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Spring 2013

Aegis: The Otterbein Humanities Journal

As a journal designed to catalyze a deeper critical appreciation of the humanities at Otterbein University, *Aegis* publishes undergraduate scholarly essays and book reviews that advance the presence and values of the humanities on campus and beyond. *Aegis* is published annually in the spring semester.

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

Essays 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*. We will also consider essays that use the disciplines of the humanities to interpret, analyze, or assess science and technology. Essays written in a language other than English will be accepted for review, provided such essays are accompanied by an English translation. Books for the book review section are selected and reviewed by Editorial Board members.

Submissions: Essay submissions should be 10-25 double-spaced pages. Use 12-point Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins, and please number all pages. Use either the MLA Style Manual or The Chicago Manual of Style for citations. Submissions will be due at the end of the first week of the spring semester. Submissions are also accepted on a rolling basis. Submissions must be accompanied by an email or cover sheet noting author's name, address, and the title of the essay. Author name/s should not appear on submitted essays. *Aegis* is committed to nonsexist language and to wording free of hostile overtones. Please send submissions to Karen Steigman, Faculty Advisor, *Aegis*, 227 Towers Hall, Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio, 43081 at ksteigman@otterbein.edu.

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Editors' Introduction >>> Beth Gier & Emmy Hammond

As this year's editors, we are pleased to present the campus community with the tenth edition of *Aegis: The Otterbein University Humanities Journal*.

The essays that have been selected for this year's edition of *Aegis* exemplify the talent and commitment to academics that are continuously exhibited by Otterbein students. The topics covered range from philosophy and music history to historiography and literary studies. All of the essays included in the journal meet the standards of rigorous research in the humanities, but more importantly, they are engaging pieces that adeptly address issues and topics relevant to Otterbein students and a more general readership. In "Israel contra Becker: Rescuing the Enlightenment?" Emmy Hammond juxtaposes two influential interpretations of the Enlightenment, and examines how the modern one can be read as a 'rescuing' of the Enlightenment that reflects the intellectual and political exigencies of the twenty-first century. Beth Dwyer, in the philosophy piece entitled "Are Negative Duties Enough? Basic Goods Deficits and the Institutional Approach to Human Rights," argues that Thomas Pogge's approach to human rights, which appeals solely to negative duties, is not comprehensive enough to provide adequate support in the aftermath of a natural disaster; furthermore, Dwyer examines the difference between Pogge's institutional approach to human rights and an approach that focuses on positive duties and frames the argument within the context of climate change and global warming. In "No Ultimatums Necessary: Defending Diverse Poetry," Beth Gier uses defenses of poetry by Romantic poets and the poems of Wendy Cope, Emily Dickinson, and W.B. Yeats to argue that poetry is not a singular entity, but can take on the roles of being serious, comical, educational, and delightful simultaneously. Finally, Jody Sjogren debunks the many misunderstandings surrounding the meaning of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, which was written and performed in a POW camp, and argues that the composition does not in fact reflect Messiaen's captivity as stated by many biographers but his devotion to Catholicism and his experimental musical nature.

Also included in this year's edition of *Aegis* is a collection of book reviews written by members of the editorial staff, covering a broad range of recently published works relevant to the humanities. The books reviewed include exciting new works of fiction, from the young adult fantasy genre represented by Orson Scott Card's *Ruins* to the searing new novel of one of the most successful authors of our day, J.K. Rowling. On the non-fiction side, a review of Eyal Press's *Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times* highlights the vital argument that this book makes about the importance of moral disobedience in immoral situations, while a review of *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back* examines some of the defects in the argument made by an influential American intellectual, Thomas Friedman. Reviews of *Mortality* and *Although Of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: A Road Trip with David Foster Wallace* take a look at the lasting character and contributions of two recently passed giants of American intellectual life, Christopher Hitchens and David Foster Wallace, respectively.

It has been a busy and exciting year filled with guest speakers for the humanities at Otterbein. In the spring of 2012, Dr. Jeanne Dubino, visiting speaker from Appalachian State

University, gave a presentation on Virginia Woolf. Otterbein also recently welcomed the critically acclaimed author and cartoonist Alison Bechdel to speak about her best-selling graphic memoirs *Fun Home* and *Are You My Mother?* This past year has also brought as visiting scholars Dr. Karen Stohr, associate professor of philosophy at Georgetown University, and Dr. Terry Castle, literary critic and English literature professor at Stanford, with whom we have had the privilege of conducting interviews published here. The interview with Dr. Stohr is primarily concerned with her newly published monograph *On Manners*, in which she argues that manners and etiquette, far from being trivial, are an extension of our deeper philosophical and ethical commitments. Dr. Castle's interview, on the other hand, was conducted with an eye towards illuminating the relationship of her personal background and career, which covers not only academic writing but essays, autobiography, and even visual art.

The essays, book reviews, and interviews included in this edition of *Aegis* are a testament to the commitment that Otterbein University makes to the liberal arts as well as to the continuing importance of this commitment at Otterbein and elsewhere; we hope that readers will find the work contained here to be both engaging and relevant.

An Interview with

Dr. Terry Castle,

Professor of English Literature at Stanford University

***Aegis:* Your books and your career as a whole span a great range of topics, from eighteenth-century masquerade to lesbianism to autobiography. What draws it all together?**

Sheer caprice! No, seriously: there are many throughlines. Feminism, the history of sexuality, the enigmas of sexual orientation, modernism and modernization, the nature of taboo, satire, the theory of the unconscious, childhood memories—all are recurrent themes in my work. The autobiographical element, for example, was always there—in a displaced or oblique way—even when I wrote about seemingly neutral or impersonal academic topics. Though I produced it so long ago, my study of the 18th-century masquerade—begun when I was in my 20s (the early 1980s)—had a lot to do with my sense of living at that time a kind of unintegrated secret or ‘masked’ life as a young, mostly closeted lesbian academic. People’s double lives and fantasy lives have always interested me: the masks we *all* wear when we present ourselves to the public. In my own case, writing about gender reversals and sexual nonconformity at 18th-century public carnivals was a displaced way of surfacing an issue in which I had a tremendous emotional stake—my own sexual identity—without revealing anything too overtly.

Ultimately I don’t believe that the best scholarship is ever entirely dispassionate or ‘objective’; there’s always some deeper psychic input. For me, this autobiographical impulse has always been fairly conscious (i.e., I’ve been aware of it since I was a novice-scholar). Writing about books, and about literary and cultural history, have on some level *always* been modes of self-exploration. In my early work, this personal element is obviously somewhat coded and disguised. I’ve become more direct and less rigidly ‘academic’ in my prose style and intellectual interests over the past couple of decades.

***Aegis:* Can you describe one class that you took in either college or grad school that stands out to you as one that inspired you or shaped your thinking?**

So many classes come to mind, it’s difficult to settle on a single one. During my first semester as a freshman in college I took a great course on myth and ritual and so-called primitive religions in which we read a number of classic works of social anthropology: Malinowski’s research on the Trobriand Islanders, Mauss on the gift, Mircea Eliade on cyclical theories of history, and so forth. That class got me started thinking (in a very fruitful way, then and later) about mythic elements in imaginative literature, archetypal symbolism—how literary works can be structured by fairly primal themes and emotions.

In turn, in graduate school at Minnesota—where I went for my Ph.D. in English—a beginning linguistics class was absolutely mind-blowing. I’d just sort of happened into it, but very luckily: so much present-day literary theory borrows its methods and terminology

from early and mid-20th-century linguistics, the course was the perfect prep for a literature student interested (as I was then) in semiotics, structuralism and post-structuralism, hermeneutics, Russian formalism and so on. But there were more obvious literary discoveries too: in another, rather different kind of grad school course I read some of the great 18th-century English novels for the first time—those of Defoe and Richardson especially—and they had an immediate and deep impact on me. Indeed, I would write my dissertation on Richardson's *Clarissa*.

Aegis: Who do you think is the most important writer today?

Again, so many different authors—in so many fields of writing— come to mind I find it hard to name just one. Someone on my mind today—he's visiting Stanford at this very moment and I'll miss his talk—is J.M. Coetzee, the South African novelist. No question he's one of the greatest living novelists writing in English. Orhan Pamuk is an astounding writer. I read just about everything Colm Toibin writes. In the non-fiction realm: I'm a huge fan of Janet Malcolm and Joan Accocella. I love literary biography: thus my admiration for Hermione Lee, Hilary Spurling, Claire Tomalin, Claire Harman, Judith Thurman, et al. For obvious reasons I'm reading a lot of political journalism at the moment [the interview took place just prior to the 2012 Presidential election]: Frank Bruni, one of the *New York Times* op-ed writers, is a favorite. He pays serious attention to the political and social issues that concern me most. (Lesbian and gay civil rights would be one.) I also devour tons of art criticism: Roberta Smith, Dave Hickey, Peter Schjeldahl, Cynthia Carr. Two of my favorite writers, both alas now deceased, were the critic/journalists Robert Hughes and Christopher Hitchens. Robert Hughes is best-known as an art critic but was also the author of *The Fatal Shore*, one of the truly magisterial popular-historical works of the past half-century. Hitchens was a master political satirist, debunker, and muck-raker. His atheism and penchant for blasphemy were thrilling. I'll always remember his great titles: i.e., *Sacred Cow* (title of his book about Mother Theresa and her financial shenanigans). A piece he wrote about the Catholic Church molestation scandals was entitled, 'Subpoena the Pope!' I adored him.

Aegis: What's one book that you think everyone should read before they're 25?

Wow, I feel like I'm on *Jeopardy* or something. Here I'm pretty hardcore: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*. Soon to be followed by Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, and the 30 volumes or so of Freud's Collected Works. And that's just the first week's reading!

Aegis: Who is one writer that you find yourself returning to, or that has most shaped your own writing?

Someone who comes to mind—indeed, I wrote about her in *The Apparitional Lesbian* (1993)—is the writer Janet Flanner: she was the Paris correspondent for the *New Yorker* for fifty years. As I was growing up, she was still alive and writing in the *New Yorker* every week and you would see pictures of her now and then—a hugely striking figure. Flanner has, I think, one of the most beautiful prose styles in English. In books like *Paris Was Yesterday* you see how amazingly skilled she was at recognizing and describing—succinctly, gloriously—

really exciting developments in the arts. Ditto events in politics and 20th-century culture generally. A brilliant Renaissance woman. Except for the period of the Occupation, she lived in Paris almost her entire adult life, from the 1920s through the 1970s: a sensitive witness to world-historical events. I find myself going back to her essays a lot, and with so much pleasure.

Likewise influential: some of the other classic essayists and diary writers—especially Woolf. (I'm very drawn to biographical and autobiographical works, generally.) With Woolf, it's not so much her novels that I find so compelling—though I do and I teach them a lot—but I don't think they fully represent her genius. I think her letters and diaries and journals are *where she lived*. They are gossipy, extraordinarily cultured, often brilliantly comic. So she would be another touchstone. There's a certain kind of educated, literate, funny writing I really like—sardonic writing. (A lot of my favorite commentators have now migrated to the blog world, of course.) James Wolcott of *Vanity Fair* is one: I've been reading him since the 70s, when he wrote for the *Village Voice*. Call me perverse, but I'm inevitably attracted to naysayers—people who say *no* to pieties of different kinds. Satirists. Janet Flanner, for instance, could be quite devastatingly witty and satirical. An essay of hers on Hitler from the 1930s is almost Swiftian in its dark hilarity.

Aegis: Written language and visual art are both clearly important to you. What about another form, music? What kind of influence has music had on you?

Well, I love music, and from a very, very early age I had my own little prehistoric record player that could play 45s and 78s and such. I remember a yellow 78—my first record!—*The Mexican Hat Dance*; I would play that all the time, over and over again. I'm hugely drawn to just about every kind of music you can imagine, from popular and trashy/sentimental stuff all the way to the most experimental and 'serious' and avant-garde. In particular, I'm a huge jazz fan, *and* a huge opera fan, and my love for both has linked up with my intellectual interests in rewarding ways. Virtuosity—especially when it's improvisational, as it can be in both jazz and, say, 18th-century opera—has impressed me since my twenties. I think I must have musician-envy: I don't play an instrument and I don't seem to have any natural musical talent, but I've always wished that I had. I find great performers just thrilling and inspiring to be around—whatever the instrument or kind of music. Singers especially. It's magical. And hey, I saw the Beatles on their first American tour at the Hollywood Bowl!

Aegis: That's a claim to fame!

Yes, what never seems to get reported or remembered: they were a staggeringly great live band. So, yeah, music has been a big part of my life—a kind of emotional sustenance. I have six iPods and they're all filled up.

Aegis: What's your favorite guilty pleasure read?

Well, that one's easy to answer. There's only one thing for me and it's house and garden magazines—those lavish glossy monthly productions about high-end interior decorating and design, full of expensive schemes for making one's home 'glamorous,' 'trendy,' 'chic,'

‘directional’—all the fashionable clichés. They are sometimes called “shelter magazines.” I’m a sucker for them. In my case, they satisfy a whole slew of residual and deeply embarrassing fantasies I retain about upward social mobility; wishing I were a millionaire; wishing I possessed numberless beautiful things; wishing I had the time to redecorate on a whim, etc. It’s pretty addictive and uncritical. Reading the latest *Elle Decor* or *World of Interiors*, I find myself wanting it all, no matter how excessive or over the top. ‘Trophy’ art, the antiques, the ‘midcentury modern’ furniture, English cottages, chic Paris apartments, etc. ‘House porn’ is a slang name for the stuff: and indeed I find myself taking an avid, almost lecherous interest in high-thread count linens, Eames furniture, ‘window treatments,’ garden pergolas, 18th-century mouldings, etc. etc. Pure *ancien régime* self-indulgence, if only in a fantasy way.

Aegis: Was there a movie, novel, or painting, (or all three) that influenced you in your youth and your life philosophy? What were they and how did they impact you?

Again, there are almost too many candidates to settle on just a few. But here’s one from the visual realm: when I was little my mother had a big thick illustrated paperback history of Western art, with a strange Picasso image on the front. I remember poring over the images in that book endlessly. Indeed, I must’ve gleaned a lot about art history from it, without even realizing I was doing so. And certain haunting and powerful paintings obviously stayed with me on a deep level. When I went in my twenties for the first time to the Prado Museum in Madrid, I saw Goya’s painting of the execution of Maximilien by firing squad—it had been in my mother’s book—I just burst into tears in front of it. Goya’s painting has had that sort of primal importance for me. Not that I understood the history that well, but what he captures about the human condition, the brutality of history: seeing him was profound. My view of the world—no doubt secular and pessimistic in many ways—has clearly been shaped by certain artists—the makers of such mighty and talismanic and unforgettable images.

As far as books go, Richardson’s great novel *Clarissa*—the 18th-century novel about which, as I mentioned, I wrote my first book—has likewise shaped my worldview: my basically bleak sense of life. [Laughs.] That book never goes away. It’s so massive and intolerable and *true*, about how things go wrong, even for the most noble and deserving and harmless human beings. We live in a tragic universe—one in which being disillusioned, critical, skeptical, would seem to be necessary for survival. (We also live, paradoxically, in a comic one too.) I’ve had similar reactions to certain operas, especially Wagner’s works. I was lucky enough to see a production of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth this past summer and it was absolutely overwhelming—so ravishing, so beautiful, so deeply serious about what it means to be yearning and embodied and alive but also mortal, condemned to die.

But that’s enough gloom and doom for the moment, I guess! Monty Python has also been hugely influential [laughs].

Aegis: Do you have an all-time favorite quote?

Yes. It’s from Gertrude Stein. Actually, I have two favorite quotes—both from Gertrude Stein. One is “This is the difference between this and that.” And the other one (I’m not going to quote it exactly) is “Let us say what history teaches history teaches.” The absence of any comma in this last is a masterful touch.

Aegis: Is there a book that you absolutely cannot stand reading? What is it and why do you dislike it?

The first works that pop into my head are those of Ayn Rand, basically anything she wrote—what an idiot, what a horrible idiot. But, I can usually find something of interest or value even in what you might call schlock fiction, pulp fiction, ‘airplane reading.’ I wouldn’t necessarily choose such fare, but if there were nothing else, I’m sure I could find something interesting about it. There is useful information about the world to be extracted from just about any book, even if the information is simply about how to avoid being a bad writer. There’s a wonderful book by the poet W.D. Snodgrass called *Decompositions* and he takes a whole lot of very famous classic English and American poems from the 19th century and the 20th century—Emily Dickinson, the beginning of *The Wasteland*, Robert Frost, this one and that one—and he re-writes the poems—very subtly, very delicately—in a way that makes them *bad*. Silly, flat, puerile, stale, enervated—excruciating. And it’s utterly brilliant: you can see it took an exacting poetic skill to make them terrible. They say the same things as the originals, in similar words, but transform the work into something completely banal. You can learn a lot, I would argue, from things that are horrible and bad. Teaching 18th-century novels (as I do), I’ve gotten used to student complaints about how ‘bad’ they are—how tedious to read. I’m used to battering my way through that: the antipathy some students have toward reading something ‘old’ and unfamiliar. If you make an effort, ‘difficult’ books gradually become less alienating. I sometimes want to say, *get over it—these things are bigger than you are!* [laughs]. God, I sound like a reactionary. But beyond boredom comes fascination. The bad becomes good.

Aegis: You specialize in the history of the novel and World War I literature, modernism, and Virginia Woolf. Are there any other classes that you have dreamed of teaching but haven’t been able to create? What is your favorite class to teach?

I’m at a stage in my career in which I’m determined not to wait around to teach my ‘dream’ courses. I taught a course last year on Freud which was huge fun. We simply read Freud, nothing else—well, we actually did read a few works of literature, to see how Freudian ideas might or might not apply to literary criticism today. And we watched two Hitchcock films. But the main thing was Freud’s work itself, starting with *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and so on. And it was fascinating. It was a graduate class, but few of the students—even advanced students in the Stanford Ph.D. program—had ever read *any* Freud, even some of the basic essays like ‘The Uncanny.’ It was startling to me. He was a hearsay figure for most of them. But it was a fantastic class. All the students became passionately involved with his ideas, whether they liked them (or him) or not.

I’m teaching a class on autobiography and memoir right now that I would never have thought to teach earlier in my career. I was too snobby; it would have seemed too flimsy and down-market. But writing my own largely autobiographical story—in *The Professor* (2010)—seems to have unleashed something in me. We’re reading all kinds of things—Hazzlitt, Gertrude Stein, Art Pepper, Lucy Grealy, Roland Barthes, Joe Brainard: talk about weird segues! I’m doing two graphic memoirs, too—Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*. The course has been a kind of wild mishmash of things. I’m finding I like to set up incongruous juxtapositions in my syllabi, because that’s how one learns, I believe, through

cognitive dissonance, by having to relate things that seem at first unrelated. That's what I wanted: a kind of checkerboard of things, and we'll see how it goes.

To speak candidly, from a psychological angle, I also think I am perhaps moving away from teaching somewhat. Retirement is not in the picture yet, but it isn't that far off. I guess what I want to say is, and, it sounds a bit ruthless (!), but the older I get, the more concerned with my own writing and creative work I become. *Ever at my back I hear...* I like teaching well enough but I don't feel it's the central thing I do—or not so much anymore. It gets harder, too—as a day-to-day practice—because my students today often seem to me, for better or for worse, far less interested in the *past*, in trying to see things historically, than they once did.

Aegis: I would say also, since you brought up the issue of history and literature at the end - I'm a history major, so for me I also notice a dearth of the ability to kind of put oneself into a historical mindset at all, in combination with problems of literacy today.

True again, alas! The lack of historical information, even among Stanford students, can be shocking. More and more, it seems, I find that my literature students—even say some of the Ph.D students—know nothing, or very little, about topics I would have thought part of a reasonably-educated college student's trove of learning. I'll ask the students, for instance, in a Jane Austen class 'what do you know about the French Revolution?'—or 'what were the Napoleonic Wars about?'—and get blank looks. (Sometimes *embarrassed* blank looks, but nonetheless *blank*.) No idea—what these things were, when they happened, what the issues were. I teach a lot of courses on modernism, and find the same thing with the First World War—especially with American students: practically zero information. The knowledge gap makes a work like *Mrs. Dalloway* or *A Farewell to Arms* almost impossible to understand.

Aegis: I always find there's some information about the Second World War, but the First World War that obviously led into the Second World War—students know virtually nothing about.

That's frightening, because that means a lot of ignorance too when it comes to contemporary global politics. The crisis in the Middle East, for example—indeed so many other horrifying present-day conflicts—simply cannot be understood without some knowledge of the First World War and its cataclysmic geopolitical and human legacy.

Aegis: Is there one book that comes to mind as being extremely over-taught in the classroom or sort of analyzed to death?

Oh god, yes, everything. I call these "school books" because they've been destroyed by being assigned over and over and over again. In my field, *Frankenstein* is one...if I ever have to teach that book again I think I'll start shrieking. (Not at the monster: he's lovely and very sympathetic.) *Heart of Darkness* is another overdone text... Often, the same books tend to be reassigned because they illuminate some contemporary political or social issue that the professor wants to foreground. But one result is we're left with a shrinking canon of works. The literary richness is lost. Add to this the fact that so few English majors, it seems, now

read novels and poems and plays other than those assigned to them. But even these ‘over-read’ books, I find, continue to mystify students. Take Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*—so often taught, yet how few students fully grasp the historical context? So many of my students seem unable to make much sense of it on their own. I confess I don’t quite know what ‘reading’ means for English majors today. Few people of your age, I would venture, started to read, as I did, at the age of four and then read, immersively, just about every day through, say, middle school and high school. That kind of ‘addicted’ early reading just doesn’t exist any more. There are too many distractions, too many other activities and skills ambitious parents want their children to develop. Yet I worry that if one hasn’t had an early experience of promiscuous self-directed reading—reading above one’s putative grade level, ‘growing’ a rich vocabulary, finding books on your own—the neurological centers of the brain associated with reading and writing don’t get to develop very fully. Language acquisition skills are at their peak from infancy to about age ten. (If you’ve ever tried to learn a foreign language later in life, you’ll find it’s much harder than one you might have begun, say, at eight or ten.) The brain’s capacity for language learning atrophies. I’m not sure that if you haven’t done a kind of *profound* reading in childhood you can develop very sophisticated linguistic competencies later in life.

Aegis: I know one novel, when I talk with teachers here, that they feel gets overanalyzed, they think *The Great Gatsby*.

Yes, that’s another one, it’s true. In the ’90s one saw Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* assigned, so it seemed, in just about every English class going.

Aegis: Your work ranges from visual art to academic research to literary criticism to autobiographical essays. Do you find yourself drawn to certain forms during certain times or to think about certain questions?

Well, there’s a simple but squalidly careerist answer to your query (!): when I was younger, like every other beginning scholar, I had to produce a certain amount of academically-oriented writing to establish my professional credentials, my bona fides. So my first books were all produced within a relatively traditional scholarly framework. That said, I think I early on realized that the essay—especially the ‘free-form’ informal essay—was my chosen genre. As things evolved, it wasn’t so much that I wanted to write *books*; I wanted to write—and did write—essays on diverse topics. Several of my published works—*The Apparitional Lesbian*, *The Female Thermometer*—are not really ‘books,’ per se, but closet essay-collections. True, individual pieces are linked in some degree by a larger theme, but each piece can also stand alone. I got into writing essays in large part, I think, because I have been fortunate enough over the years to write reviews for hospitable places like the *London Review of Books* or the *Atlantic* (lately *Slate*, the *Paris Review*)—publications in which the focus is typically on broad cultural commentary and a certain freewheeling and experimental exploration of one’s topic is possible.

Likewise, ever more visible to me now—to return to an earlier comment—is the gradual but decisive turn my writing has lately taken toward the personal and idiosyncratic. Beginning in the 1990s and into the early 2000s I became more than a little disenchanted with academic ‘theory’ and indeed the so-called ‘cultural studies’ approach to literature and

art. Most academic writing in the humanities, I feel, has become ossified and stultifying: jargon-laden, often impenetrable, ideologically narrow, excruciatingly didactic and ‘group-thinky.’ I wanted to move away from that and did. For me, however eccentric, a more autobiographical kind of writing was the answer—a great liberation. (I also made art-making and the visual a much more central part of my creative life.) This turn toward the personal—likewise my interest in making images and blogging about it—no doubt has had a lot to do with my growing skepticism regarding the long-term survival of academic English studies. Many top-flight English departments have lately begun hemorrhaging majors—and, in particular, majors engaged in the historical and philological aspects of the subject. The economy no doubt has something to do with it. But more and more students would much rather do ‘creative writing’ than study the history of the English language over the centuries or familiarize themselves with the great authors of the past. I don’t see a robust future thus—I’m sorry to say—for literary history as an academic discipline. We English professors are caught in the endgame. Yes, kids! I AM a cultural pessimist! A real Debbie Downer! [Laughs.] To steal a line from a friend, the issue for me isn’t whether the glass is half-full or half-empty: actually it’s already smashed on the ground and one’s drink is all over the floor. So you might want to take some of my maunderings here with at least a teensy grain of salt. I hope you will prove me wrong! [Laughs again]

An Interview with

Dr. Karen Stohr,

Associate Professor of Philosophy and Senior Research Scholar for
the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University

Aegis: Can you tell us briefly how it is that you came to be interested in the topic of manners and their connection to morality? What was it within your general field of philosophy that most sparked this direction for your research?

I do ethics as a moral philosopher, and that's part of the answer because there's a lot of connections there. But the other part is that I've always loved etiquette. When in graduate school in an area like philosophy where the job market is pretty bad, it's good to have alternate career plans, and my other alternate career was being the next Ms. Manners. So I had thought I had an independent interest in manners and an independent interest in ethics, but I saw them start to converge because the kinds of practical problems that etiquette presents actually resemble ethical problems in many ways. In fact, I actually think they are miniature ethical problems. They raise questions like, "What should I do here? Do I have to follow this existing rule? What will happen if I don't?" So that etiquette problems present themselves to us in the same way that ethical problems do. I think there are a lot of structural similarities between the two, but mostly just because I loved reading etiquette columns and advice columns in general. I just think it's a fascinating area.

Aegis: In the book, you make the distinction between the principles of manners and the rules of etiquette. Could you elaborate on that distinction for people who haven't read the book? What are the key differences that distinguish manners from etiquette and why is it important to make the distinction?

I actually borrowed this distinction from Judith Martin, who is Ms. Manners. She draws the distinction in a way that I picked up on, but I do something a little bit different with it. She thinks that the principles of manners are universal principles that underlie all systems of etiquette and the rules of etiquette are the manifestations or particular applications of those principles in a particular society. A useful example that she uses is a principle of manners that says show respect for your host. In different cultures that is going to translate into very different rules of etiquette so in one system it might mean that when you come in you don't take off your shoes and in another system of etiquette it might mean that you do. Or it might mean that if you're a host that you let your guests walk in the door in front of you or in other cultures you let your guests walk out last. Martin's point is that the principles of manners are universal, they're applicable in all cultures, but there can be variations in the etiquette rules. What looks like a disagreement, like should you or should you not take off

your shoes when you go into a house, isn't actually a disagreement; it is a difference in the rules of etiquette, but it's not a difference in the principles of manners.

I think that this is a useful distinction, and the way I interpreted it the principles of manners are actually moral principles like "Show respect for people" or "Be considerate of them." But there's a lot of debate within philosophy about whether there are any universal principles like that or what we mean by respect and consideration. Those principles, as far as I'm concerned, are moral ones and the rules of etiquette, as I interpret them, are ways of doing that in a particular context. Because if you have a principle that says "Show respect for someone," you have to do it in a way that will be understood. So my claim is that the rules of etiquette are devices to communicate the aims of the principles of manners and those devices are arbitrary. They can and do vary, they change over time, they depend on where you are, and what conventions are in place so they really are conventional, but they're reflecting something that's not conventional.

Aegis: How would you respond to questions about how, or if, manners, in the sense of both more and less trivial etiquette, actually serve to reinforce and perpetuate certain ingrained differences of gender, class, etc.? To make the question a bit more concrete, we could cite your own examples at various points in the book about what to call a married woman, using Mrs. or Ms. or referring to a married woman by her husband's first and last name, or else whether it's polite for men to hold doors open for women, something that you note causes 'considerable angst' for many people today. In these examples, are "good manners" actually doing something destructive?

This is a great question and a fun one for me to answer. There are two ways in which we can talk about what are good manners and what are the rules of etiquette. There are those rules as they are written down in etiquette books that somebody who is an etiquette expert, whoever that might be, has written down. They are either self-proclaimed or somebody else has said and they're in a book. So some of them might be able to say, "But look! This etiquette book says that I should do this." That's actually not the kinds of etiquette rules that interest me. I think those are useful, but the things that I think are actually binding, that are extensions of moral principles are a little bit different than that. In my view, even if something really is a rule in a book somewhere, it doesn't necessarily mean that you should follow it. Whether or not it's a good rule depends on whether it reinforces the moral principles or whether it's at odds with them.

So there's a sense of good manners which is just following the rules that are in the books and there's another sense of good manners which I think is the more interesting one, which may mean not following the rules that are in the books. Take for example Rosa Parks. It probably wasn't in an etiquette book or somewhere or other that African Americans should cede their place in the front of the bus when whites got on, it was the law in places too, but she may have been acting rudely according to the conventions of the time by refusing to move. But she's not in my sense of acting rudely, acting rudely at all and in fact, that's a convention she was right to buck because it's a convention that is based in an immoral principle about inequality. The mere fact that something is an existing rule of etiquette doesn't necessarily give you reason to follow it. On the other hand, because the rules of etiquette are

communication devices, it does matter both what is being conveyed by it and what is being understood by it.

With regard to titles for women, this is a place where as you know there is a lot of confusion and fluctuation. Or, the opening doors example...it still causes issues like who do you hold the door open for, and people do all kinds of things, like there may be people who hold the door open for their mother or grandmother but not their students. There's a lot of back and forth, and I think when the conventions are in flux there has to be a lot of goodwill in letting things slide. With the door opening, I know that I'm opening a door for someone as a sign of respect and then someone says, "Well, it doesn't feel like a sign of respect. It feels like an implication that I can't open a door by myself or that I can't take care of myself." So you kind of have this mismatch between what the person is intending to convey with the convention and the message the person is receiving with the convention. I think that in these times of transition, until things get settled, you do have to kind of just go with it.

As for the bigger question whether manners can perpetuate and enforce certain differences, I think if we just think of them as following the rules in the books, then they can. But that's not how I would want to interpret it. I do think that what the conventions are supposed to do depends on these moral principles that are underlying it. And once we figure out that the conventions should not reflect gender or race assumptions then we need to adjust those conventions. You give people some leeway for catching up but not so much. We might make more exceptions, for instance, for people who are very old or for kids who are still trying to figure it out, but we think gradually people should get with the times. The conventions should reflect genuine moral views about things and insofar as they don't, we shouldn't follow them. But when they do reflect that, then we should.

Aegis: You state that "people do sometimes try to employ etiquette in order to embarrass or humiliate others by putting their ignorance on display," but that using etiquette and manners in such a way as to deliberately embarrass or belittle another is actually quite impolite (35). If manners and etiquette are an extension of moral values, how can a person both follow etiquette and be impolite? Do you feel that this is the main reason why many people have a negative connotation of etiquette and do not consider that they themselves practice it as such?

I think the reason why people have this negative impression of it is because when they hear the word etiquette they think of things like forks. Ms. Manners is funny on this, like, "Everyone is so obsessed with forks!" They think of things that are sort of stuffy and make them uncomfortable or they think of it as attached to occasions like weddings so nobody cares about etiquette until they get married and suddenly wedding etiquette becomes everything. That's kind of strange, like why weddings and not other things too? I think it's interesting that it brings it out, and I think a lot of the obsession with wedding etiquette is actually a big mistake. But there's something that sort of brings it out, like, "Oh, we need it for these formal occasions where we feel uncomfortable." And that is actually kind of interesting because people do recognize in this sort of novel big thing like planning a wedding that it is helpful to have some things to fall back on, like a standard way of doing it. They also associate it with things being over the top or stuffy or situations that make them feel uncomfort-

able, and particularly, I think this plays out differently in different countries. So for instance, in the U.K. a very class based system in which there is a much stronger association with manners being the provenance of a certain group of people, and in America there are plenty of class based distinctions going on—we just don't like to call them that—but there's this idea that, "Hey! We're sort of informal people. This etiquette stuff is stuffy. It's not really us." But I think that's much too narrow a view of etiquette because I don't think that rules about place settings are very important parts of it. So Emily Post, one of my etiquette heroes, tended to eat with her elbows on the table because she was like, "It's really not that big of a deal." So this is for her, yeah it's a rule, but it's one that you can easily break. It's not a big deal. I think that the range of things that are the province of etiquette is much bigger than that and if you start thinking of things like someone telling a racist or sexist joke at a party, there is an etiquette issue about how you respond to that, but it's not trivial at all. It's important. So I think sometimes when people think of it they have these associations with these formal, uncomfortable occasions so they seem kind of trivial and that's why people are dismissive of it.

As for the being rude thing, I do think it's possible to follow an etiquette rule in a book somewhere and be rude. As Ms. Manners is fond of pointing out, people are always saying, "Oh, if I do something rude, you're going to point it out!" And she goes, "No, because it would be rude to point out somebody else's etiquette mistake." So if you're really being polite, you're never going to notice what anybody is doing anyway so you won't even know if people are making etiquette mistakes. If you're trying to point out other people's etiquette mistakes, you're violating etiquette. I do think, though, like in the case of using or not using people's titles or enforcing existing conventions, that you could be at once following an existing convention that really is the convention but being rude while you do it. So, I do think it's possible to be polite in the sense of following what's in the etiquette book and rude at the same time, but that's because the politeness in the sense of following what's in the etiquette book isn't the interesting sense of polite. Not that we should ignore etiquette books because I do think they're helpful. We just shouldn't treat them as static or unchanging. We should recognize that they're products of their time in the ways lots of other things are, too or that etiquette writers are also human and they don't always have it right. Also, they disagree on conventions. They don't all agree on what the rules are, too. So we have to take those existing practices and conventions with a grain of salt anyway.

Aegis: You use classic literature, e.g., Jane Austen and Edith Wharton, the expertise of Emily Post, and classical doctrines of philosophy to explain our moral obligations to manners, but you also use examples from recent popular culture like *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. What was your reasoning to use modern examples like *Seinfeld*? Is the practice of using popular culture to examine philosophical dilemmas and morality common among philosophers?

I think it's becoming more common. I don't think it is unheard of. Why it's becoming more popular is interesting. There are still plenty of people who roll their eyes, but I think that's just plain snobbery because what you're trying to do in ethics is figure out the way that things really are in the world and reflect on them. Like, what are people's actual ethical practices, how do they behave? There's no reason at all for philosophers to think that we're better at that than anybody else, and in fact, we're worse at it than a lot of people are. My

reason for using some of these is that I'm a huge Austen fan and Emily Post fan, too, though for different kinds of reasons. I think Austen is just really, really good at assessing people's characters and getting moral nuances. In fact, if we're looking for, especially in ethics, people who are really good observers of our practices and behaviors and who are really good at raising interesting questions about that, very often those are the people writing novels or producing interesting television shows. There's no reason not to look at that and lots of reason to look for that because you're looking for people who have insight, and people with insight are in a lot of different professions.

Now, *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, which are done by the same producer, is because this show just raises all the right questions. Like, "Yeah! This thing that we all do... Yeah. Why?" Like, what's the point of this? They're kind of obsessive in many ways, obviously, and the characters aren't sympathetic, but it just generates these questions. So I start the book with this example from the *Seinfeld* episode called "The Dinner Party," about hostess gifts. They're all going out and they have to get a hostess gift, and in this case, George, plays the role of the needling "Why? Why?" Elaine goes, "We need to get a hostess gift." And George is like, "Why do we need to do this? Why do we need to show up with something?" And that's a great question! Why do you need to show up with something? Then, Elaine starts getting obsessed with it, and it needs to be wine and chocolate babka. George is just like, "Why not just Pepsi and Ring Dings because we can get that right down the street?" They're like, "Oh, George." They know that there's this convention, and Elaine has these rigid—too rigid—ideas it turns out about what this convention is, but they can't defend it. They know there is this convention, but they don't have anything to say to George, who is just like, "Why are we doing this?" And *Seinfeld* does this over and over again. It points to these conventions that we're all slavishly adhering to and it kind of unpacks them in interesting ways. Of course, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* does the same thing but with more sympathetic portrayals of the characters.

I think there's a lot to learn from television and movies and novels, and generally, if something is really popular with people there is usually a reason. There's something about it that resonates with people, and it's worth finding out what that is, even if it turns out not to be good. But there's something there that's making these shows popular, and philosophers who are interested in making our theories match up with human life should figure out what it is.

Aegis: You raise at a few points in the book the issue of contemporary technology—social media such as Facebook and Twitter, ubiquitous cell-phone texting, Skype and other video-chatting, etc.—and how such technology has already changed and will inevitably continue to change the realm of manners and etiquette. How do you see manners being impacted by such technologies, now and in the future? We can all see the effects that, for example, anonymity on the internet, has on manners, but if manners are, as you argue, an extension of our deeper moral commitments, how do you see technology affecting those morals?

This is a really fascinating topic. It's actually one of the places where I disagree with Judith Martin on something, too. I think there are some ways in which technology raises new versions of the same old problems—some of the privacy considerations like how much should you reveal on Facebook or on Twitter. That's not a new etiquette problem, it's just a

new version of it. There was always the problem about sending stuff on postcards—the old fashioned way—or party telephone lines. So the general issues about privacy are old ones, although they have new forms.

But there's other issues, for instance texting, that I think there's a conceptual shift that's worth noting. I think this is one of the things that Martin misses. There's a distinction between a telephone—not a cell phone, but the old fashioned kind that plugs into a wall somewhere. So if we're having this conversation and the telephone rings, there's this kind of thing where we should ignore the telephone because whoever is on the phone... What we should do is focus on the people here and ignore the phone. But if another person walked into the room right now, we don't think we should just ignore them. We should at least acknowledge them in some way, shape, or form. They may still be interrupting, but we can't just pretend they're not there. The traditional rules make a big distinction between the telephone and the person who walks up.

What I think has happened with texting is that our ideas about who is a conversational partner, who should be acknowledged, have really changed. In some ways, when a text comes in it's not the same thing. Just because it happens through technology doesn't mean it presents us with the same kind of "set it to the side" claim. Because I think the ways that we think of having conversations with people have really changed.

Skype is a good example. If someone is skyping—especially with the video feed where you can see them—you kind of feel like they're really there in some sense. You feel like you should look at them when you talk. I think our ideas about who is a conversational partner have shifted. The impression I've gotten from college students is that when someone is texting you it feels more like someone has walked up to your group and you have to acknowledge them. It has a different feel. It doesn't feel like a telephone ringing does to your parents; it feels like someone walking up. That, I think, is a pretty big shift in how we think of who has a claim on our attention and in what form that takes. Facebook threads are really interesting, too, because you can have people from all walks of life. What's interesting about it is that you can have conversations between people who don't know each other, your grandmother and your high school friend all commenting on your picture, that you get these new kinds of conversational threads that take on their own form. There are also these new forms of etiquette with Facebook threads like thread jacking that go along with it that I think are genuinely new.

Aegis: How do you see the anonymity of the internet affecting etiquette?

Anonymity is true in cyberspace but it's also partly a question of size of community. If you're in a large city you can become anonymous pretty quickly because you're not likely to cross paths with the people, too, so some of it has to do with the size of community. But the interesting thing about the internet is there are all these forums where people can behave anonymously, and I think it's true that anonymity because it lowers accountability makes people...I mean, that can be valuable in some context, but in many cases, there are no consequences to behaving badly so people will and do. There is also a distancing. It's pretty well known that people behave differently in cars than they do face to face because in a car it feels like you're interacting with another car not a human being, so people are often ruder when we drive than when we're walking. The internet does that, too, because it's harder to see the human being behind it.

On the other hand, there's also this knowledge that everything you see and do is being tracked, like there's a copy of it somewhere and it can come back to haunt you. On the one hand there's this anonymity but there's also this huge wealth of information about everybody that's out there, too. So on the one hand, we're more anonymous than ever—it's easier to be anonymous—and I do think that anonymity tends to lower civility, but there's also this idea that whatever I say and do on Facebook can come back to haunt me in some way or shape that raises accountability. So it kind of works both ways.

Aegis: Given the current political climate, discussion about how a politician must conduct him or herself on the campaign has become prominent. For example, if a politician speaks a harsh and unlikeable truth outside of the usual political rhetoric, he or she is considered to have behaved against the social norms in an abhorrent manner. Technically, the politician has upheld a moral duty by being honest, yet he or she is considered rude, blunt, and has not followed the etiquette of politics. Do manners and etiquette have a different role within a political context? If so, what are the established roles of manners and etiquette within the political sphere?

What's interesting is that, on one hand, we have these very rigid standards of decorum, and you really see these in debates and sometimes they're enforced in debates by the rules. People are supposed to engage in a certain kind of way and it's more rigid than in other contexts, too. So we sort of believe that candidates should always be civil and always polite, but that's not, of course, the way that people actually engage. People also enjoy the jabs and the hit below the belt, too. I think that it's kind of a mixed message of what we want from our candidates. We want them to have a high standard of civility and decorum, even setting aside the fact that it's hard to get elected that way. But we also don't want them to act this way because we don't want to them to look weak. I think it's an impossible task. People often claim that politics is very uncivil. I don't know if it's more uncivil than the rest of life. It's tough because there's this idea of a front that they're putting on. Politicians have a complicated front they have to put on at all times. If you're a male, you have to be a family man. Whatever it takes to show that you're really into your wife and kids, you have to do it. It helps to have a dog, too. For women it's much more complicated. If you're too into your family, then you're not serious enough. So there's this front that you have to put on. You have to be tough but not too tough, one of us but not really one of us. There's this balancing act that makes it hard to see the real person. But we appreciate the glimpse of the real person, for better or worse. We also recognize that politicians have a lot of interest in hiding. I think the standards of decorum are more agreed upon but maybe less followed in politics.

Aegis: People are really appealing to this sense that lately political discourse has gotten so bitter and so divisive and this idea that it wasn't this way before.

I think that the fact that so many people participate in it has changed it, and that's good. But there's a lot that people who are direct participants have to lose if they are perceived as uncivil, but their supporters don't have as much to lose. I think that part of it is a broadening out of communication and arguments about candidates, which might have happened in more public and less anonymous forums before. Nobody was having debates about

candidates on the internet when I was in college because there was no internet. All of those debates were happening in public space, like face-to-face or newspapers. People were talking about these debates but in more measured and public ways and certainly not so instant. Now, you get instant reactions to things, and people quickly turn things into spoofs and jokes. Someone says something and five minutes later, it's not just being repeated but parodied. In some ways that gives us a fuller picture of what's going on because it's likely that someone will report on anything that happens, but it also makes it more divisive because people using Twitter don't have the same reason to maintain a civil attitude towards the opposing candidate as the candidates themselves do or the reporters or journalists that are attaching their names to statements in print. So there might be something to politics being less civil. I think it might be, but I don't know if it's the fault of the candidates. I think it has to do with it being more open and participatory.

Aegis: Going off of the last question, many people today may say that too much emphasis, or much emphasis at all, on manners and etiquette is non-constructive in the sense that it is a distraction from the issues that truly matter, issues like poverty, equal political rights, economic justice, etc. Could you explain why you would disagree with such an assessment, which amounts largely to a dismissal, of manners?

I do think that manners are ethical issues, but they're certainly not the most pressing ones. If we're having this conversation and a horrible accident happens outside, we should stop and do something. Clearly, there are more pressing issues, and on a case by case basis, you can say that manners always takes a backseat to immediate problems such as hunger or unemployment. In that sense, of course manners are less important, but it doesn't follow that they aren't important. There are three things about it. One is that I think they're more important than we think that they are because they reflect things like deeper moral attitudes.

In the book, I give the example of Martin Luther King's letter from a Birmingham jail when he's outlining a list of grievances, saying these are the things we've suffered. He lists things that are clearly injustices like bombings and lynching. Then, he uses the example of his wife and mother being called Missus So and So. He has this list of these things and then this random complaint about a title. It seems minor, and of course it is compared to lynching, but I think he is right because he outlines an underlying problem of respect and it manifests itself in a whole bunch of different ways. It's in some sense one and the same problem. The same thing that makes people completely disregard the situation of people who live on the other side of town or the block is the same thing that makes them disregard the fact that they are trying to merge into the lane of traffic. I think the attitudes are connected; they aren't really separate.

I think they're really pervasive as well. This is one of the things that *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* are really good at pointing it out. It may be that they're small, but there's a lot of them and they take up a lot of space in our day and in our thinking because people get really caught up in them, or at least in *Seinfeld* they do. There's something to that that we do care about this. It's not as if questions of manners are completely irrelevant, even to the debates about the really important, difficult stuff. There's a historical figure, the Earl of Chesterfield, who I think has gotten a bad rep, he's the historical representative of having

good manners to get ahead in life. But part of his point is that if you have an important case to make, you want to make it as effectively as you can and manners and civility are part of that. So with these pressing issues that need resolution, you still have to have those resources to engage with people with whom you disagree in order to get anywhere with them. Of course, the economy is more important than sorting out whether it's rude to interrupt a text message, but those difficult conversations about the economy can't happen unless we know how to engage with each other.

Olivier Messiaen and the *Quartet for the End of Time* >>> Jody Sjogren

In the decades since Olivier Messiaen composed and premiered his *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (Quartet for the End of Time) during confinement in a prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, musicologists have commonly suggested that this work is a reflection of the composer's experience in captivity. Interviews with Messiaen himself, liner notes written for post-war recordings of the Quartet, and subsequent biographies of the composer have collectively connected the Quartet to the conditions of its creation and associated it with the hardships and cruelty of war. The result is a misunderstanding of Messiaen's original inspiration and intended message for the *Quartet for the End of Time*. Through a careful presentation of biographical and historical information, accompanied by musical analysis of key passages from the Quartet, I propose here that the true inspiration for this work grew out of Messiaen's deep and lifelong Catholic faith. His intention with the Quartet was to communicate his musical interpretation of angelic visions and prophecies regarding the end of Time from the biblical Book of Revelation.

The historical details of the composition and premiere of the *Quartet for the End of Time* are now legendary: Olivier Messiaen, a devout Catholic, musical prodigy, graduate of the Paris Conservatoire, and five-time winner of the coveted *premier prix* award, had joined the French army at the outbreak of war in 1939. He was captured by the Germans and transferred to a prisoner-of-war camp in Görlitz, Silesia (in northern Europe), where chance encounters with a cellist, a clarinetist, and a violinist who were imprisoned with him led to the composition of the Quartet. Hidden in the latrines, he wrote *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* with help from German guards who supplied him with manuscript paper, pencils, erasers, and relief from other prison duties. The Quartet premiered on a bitterly cold January evening in 1941, with Messiaen and his fellow musicians shabbily dressed in prison uniforms and wooden clogs, playing an old upright piano with sticky keys and a three-stringed cello. The Quartet mesmerized the audience of five thousand prisoners and guards alike in that prison barrack at Stalag VIII A. In Messiaen's own words: "Never have I been listened to with so much attention and understanding."¹

The Quartet has thus become a symbol of the artistic spirit triumphing over evil and injustice. Karl Paulnack, director of the music division at the Boston Conservatory of Music, expresses this view in his 2004 welcome address to incoming students as he argues for the power of music to help people recover from tragedy and survive overwhelmingly painful circumstances. Rehearsing the well-known story of the Quartet's creation and premiere, he asks why Messiaen (or anyone) would write and play music in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp. He concludes that "art must be, somehow, essential for life ... art is part of survival ... part of the human spirit, an unquenchable expression of who we are."²

While the association with its wartime circumstance is both obvious and significant, certain assumptions about the Quartet deserve correction and further clarification. First, the

assumption that the Quartet was written to help the composer and his fellow prisoners survive their imprisonment, as Paulnack and others suggest, is only part of the story. Though it is understandably a source of inspiration and triumph for later generations, this great work is not fully appreciated without a deeper consideration of the composer's personal motivations in writing it. Second, the title itself, "for the End of Time," is a name with multiple meanings both musical and spiritual—and possibly even scientific. The superficial and perhaps obvious assumption that it referred to the endless duration of imprisonment, or to the end of the world as threatened by the European war, is not what the composer had in mind. The key to both of these issues lies in a more thorough knowledge and understanding of Messiaen himself, his Catholic theology, and the nature of creativity. Third, while the story of the Quartet's creation and premiere at Stalag VIIIA is routinely quoted at performances of the work today (thus reinforcing the view that the Quartet became famous because of the circumstances of imprisonment), this view overlooks both Messiaen's stated inspiration for the piece and the political forces that influenced its acceptance and performance—or lack thereof—in war-time Europe. The attitude of the Vichy government in France, as well as its relations to Nazi Germany during the war, profoundly affected the contemporary exposure of the Quartet to European, specifically French, society. The Quartet was, in fact, ignored by the Vichy government for the reason that it was *not* inspired by, nor was it even a musical commentary on, life in the prisoner-of-war camp.³

Even on the surface, understanding Olivier Messiaen the composer and theologian presents no simple task. He was born in 1908 to Pierre Messiaen, an English teacher and translator of Shakespeare, who instilled in young Olivier an admiration for Shakespeare's plays, and to Cécile Sauvage, who wrote a cycle of poems during her pregnancy, in which she anticipates his birth. Olivier took an early interest in music, requesting operatic vocal scores for Christmas presents and familiarizing himself with works by Mozart, Gluck, Berlioz, Wagner, and the piano works of Debussy and Ravel.⁴ He began playing the piano at the age of eight, improvising his own melodies. In a film documentary made later in his life, he claimed that he received his vocation to music as a boy while reading a score of Gluck's *Orpheus* (Orpheus' "Aria in F"). As he sight-read the score, he realized that he could literally hear the music he was reading.⁵ He entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1919 at the precocious age of eleven, studying harmony, counterpoint, and fugue under the brothers Jean and Noël Gallon; composition and orchestration under Paul Dukás; music history under Maurice Emmanuel, from whom he gained an enthusiasm for Greek and Hindu modes; and organ under Marcel Duprè, who encouraged his penchant for improvisation.⁶ After graduating from the Conservatoire, he became the church organist at the church of La Trinité in Paris, a post which he held for more than 40 years. In 1936 he began teaching at the École Normale de Musique and the Schola Cantorum, and during this decade he composed a number of organ works, preludes in the style of Debussy, and two song cycles in celebration of his marriage to Claire Delbos (in 1932) and the birth of their son, Pascal.

One gift that he apparently owed to neither the Conservatoire nor his parents was his Roman Catholic faith. In his own words, "I have the good fortune to be a Catholic. I was born a believer, and the Scriptures impressed me even as a child. The illumination of the theological truths of the Catholic faith is the first aspect of my work, the noblest, and no doubt the most useful and most valuable—perhaps the only one I won't regret at the hour of my death."⁷ Messiaen's Catholic faith was at the heart of his world, both spiritually and

musically. It guided his life, ignited his inspiration, and formed the theological and liturgical subject matter for nearly half of his published compositions. It also gave him the unshakeable inner strength that enabled him to transcend the wretched conditions of the prisoner-of-war camp where he was interred in 1940 and 1941. In personal testimony to Messiaen's faith, the violinist of the Quartet described him many years later with these words: "I fully confess that it's the mystery of this man that I still carry with me. But that's what is so attractive about Messiaen. He was elusive, a man who lived in his own personal sphere. And that's why I admired him."⁸ While his fellow prisoners were often depressed and demoralized by their captivity, Messiaen retained his faith with the proverbial peace that passes understanding, often serving as a sort of camp counselor between rehearsals and composition. And on Sunday, recalls his cellist, "'Messiaen was invisible.' On that day the composer was to be found praying in the camp chapel."⁹

Messiaen particularly loved the Revelation of Saint John the Divine in the New Testament, in which angelic messengers foretell the apocalyptic future destruction of the world and its subsequent redemption and restoration by Christ Himself. It is an intensely visual book, evoking images of supernatural creatures from the upper and underworlds, global and astronomical cataclysms, colorful visions of thrones, rainbows, celestial seas, precious stones and a three-dimensional heavenly city. Messiaen's vivid imagination was captivated by this awesome and enchanting prophecy, and thus the image of the great angel announcing "the end of time" (Revelation 10: 1-7) became the direct scriptural inspiration for his *Quartet for the End of Time*. This passage, which opens the preface to the published score of the Quartet, reads as follows:

"Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring; when he called out, the seven thunders sounded... And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that *there should be no more delay (Time)* [italics mine], but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as He announced to His servants the prophets, should be fulfilled."¹⁰

Though the quotation appears in many versions of the New Testament as "there will be no more delay," Messiaen was emphatic about the translation and meaning of this phrase. In his words, "That's not it. [It's] 'there will be no more Time' with a capital 'T'; that is to say, there will be no more space, there will be no more time. One leaves the human dimension with cycles and destiny to rejoin eternity. So, I finally wrote this quartet dedicating it to this angel who declared the end of Time."¹¹ Indeed, in the original Greek language in which the New Testament was written, the phrase in this passage reads: *ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται* which translates "that time no longer shall be."¹² The transliteration of the critical word is "chronos" (second word of the Greek phrase), meaning "time," from which the English word "chronological" derives. This phrase in the Latin New Testament, to which the Catholic Church would refer, reads: *Quia tempus non erit amplius* which translates "that time will not be any

longer.”¹³ The operative word here is “tempus,” meaning “time.” So Messiaen interpreted the scriptures accurately, and he took the prophecy of the end of time literally.

What, then, is Time? And how did it begin? The answer to this question diverts us to a brief astronomical time-out. In the wake of Einstein’s general theory of relativity, twentieth-century cosmological and astrophysical discoveries have confirmed that we live in an inflationary universe—that is, a universe that is expanding outward. The unavoidable implication of this is that, if time is theoretically run backward, the universe had a beginning. Astrophysicist and theologian Hugh Ross, Ph.D., extrapolates:

This space-time theorem (The Inflationary Big Bang) tells us that the four dimensions of length, width, height, and time in which we live have existed only for as long as the universe has been expanding, less than about twenty billion years. Time really does have a beginning. *By definition, time is that dimension in which cause-and-effect phenomena take place* [italics mine]. No time, no cause and effect. If time’s beginning is concurrent with the beginning of the universe, as the space-time theorem says, then the cause of the universe must be some entity operating in a time dimension completely independent of, and preexistent to, the time dimension of the cosmos.¹⁴

Ross then reasons that a transcendent Creator must be responsible for the existence of the universe, and hence, of time itself. This is consistent with Messiaen’s belief in the God of the Bible, and with the logical conclusion that a Creator who has the power to bring matter, energy, space, and time into existence can also bring those entities to an end. Though perhaps more in the realm of faith than astrophysics, it was this awesome realization—with all of its redemptive, judicial, and eternal associations—that absorbed Messiaen for those long days in Stalag VIIIA.

Though he was a passionate reader of the latest textbooks on physics and astronomy and spoke of the dances of planets and atoms in the prison camp, his medium of expression was music, not calculations and theoretical astrophysics.¹⁵ As a musician-theologian, Messiaen concerned himself with time-related themes that hinged on the meeting of the divine and the human (in the life of Christ, in the continuing presence of Christ in the Eucharist, in the celestial life intended for humanity), and therefore on the meeting of the eternal and the temporal. He focused on the glories of the life to come, on the nature of resurrected existence, and on the pronouncements of angels and on the heavenly city.¹⁶ Messiaen reveals this focus in the titles and descriptions he gave to the eight movements of the *Quartet for the End of Time*. He chose the number eight deliberately, stating in his preface to the score, “Seven is the perfect number, the Creation in six days sanctified by the divine Sabbath; the seventh day of this repose extends into eternity and becomes the eighth day of eternal light, unalterable peace.”¹⁷

Movement I: Crystal Liturgy (the sound of a blackbird and nightingale awakening in the early morning darkness, surrounded by a halo of harmonics lost high up in the trees; transposed to a religious plane, it is the harmonious silence of heaven)

Movement II: Vocalize, for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time (in three sections, evoking the power of the mighty angel and the impalpable harmonies of heaven)

Movement III: Abyss of the Birds (for unaccompanied clarinet; the abyss is Time,

Movement IV: Interlude (scherzo in a more outgoing character than other movements related to them by melodic "recalls")

Movement VI: Dance of Fury, for the Seven Trumpets (the four instruments effect
hm of gongs and the trumpets of the Apocalypse)

Movement VIII: Praise to the Immortality of Jesus (addressing the immortally resur-
esus who imparts his life to us; the ascension of man toward his Lord, of the son of
ward his Father, of deified Man toward Paradise)¹⁸

From the first measure to the last, the piano part of Movement I (Crystal Liturgy) incorporates a *rhythmic ostinato*, which functions autonomously of the rhythms being played by the violin, clarinet, and cello. This ostinato is based on the following rhythmic fragment, which Messiaen describes in the preface to his score:



'lackskîca'

Tâla 1

This piano ostinato consists of a repetition of the 17 note-values of Tâla 1, shown above (a *tâla* is an Indian composite rhythmic pattern) combined with a sequence of 29 chords so that the two overlap throughout the movement. In this case, the *tâla* consists of the three Sharngadeva rhythms called 'râgavardhana,' 'candralâlâ,' and 'lackskîça.' A particular feature of these rhythms is their ametrical character. Rather than arising from a division of time (as in

Western classical music), rhythm in this sense arises from an extension of durations in time.²¹

Over the course of the movement, this rhythmic ostinato repeats ten times successively (but could potentially repeat endlessly), traversing four and one-third measures per repetition. The time signature for the movement is three-four, but as if to conceal the beginning and ending of each repetition—and thus convey a sense of infinity by “endless loop”—there is no regularity to the count on which each ostinato begins; it begins variously on beats one, two, or three. Although the time signature is three-four, the triple meter is scarcely felt; bar lines are indistinguishable through this ostinato, which presses calmly and relentlessly onward as it develops harmonically, always independent of the other instruments. One cycle of this rhythmic ostinato can be seen in the opening five measures, indicated by brackets, of “Crystal Liturgy”:



A second technique which Messiaen employs to convey “the end of time,” is an *extremely slow tempo* in Movements V and VIII. Movement V is a cello solo with piano accompaniment, and Movement VIII is a violin solo. The tempo marking for the cello solo is “Infiniment lent, extatique”—infinitely slow, with ecstasy (metronome marking for sixteenth note is 44). The tempo indicated for the violin solo is even slower, “Extrêmement lent et tendre, extatique”—extremely slow and tender, with ecstasy (metronome marking is 36). This presented technical challenges for the instrumentalists. In the words of cellist Étienne Pasquier, “[Messiaen] wanted it very slow. Even a slowness that verges on the impossible. So, I would debate with him, because you cannot manage to sustain the bow at that tempo. ‘But yes, you’re doing it,’ he would insist.”²² The violinist, Jean Le Boulaire, also remembers Messiaen’s insistence on the “inhumanly slow” tempo in order to establish the atmosphere of the great beyond being conveyed by the movement’s title, ‘Praise to the Immortality of Jesus.’ In spite of the technical challenge, Le Boulaire recalls, “This slowness is not annoying. On the contrary, I have the impression that this world that we don’t know must be, in effect, something rhythmic but extremely calm, calm, calm. It’s a sort of superiority to silence. What I find beautiful is this musical silence. One has already left the earth at this moment ...

He spoke often of elevation, of ascending ... His music wasn't about instrumentation; it was about something far beyond that. That's where the great genius of Messiaen lies."²³

The excerpt below is from the opening measures of the cello solo in Movement V, "Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus." Here the composer uses the languidly slow and sustained melody in the cello part against the slow harmonic pedal in the piano to suspend the expectation of linear musical progress. Time, as Messiaen intended, seems to stand still under the weight of the slow, intense, sacred lines of the cello.

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Violoncelle (Cello) and Piano. The Violoncelle part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with the tempo and mood markings "Infiniment lent, extatique" and "P (majestueux, recueilli, très expressif)". The Piano part is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp. It is marked "Infiniment lent, extatique (♩ = 44 env.)" and "(4) P". The piano part features a slow, sustained harmonic pedal. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial measures, and the second system continues the music. The Violoncelle part has a melodic line with some rests, while the Piano part provides a continuous harmonic foundation.

A third device that Messiaen uses involves *sudden interruptions*, i.e. contrasts in pitch, rhythm, and tempo. Movement III, "Abyss of the Birds," is written entirely for unaccompanied clarinet. This versatile instrument alternately expresses the "abyss," (a metaphor for gloomy, dreary Time) and "the birds" (a metaphor for our desire for light, stars, the things of heaven, and the opposite of Time). Asterisks denote sudden motions from the sound of the abyss to the sound of birds singing:

*** Lent, expressif et triste** ($\text{♩} = 44 \text{ env.}$)

Clarinette en Si \flat

p (désolé)

ppp

Sans presser, * Presque vif, gai, capricieux ($\text{♩} = 126 \text{ env.}$)

progressif et puissant

ppp cresc. molto ffff

f (ensoleillé, comme un oiseau, très libre de mouvt)

Pressez
brillant

Lent ($\text{♩} = 44 \text{ env.}$)

*** Presque vif** ($\text{♩} = 126 \text{ env.}$)

Sans presser, progressif et puissant

ppp cresc. molto ffff

The slow sections of this movement (marked *Lent*) are suggestive of the abyss, while the lively sections (marked *Presque*) represent the birds. Messiaen made special note to his clarinetist concerning the long sustained *crescendo molto* to an excruciating *fortissimo* at the end of the slow sections. A later clarinetist, under Messiaen's supervision, remarked that "these notes are symbolic of eternity, but eternity in all of its horror—in the abyss."²⁴ Contrasted with this hellish symbol, the birds sing in free flight above the abyss. Messiaen had a lifelong fascination with birdsong, and the *Quartet for the End of Time* became one of his first works to prominently feature birdsong. In his own words, "If you want symbols ... the bird is the symbol of freedom. We walk, he flies. We make war, he sings ... I doubt that one can find in any human music, however inspired, melodies and rhythms that have the sovereign freedom of birdsong."²⁵ When the Quartet premiered in that abysmal prison on a cold January evening in 1941, Messiaen transcended time and misery, making music like a bird instead of war like men.

Of the rhythmic devices which Messiaen employed to create the musical “cessation of time,” perhaps the last of these four is the most clever and original. “By altering rhythms, through such techniques as augmentation, diminution, and the ‘added value’ ... Messiaen created one of his trademarks: ‘*nonretrogradable rhythms*’—musical palindromes—a grouping of values which read identically from left to right or from right to left, that is to say, which present exactly the same successive order of values, read in either direction.”²⁶ Taken together, the rhythms form a continuous chain in which there is no true beginning or end to this rhythm. In Movement VI (Dance of Fury), which features extended passages of extremely rapid unison playing for all instruments of the Quartet, these nonretrogradable rhythms feature prominently. The following schematic from Messiaen’s preface to the Quartet’s score shows a theoretical measure, in which the middle note (+) indicates the central common value by which two groups of retrograde are related to each other. Using this device from measure to measure, as shown in the schematic and the excerpt from the score, creates a series of nonretrogradable rhythms:



Succession de rythmes non rétrogradables (chaque mesure contenant un de ces rythmes) :



The image displays a musical score excerpt from Movement VI of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. The score is for four instruments: Violon (Vn.), Clarinet (Clar.), Violoncelle (Vclle), and Piano. The top system shows the beginning of a section marked "Au mouvt" (Allegretto) with dynamics "pp (lointain)" and "cresc. molto". A bracket groups the first five measures, which are marked with an asterisk and a box containing the letter "F". The bottom system continues the music with similar dynamics and markings. The score is written in G major and 4/4 time.

In the excerpt above from Movement VI, the five measures following Letter F (*) illustrate Messiaen's use of nonretrogradable rhythms in all four instrumental parts.

Thus Messiaen reveals his true focus in the *Quartet for the End of Time*. The theological symbolism of the timelessness of eternity (from his Catholic faith) and the composer's desire for the end of musical time (based on the equal durational divisions of classical music) informed the structure, rhythms, and harmonies of the Quartet.

The instrumentation for the Quartet was naturally dictated by what he had available in the camp, which Messiaen may also have owed to the hand of Providence. The three musicians who premiered the Quartet with Messiaen came from prior professional careers. Jean Le Boulaire, the violinist, had studied the violin at the Paris Conservatoire before his military conscription in 1934. Étienne Pasquier, the cellist, was, like Messiaen, a child prodigy and a graduate of the Paris Conservatoire. For the nine years prior to his military duty in 1939, Pasquier was assistant principal cellist of the Paris Opera Orchestra, a position he resumed after his release from prison in 1941. Along with his two brothers Jean and Pierre, Étienne was member of the Trio Pasquier, whose performance career would ultimately span 47 years. Henri Akoka, the clarinetist and the only Jewish member of the quartet, was raised in a musi-

cal family, attended the Paris Conservatoire, and was a member of the Paris-based Orchestre National de la Radio when he was mobilized for military service in 1939.

The four musicians met during the course of their captivity, first at a field in Nancy near Verdun, and then in Görlitz at Stalag VIIIA, where most of the movements of the Quartet were composed. Messiaen and Pasquier were released together from Stalag VIIIA less than one month after the January 1941 premiere of the Quartet, and Akoka escaped three months later (clarinet under his arm) in a dramatic leap from a convoy train loaded with prisoners. Messiaen took a professorship at the Paris Conservatoire within months of his release, Pasquier resumed his position with the Paris Opera Orchestra, and Akoka made his way back to Marseilles to play again with the Orchestre National de la Radio. Le Boulair continued in captivity until his release in December 1941, after which he pursued an acting career in theater, film, and television.²⁷ The original four members of the quartet were never to play again together after that now-famous prison premiere.

The war, however, was not finished with its effects on Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Hitler's military machine had made hasty work of Europe after invading Poland on 1 September 1939. In May 1940, Germany launched a blitzkrieg against Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. That same month, France surrendered, and an armistice was signed on 25 June 1940. The terms of this armistice established a German-occupied zone in the northern two-thirds of France, including the Atlantic coast. The southern and Mediterranean area of France became the Free Zone, with the capital of the French government located in Vichy. According to the terms of the armistice, France was forced to aid German authorities, i.e. to "collaborate" in exercising the rights of an occupying power in the Occupied Zone.²⁸ The German army had captured nearly two million French soldiers in the 1940 invasion (including Messiaen and his comrades), and Germany was determined to detain them as hostages to French collaboration for as long as possible.²⁹ Of the 1.58 million taken to German prison camps in the fall of 1940, the Vichy government succeeded in negotiating the release of only 222,841 soldiers; close to one million would remain in captivity as late as December 1944.³⁰

In its otherwise futile efforts to negotiate with the Third Reich, the Vichy government lobbied for the release of some prominent artists and musicians as a symbol of progress. Messiaen and Pasquier, due to their fame prior to captivity, were among those repatriated fairly quickly. Both of them chose to return to Paris, in the German-occupied northern zone of France. Messiaen's return received publicity with the first Paris premiere of the *Quartet for the End of Time* on 24 June 1941 at the Théâtre des Mathurins, with Pasquier's brother Jean on violin and André Vacellier on clarinet. The premiere aired the next day in a national radio broadcast featuring the music of Messiaen and three other French composers who had been killed or captured in the invasion. The Quartet dominated the reviews of the event that appeared in the following weeks, but the critics scarcely mentioned Messiaen's captivity.³¹ As he had done with the Quartet's premiere in the prison camp, Messiaen had prefaced each movement with his commentary on its theological symbolism, and the wartime critics apparently picked up on Messiaen's detachment from his prison circumstances in the composition of the Quartet. For the remainder of the war years, concert organizers in France ignored the *Quartet for the End of Time* when they were looking for music written in captivity.

The Vichy government, through its Diplomatic Service for Prisoners of War, actively promoted the creative work done by many French soldier-musicians during their imprison-

ment as a means of demonstrating Vichy's "success" in negotiating for their release, or at least for better conditions in the camps. Many well-known French composers, such as Maurice Thiriet, Henri Challan, and Émile Damais, had their wartime compositions prominently featured in Paris concerts. Even the music of little-known amateur composers was featured and performed when their music expressed the grief, pain, and tedium of exile.³²

Perhaps the most popular of all French modernist works written as testimonials to the war was André Jolivet's *Trois complaints du soldat*, I: "La complainte du soldat vaincu." This "Lament of the Defeated Soldier" was a song cycle published after the defeat of Jolivet's own battalion by the German army at the Bridge of Gien. Unlike Messiaen, Jolivet combined the music with a baritone voice narrating the text of his grim story, which moves from the depths of defeat and despair to revelations of hope and confidence in "divine truth through the splendors of nature."³³ In the second song of the cycle, "The Lament of the Bridge at Gien," Jolivet tells the tale of the soldier escaped from the ruins of the defeat, returning to his devastated home town. The piece achieved immediate success and wide exposure through national broadcasts and a commercial recording, "due in large part to the act of identification with the soldier that Jolivet requested of his audience."³⁴

In the dark years of the German occupation in France, Jolivet's *Trois complaints* was widely assumed to emerge as "the most significant musical legacy of the war," in spite of its edgy modernist style, because it inspired the kind of determined resistance that the French people needed during the German occupation.³⁵ By contrast, Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* left its listeners not only baffled by its musical abstraction to the images in Revelation, but also alienated by Messiaen's reading of the biblical commentary which he had prepared for its premiere in the camp. Critics spent their time debating the allusions of the narrative to the symbolism conveyed through the music. While some, such as Arthur Honegger, acknowledged Messiaen's sincerity in providing his textual commentary to aid the audience in understanding the Quartet, other influential critics were less charitable. The Paris audience itself was confused; "caught up in their struggle to relate the Quartet to the symbolism of Revelation, [they] completely ignored the possibility that the Quartet bore traces of Messiaen's captivity."³⁶ The Vichy government, in spite of Messiaen's affirmations that the Quartet was written in captivity and that it was one of his best works, ignored his pleas to program the Quartet. The only public rehearing of the Quartet in occupied Paris took place one month after the premiere, on 18 July 1941, as an encore performance of the fifth movement for cello and piano by Messiaen and Pasquier. And this was not through the propaganda arm of the Vichy government, but through Messiaen's connections to Le Jeune France, a group of progressive musicians with whom Messiaen had collaborated before the war.³⁷

And yet, in spite of the lack of attention that it received during—and for some time after - World War II, Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* has withstood the test of time. While many popular compositions by Messiaen's contemporaries have been forgotten or discarded as too literal a representation of the horrors of war, the Quartet is widely known today as a symbol of triumph and transcendence in wartime conditions. Why this, in spite of Messiaen's stated inspiration from his Catholic theology and modernist musical style, and in spite of the Vichy government's indifference to the piece in the 1940s?

We may owe the explanation largely to Messiaen's biographers, according to musicologist Leslie Sprout.³⁸ Messiaen had a strong emotional attachment to his *Quartet for the End of Time*. His frustration with postwar criticism and neglect of the Quartet, and perhaps

also with a belated first recording of the Quartet in 1957, may have accounted for the way in which he vividly described the conditions of his imprisonment in the 1958 interview with André Goléa.³⁹ Apparently the prison association took hold and gave the Quartet new impetus. Sprout lists the biographers who have since referenced Messiaen's interview with Goléa, thus perpetuating the prison associations. These biographers include Robert Sherlaw Johnson, Paul Griffiths, Roger Nichols, Harry Halbreich, and others.⁴⁰ Several of Messiaen's own exaggerations, later corrected in Rebecca Rischin's 2003 book-length study of the Quartet, were also perpetuated through the interview with Goléa. These include the three-stringed cello myth (Pasquier confirmed that it had four), the unrealistic size of the audience in the barrack (it was probably 400-500 at most), and the idealized way in which his audience supposedly received and understood the work (responses ranged from confusion to rapture). Ironically, then, Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* may owe its long-term popularity—at least in part—to the prison associations that Messiaen did *not* intend, and to some circumstantial exaggerations that made for a better story.

In summary, the true inspiration for Olivier Messiaen's *Quatour pour la fin du Temps* derived from his Catholic faith and, in particular, from his fascination with prophetic heavenly visions from the Book of Revelation. The conditions of his imprisonment may have imbued the Quartet with heightened personal conviction and hope, and undoubtedly they contribute to the listener's awe and appreciation for this monumental accomplishment. However, in Messiaen's mind, the work was only obliquely related to the war. If the title had a double entendre, it revolved around the end of dimensional time as proclaimed by the angel in Revelation and the end of classical divisions of time as commonly used in music. Perhaps the very act of creativity brought yet another meaning to the end of time. Absorbed in the visual, spatial, auditory, and nonlinear world of composition, Messiaen was probably less aware of the passage of time than his fellow prisoners. As he would later admit, "I composed this quartet in order to escape from the snow, from the war, from captivity, and from myself. The greatest benefit I gained from it is that among three hundred thousand prisoners [*sic*], I was probably the only one who was free."⁴¹ And although the Vichy government in occupied France ignored this great wartime masterpiece, largely because the composer's stated inspiration had nothing useful to say for Vichy's propaganda purposes, the Quartet has stood the test of time. It has become famous because the music is so beautiful, because it is a revelation, and because it is the outpouring of a musician who truly believed in the message of his work: Some day, we will be living in the mystery of eternity, and there will be no more Time.

Notes

- 1 Antoine Goléa, *Rencontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris: René Juilliard, 1960), 63.
- 2 Karl Paulnack, "Why Music Matters." Welcome Address to the Boston Conservatory Freshman Class, September 2004. www.greenroom.fromthetop.org/2009/03/11/karl-paulnack-to-the-boston-conservatory-freshman-class/.
- 3 Leslie A. Sprout, "Messiaen, Jolivet, and the Soldier-Composers of Wartime France," *The Musical Quarterly* 87 (2005): 264-5.
- 4 *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Messiaen, Olivier" (by Paul Griffiths), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/> (accessed February 21, 2012).
- 5 "The Crystal Liturgy: A Portrait of Olivier Messiaen," DVD, directed by Olivier Mille (France: Artline Films, 2002).
- 6 *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Messiaen, Olivier."
- 7 Rebecca Rischin, *For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 49.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Jesus Christ, *The Revelation to John, The Navarre Bible, Revised Standard Version* (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2005), 71-2.
- 11 Rischin, *For the End of Time*, 51.
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No Ultimatums Necessary: Defending Diverse Poetry >>> Beth Gier

The proper form and purpose that poetry should have is under constant debate in the literary world. Debates and viewpoints on poetry arise in the form of defenses of poetry, an esteemed essay form utilized by some of the greatest scholars and poets to convey their poetical opinions. Although the nature of determining what constitutes as “good” or “proper” poetry is extremely subjective in nature, there are still attempts to define poetry and limit it to a specific use. Often the arguments in poetry defenses discuss the tone that poetry should take—whether it should take on a more serious, educational, or comical tone—and the inability of a poem to encompass more than one of these different tones at once. Discussion also arises about the purpose that poetry serves. There are some readers and poets that believe that poetry needs to arouse some sort of action in its audience, while others believe that poetry needs only to exist for the sake of beauty or simply for the fact of its creation. But poetry is a vast and expansive form of literature and to force it to adhere to opposing viewpoints like those mentioned above does it a disservice and requires readers to take sides rather than enjoy poetry in whatever form it takes. This defense of poetry will not issue an ultimatum to readers that poetry will become meaningless if they do not engage with a singular form of poetry. Rather, this defense includes passages from the defenses of poetry by poets such as Percy Shelley, Sir Philip Sidney, and Wordsworth, as well as analysis of poems by Wendy Cope, Emily Dickinson, and W.B. Yeats to prove that poetry can simultaneously fulfill many goals within the context of two objectives. First, this defense will examine the various tones of poetry and its ability to function as a serious, educational, or delightful tool containing multiple tones at once. Second, the defense will explore the purpose of poetry and the claim that its aim is to move a people to action and redress the wounds of the world.

Over the span of its history, poetry has come to be looked upon as more of a teaching mechanism rather than an exhibition of language mastery. According to Dana Gioia, educational “institutions have changed the social and economic identity of the poet from artist to educator. In social terms the identification of poet with teacher is now complete” (n.p.). Gioia believes that the reader now identifies the poet more as a teacher than a writer or more of an advice-giver rather than someone who creates vivid images simply for the pleasure of creating those images. However, one may question why there is or should be a separation between a poem that is beautiful and a poem that teaches a lesson. Sir Philip Sidney believes that poets “imitate to teach and delight, and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be” (484). The job of a poet is not only to teach but to delight while being entirely original and prescient. Readers may devise satisfaction from poems that simply teach or poems that are meant only to delight, but there is no reason that a poem cannot perform both functions. Wordsworth corroborates Sidney’s thoughts when he writes that “the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time...Poetry is the first and last of

all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man” (271). Poetry should serve the dual purpose to both impart knowledge to and engender emotion within a reader. One should not have to choose between being delighted and being taught.

Contemporary British poet Wendy Cope is an example of a poet who manages to both edify and charm a reader with her poem titled “An Anniversary Poem.” A female member of St. Paul’s cathedral commissioned the poem to celebrate the “10th anniversary of the first women priests in the Church of England in February 1994” (Cope 75). While Cope instills the poem with her trademark sarcastic sense of humor, she sends a message to the reader about the unequal treatment of women in the church. Cope wastes no time bombarding the reader with a caustic sense of humor when she writes in the first two lines for “good Christian men and women, let us raise a joyful shout:/The C of E is treating us as equals. Just about” (1-2). She opens with sarcasm that could make anyone snicker when she asks good Christian people to celebrate the fact that women have only been allowed to hold high positions in a church for the last ten years, but even then, women do not have the same opportunities to advance as men. Despite the long and lustrous history of the Church of England, women have only recently been recognized but not entirely. Cope elaborates more on why the Church of England nearly treats women as equals when she writes: “Sister, fetch the fatted calf, and we’ll prepare a feast:/You can’t become a bishop but you can become a priest” (3-4). Women are “just about” treated as equals because the church still bars them from achieving the rank of bishop. Cope uses her blatant sarcasm to criticize the hypocrisy in the Church of England, and at the same time, she enlightens the reader to the struggles of women in the Catholic faith. With “An Anniversary Poem,” Cope delights any reader who appreciates caustic or mocking humor while also explaining to him or her the plight of women in the Catholic Church.

Yet if it is rare to find a reader who believes that a poem can both educate and delight, it is equally rare to find someone who believes that a poem can be serious as well as delightful and teach a lesson. A poem does not necessarily have to incorporate humor to entertain a reader, or to satisfy the dual criteria to teach and delight that Wordsworth and Sidney define. In her poem “I fear a Man of frugal Speech,” Emily Dickinson takes on quite a serious tone while simultaneously delighting the reader with mastery over language and cautioning to be suspicious of quiet men. Dickinson does not show any of the sarcasm that Cope employs when she writes: “I fear a Man of frugal Speech—/I fear a Silent Man—” (1-2). She is cautious and afraid of the kind of man who does not speak, and Dickinson emphasizes that fear by capitalizing the words “Man,” “Speech,” and “Silent.” Dickinson warns the reader that the Silent Man is an entity to be feared when she capitalizes and draws attention to the words that characterize his entire being. One can just as easily be delighted by the detail that Dickinson shows in creating a suspicious character like the Silent Man as one is by Cope’s use of caustic humor. Dickinson further delights the reader who appreciates clever word play when she elaborates on the reasons why she fears the Silent Man. The poem concludes with the lines:

But He who weigheth—While the Rest—
Expend their furthest pound—
Of this Man—I am wary—
I fear that He is Grand— (4-8)

Dickinson continues to impress readers with her expertise when she creates clever word play between “weigheth” and “pound.” While other men share their opinions and expertise,

the man who weighs their comments is the most dangerous because he is the man who passes judgment upon the rest. Judgment is a frightening concept and Dickinson reinforces her lesson to be cautious of the Silent Man when she writes that she fears the man could be “Grand.” By saying that the man is grand, Dickinson implies that he is of better ilk or higher status than she is and he will pass judgment on her like he passes judgment on the men he listens to. But the combination of Grandness and his tendency to listen and pass judgment also suggests that the Silent Man has a God-like quality about him. Dickinson warns the reader of this kind of Silent Man through elaborate word play, and the implications that she writes about the Silent Man—the Grandness and judgment—teach the reader to be cautious. While Cope succeeds in educating through humor, Dickinson educates through serious but well-designed warning, proving that poetry can both teach and delight whether a poem has serious or humorous qualities.

In addition to teaching and delighting readers, many people believe that the purpose of poetry is to shock people to action to repair or address world issues. In his Nobel acceptance speech, contemporary Irish poet Seamus Heaney explains that “there are times when a deeper need enters, when we want the poem to be not only pleurably right but compellingly wise, not only a surprising variation played upon the world, but a re-tuning of the world itself.” Heaney’s sentiments echo those of Sidney and Wordsworth when he talks about the “deeper need” for a poem to “be not only pleurably right but compellingly wise” but to “re-tune” the world. Clearly, Heaney agrees that a poem should both be enjoyable and edifying and that the job of the poet is to take into consideration “what may be and should be” (Sidney 484). But Heaney expands the purpose of poetry to act as defibrillator. Heaney states in his speech that he believes that “we want the surprise to be transitive like the impatient thump which unexpectedly restores the picture to the television set, or the electric shock which sets the fibrillating heart back to its proper rhythm.” While the comparison between poetry and pounding the television to receive a better signal is humorous, the image of shocking the heart back to life is completely relevant to poetry that aims to restore the emotions of an unfeeling public or revitalize activists who have grown sluggish. In his defense of poetry, Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley claims that “men, even in the infancy of society, observe a certain order in their words and actions, distinct from that of the objects and the impressions represented by them, all expression being subject to the laws of that from which it proceeds” (839). Readers develop a subjective interpretation whenever they read a poem separate from what the author may have intended. Poetry should encourage readers to meditate and act on their interpretations. Expanding upon teaching, delighting, and acting, Sidney believes that good poetry will “delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed...” (Sidney 484). Beyond entertaining the reader and leaving him or her with a good moral message, a poem that delights and educates will also spark a reaction within a reader. A poem should “move men to take that goodness in hand”—it should motivate them towards a reaction (Sidney 484).

W.B. Yeats was a poet with the ability to shock people into a reaction. Usually a man of romantic or supernatural topics, Yeats changed course from his common themes to comment on the political turmoil before and during the events leading to the Irish Civil War. In his initial poems discussing violent protest, Yeats clearly displays his pacifist leanings. One of

Yeats' most famous poems "No Second Troy" harshly reprimands Maud Gonne, the woman that Yeats pined after nearly his entire life and usually a favorable subject in his poems, for her radical political beliefs and her support of violent protest. Yeats begins the poems with an accusation veiled as a question when he asks, "Why should I blame her that she filled my days/With misery, or that she would of late/Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways" (1-3). Yeats is not actually asking whether or not he should blame Gonne because it is clear that he already blames her. He is asking for a reason to blame Gonne, not debating whether he should place the blame on her. Yeats also uses strong and inflammatory words such as "ignorant" and "violent." He accuses Gonne and her followers of being ignorant and unquestioning in an effort to discourage violent rioting. A supporter of Gonne's would pause to question his or her political stance if one of the best poets in the world is accusing them of being ignorant. Even if Yeats was not one of the most famous poets during that time period, accusing any political group of being ignorant will cause people to stop and deliberate the group's actions or motives. While Yeats may not be inciting people to action, he is still causing a reaction—the reaction to stop and think.

Yeats continues to discourage political radicalism in "No Second Troy" when he belittlingly asks, "What could have made her [Gonne] peaceful with a mind/that nobleness made simple as a fire" (6-7). Yeats accuses Gonne of becoming dangerously obsessed with radical politics. She is so engrossed by her political beliefs that her mind is as simple and elementary as fire, and she does not realize that she has the capacity to do considerable damage with her power. Her beliefs have the destructive capability of fire. Nothing could possibly douse the burning in Gonne's mind now that she has succumbed to her radicalism; Yeats' incendiary reprimand proves to be a warning for people who have not yet begun to blindly follow Gonne's path to choose a more pacifistic route to freedom lest they become simple-minded with obsession. Yeats' delivers a final, fiery blow to stop Gonne supporters in their tracks when he ends the poem with the lines: "Why, what could she have done, being what she is?/ Was there another Troy for her to burn?" (11-12). Yeats draws a comparison between Gonne and Helen of Troy, the woman whose beauty was so captivating that it caused the Trojan War and the destruction of Troy. Yeats threatens that Gonne's beauty will lead to the destruction of Ireland. Yet by asking what else Gonne could have done, Yeats implies that with her beauty, it was inevitable for Gonne to choose her radical beliefs. But the connections to the destructive potential of fire and the popular mythological tale of Helen of Troy, Yeats aims to instill in the reader the kind of deliberate questioning that so many of Gonne's supporters failed to do. His angry words also cause readers to pause with shock because it is so uncharacteristic for Yeats to speak angrily about Gonne let alone insinuate that her mind has grown simple with obsession. If even Yeats admonishes Gonne, then the severity and anger behind his words have the ability to shock the public into a reaction after hearing years of nothing but tenderness and devotion to her. The sheer accusatory and admonishing tone within his carefully chosen words elicits a reaction from his readers and causes them to rethink their devotion to Gonne's brand of violent politics.

While Yeats was known to discourage violent protest, as seen in "No Second Troy," he was equally capable of inciting the Irish people to the opposite kind of reaction. Once the first Irish blood was shed in 1916, Yeats briefly abandoned his staunch pacifist ways and wrote poems that could rally the country into protest and perhaps even encouraged the kind of radical behavior he had previously admonished. Yeats addresses his sudden switch to

rebel rousing poetry in his poem “Easter, 1916” when he writes that “all changed, changed utterly:/A terrible beauty is born” (15-16). Whether or not Yeats supported Gonne’s call for violence does not matter now that men have died in the name of Ireland. Everything about the country has changed and with it Yeats. He even changes his view about Gonne’s radical politics which he so clearly admonishes in “No Second Troy.” Yeats writes that the “woman’s days were spent/In ignorant good-will” (17-18). He obviously still believes that Gonne was ignorant or unwise in her political choices, but now he claims that her actions were grounded in good-will. In an effort to unify Ireland under oppressive English rule, Yeats is willing to partially exonerate Gonne of political violence. The “terrible beauty” that is born is Ireland’s unity that came from the blood of sixteen men. “Easter, 1916” is a plea to remain united, to preserve that “terrible beauty,” so that the casualties of the Easter uprising did not die in vain.

Yeats’ goal in writing “Easter, 1916” is no longer to prevent radical protest, but to have the Irish people “know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed...” (Sidney 484). He now believes that these men died for a noble cause and writes an ode to commemorate the dead and unify a divided Ireland. Yeats even dedicates a stanza of the poem to John MacBride, Gonne’s abusive and estranged husband. Yeats writes about MacBride:

A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy; (31-37)

Despite his bitter hatred for MacBride, Yeats still honors him in the poem and recognizes the crucial part he played in the uprising. If Yeats’ admonishment of Gonne was shocking enough to incite pause, then Yeats’ endorsement of a man whom he violently hates would be equally shocking. He must truly believe that the uprising falls under Sidney’s noblest good and the Irish people should pursue it, otherwise Yeats would not praise MacBride for his role. Finally, Yeats names some of the other major players as well as MacBride in a powerful declaration that shows his support. The final seven lines read:

I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born. (74-80)

Yeats commits himself to the Irish cause when he recites the men’s names and declares that Ireland is forever changed by these men. He writes a poem extolling the acts of these brave men, and just as halting and shocking as Yeats’ violent reprimands against Gonne in “No Second Troy” is his sudden shift in respect for the men who reacted violently. But Yeats binds himself to the Irish rebellion and his ode to the men who fought and died in the Easter uprising serves to rouse Irish spirit and camaraderie—to rally the Irish people into unity and action against England. Both “No Second Troy” and “Easter, 1916” work as a defibrillator to the

hearts and minds of the public. Yeats seeks two different reactions in the poems, but through his bold and incendiary words he achieves those reactions all the same.

Many people have written poetry defenses stating that poetry has one particular function or purpose, but in doing so they often severely limit what poetry can accomplish. Some debates argue that poetry should be serious, educational, or delightful without there being any combination of these tones at once. But poetry should not be categorized into serious, educational poems, and delightful poems without the possibility of overlapping. Poetry has the capability to both teach and delight simultaneously, and in fact, prestigious poets like Sir Philip Sidney, William Wordsworth, and Seamus Heaney agree that poetry should both teach and delight. Poems are also equally capable of being able to delight and hold serious undertones or educate a reader through humor. Wendy Cope uses extreme sarcasm in "An Anniversary Poem" to mock the sexism that remains in the Church of England. She informs the reader of the issue of inequality in the Catholic Church through her scathing wit. Emily Dickinson on the other hand affects a more serious quality with her poem "I fear a Man of frugal Speech," but through her clever word play and implications of judgment from a Silent Man, she simultaneously impresses the reader with her own brand of melancholic wit while cautioning the reader to remain wary of the man who listens more than he talks. While the tone or function that poetry takes incites great debate, Heaney and Sidney both believe that the true purpose of poetry should be to motivate readers to reaction or elicit an emotional response, regardless of its educational or delightful qualities. Heaney compares poetry that elicits a noticeable reaction to fibrillating the heart. Yeats, a poet who greatly influenced Heaney's work, shocks the reader into a reaction time and again. In "No Second Troy," Yeats reprimands his unrequited love Maud Gonne in an attempt to discourage the public from blindly following her radical form of politics. Yeats uses antagonistic words like "ignorant" to provoke the reader into questioning Gonne's politics. His comparison of Gonne's political obsession to fire and destruction also aims to evoke deliberation in her political supporters, who so blindly follow her bloody ways. Conversely, Yeats' poem "Easter, 1916" looks to provoke the opposite reaction from "No Second Troy." Yeats wants to unify Ireland under the rebel cause, and he praises the men who lost their lives fighting against England's oppressive regime. He even turns Gonne's political obsession into "ignorant good-will" instead of the destructive fire capable of ruining Ireland in "No Second Troy." Although he works to elicit two very different responses, Yeats still manages to provoke significant reactions. Despite debates that argue that poetry must adhere to a specific tone—educational, delightful, or serious—or that it should only exist for the sake of existing, poets like Wendy Cope, Emily Dickinson, and W.B. Yeats prove that poetry is capable of achieving all of these different purposes and encapsulating a wide range of emotions and responses.

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Are Negative Duties Enough? Basic Goods Deficits and the Institutional Approach to Human Rights >>> Beth Dwyer

One-third of all human deaths are due to poverty-related causes, such as starvation, diarrhea, pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, measles and perinatal conditions, all of which could be prevented or cured cheaply through food, safe drinking water, vaccinations, rehydration packs, or medicines. If the developed Western countries had their proportional shares of these deaths, severe poverty would kill some 3,200 Britons and 16,000 Americans *per week*. Each year, 14 times as many US citizens would die of poverty related causes as were lost in the entire Vietnam War.

(Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*)¹

The effects of severe poverty are devastating.² In light of these devastating effects, it is troubling when one considers both the number of people who continue to suffer while living in severe poverty, as well as the number of individuals who—living quite comfortable lives—have the means to help.³ And though it would not take much to end the suffering of these individuals—eradicating severe poverty would require “no more than 1 percent of the global product”—discussions regarding the obligations of those with the means to help, raise substantive philosophical questions.⁴ For instance, do individuals who have the means to help, have an obligation to the global poor? If so, what grounds this obligation? In his book *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Thomas Pogge argues that such obligations are grounded in the human rights of the global poor.⁵ But this raises another, perhaps more significant question. In order for citizens to have this obligation, in what way must affluent nations contribute to the persistence of severe poverty? One might argue that, regardless of how affluent nations contribute to the persistence of severe poverty, affluent nations and their citizens have an obligation to help the poor. With the means to assist, citizens of affluent nations have a human rights based duty to attend to severe poverty. However, this is a contentious approach, as some argue that the human rights of the poor require no such obligations.⁶ Though we may have a moral duty to help the poor, it is not because the poor have a “right” to be helped. In response to this contention, Pogge attempts to provide a less controversial approach and argues that affluent nations have an obligation to the poor because they contribute to the poor’s suffering. He argues that the global order significantly contributes to the persistence of poverty, and thus those who benefit from it - the global affluent - have a duty to assist.

Certainly the debate regarding affluent nations’ duties to the global poor is a significant philosophical disagreement. Practically speaking, however, how much does the disagreement matter? Considering that the alleviation of global poverty is what matters

most, it seems that the difference between the two approaches - with Pogge's appealing to only negative duties, and the other also appealing to positive duties - is insignificant.⁷ If this is true, and if Pogge can successfully prove that citizens of affluent nations are causally responsible for severe poverty, one should accept his approach regardless of which duties it appeals to. However, in this paper I will highlight the difference between the two approaches and suggest that it is in fact rather significant. Basic goods deficits that are not the result of an institutional order, but say a natural disaster, ought to evoke human rights based duties. In so far as Pogge's approach cannot formulate these basic goods deficits in terms of human rights deficits, one ought to prefer a more complete account of human rights. To motivate my argument I will first examine Pogge's institutional approach to human rights, focusing on how he formulates human rights in terms of negative duties. I will then examine how Pogge's account compares with a more robust account of human rights. Specifically, I will examine how each approach might formulate human rights deficits resulting from natural disasters. I will conclude by examining concerns regarding climate change and human rights and the implications such concerns could have for the debate.

Pogge's Institutional Approach to Human Rights

Commonly, human rights accounts formulate human rights as claims against individuals. For example, the right to life is a claim that one not be unjustly killed. On the "common" account then, the right to life is more specifically a claim one has against all other human beings. Human rights accounts that formulate human rights as claims against individuals are known as interactional accounts. Pogge's account is distinct, in that he offers a conception of human rights as claims against *institutions*.⁸

In addition to claims against institutions, Pogge formulates human rights as claims to the secure access to the unspecific means to living a flourishing life. In other words, human rights are claims individuals have to the secure access of "the goods they need to develop and realize a conception of a personally and ethically worthwhile life".⁹ While this might sound complicated, the idea is rather simple. One must imagine what goods/services individuals need in order to live a flourishing life. Given that a personal conception of a worthwhile life is dependent on the individual's psychology (values, desires, personal goals, et cetera), there are goods that are specific to an individual's flourishing. For example, if an individual's personal conception of a flourishing life involves attending live theatrical performances, this individual will require secure access to the means to attend such performances. However, Pogge is not concerned with goods that are specific to each individual's flourishing. Rather, Pogge is concerned with the secure access of goods that are necessary inspecifically, or generally for human flourishing. And though Pogge does not offer us a list of human rights, as say the UDHR aims to, one can expect it will include access to goods such as food, sanitary water, shelter and basic medical care. For this reason, I will from now on refer to the 'inspecific means to flourishing' as simply 'human rights goods', 'basic goods' or 'basic necessities'.

Regarding the human rights of individuals, institutional orders have corresponding human rights based duties. Pogge—in the quest to offer what he calls a "modest proposal"—formulates these duties as negative duties, and grounds them in the basic negative duty not to harm.¹⁰ Because these duties are formulated in terms of the human right to the secure access of basic goods, institutions have a duty not to restrict this access to individuals.¹¹ It must *not act* in ways that make it less likely for individuals' to access the most basic goods. Despite

this seemingly weak standard of human rights, Pogge argues that this is in fact a significant strength of his approach. By formulating severe poverty as a violation of a negative duty, individuals in affluent countries will be more likely to recognize they have a duty to help the victims of severe poverty. That is, Pogge argues that his approach is “morally efficacious,” and that it will result in a greater alleviation of severe poverty than an approach appealing to positive duties. By forgoing the appeal to positive duties, Pogge can also get libertarian thinkers on board, as they cannot deny that severe poverty evokes human rights based duties.¹²

Though Pogge’s approach is not interactional, his approach still places significant demands on individuals. Pogge writes that “human rights ultimately make demands upon citizens” as they are the ones responsible for the organization of the institution.¹³ With regards to human rights claims, individuals have a negative duty not to contribute to an institutional order that restricts an individual’s access to the means to flourishing.¹⁴ According to Pogge: “Human agents are not to collaborate in upholding a coercive institutional order that avoidably restricts the freedom of some so as to render their access to basic necessities insecure without compensating for their collaboration...”¹⁵ If an institutional order restricts access to human rights goods for some group of people, individual citizens share the responsibility for the injustice. And in cases where an institutional order has violated this negative duty, one must make up for the injustice through some positive action. One must either withdraw her support from the institution or work for its reform.

The Implications of Pogge’s Approach on World Poverty

At this point, we have examined what human rights are in Pogge’s approach and the negative duties they impose on institutions and individuals. Now we are in a position to see the implications of Pogge’s approach on world poverty. In the remainder of *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Pogge attempts to show that the global institutional order significantly contributes to the persistence of severe poverty. Because the global institutional order is structured to benefit affluent countries at the expense of poor countries, those who uphold this institutional order share responsibility for the persistence of severe poverty.

To make the case that the global institutional order contributes to the persistence of severe poverty, Pogge examines what he calls the international resource privilege and the international borrowing privilege. He explains that the privilege to sell a country’s natural resources and the privilege to borrow money in the country’s name are privileges all leaders—or “any group controlling a preponderance of the means of coercion”—have.¹⁶ And this is a privilege we respect regardless of how a leader achieves or maintains his power or whether he is concerned with the well-being or flourishing of the citizens. Pogge explains that the wealthy countries’ willingness to respect these privileges has three significant effects on corruption and poverty in impoverished and resource-rich countries. First, it allows leaders to maintain a position of power, even with substantive opposition from citizens. Given leaders have the right to the revenue from the selling of natural resources as well the right to take loans in the country’s name, this provides leaders with a nearly unlimited access to wealth, which they can use to accumulate weapons and maintain strong security forces; thus securing their power. Second, respecting these privileges incentivizes coup attempts and instability in the political sphere. The access to the resources and wealth of a country incentivizes individuals, who have the means to do so, to take the country by force.¹⁷ Finally, it renders poor countries less stable and successful. Corrupt leaders are able to drain the country’s resources

and keep the wealth for themselves; often times leaving citizens nothing while making few investments in poverty eradication programs. And even if a corrupt leader borrows money and leaves the country in debt without having made any investments in economic development, international borrowing agencies still expect the country to pay it back.¹⁸ As Pogge concludes,

The two privileges crucially affect what sorts of persons jostle for political power and then shape national policy in the poor countries, what incentives these persons face, what options they have, and what impact these options would have on the lives of their compatriots. These global factors thereby strongly affect the overall incidence of oppression and poverty and also, through their greater impact on resource-rich countries, international differentials in oppression and poverty.¹⁹

It seems evident to me, given the affluent countries' willingness to respect these privileges despite the effects of doing so, that the global institutional order contributes quite significantly to the persistence of severe poverty.²⁰ The global institutional order contributes to the suffering of millions of people, as the impoverished continue to live with severely restricted access to the most basic of necessities. By contributing to and benefiting from the global institutional order then, we are violating our human rights duty to not restrict individuals' access to the inspecific means to flourishing. As Pogge argues, given our violation of this duty, it is now our duty to reform the global institutional order so as to eradicate severe poverty.

Duties of Beneficence or Duties of Justice?

Despite the apparent strength of Pogge's approach, as I will demonstrate, one will find that his approach cannot make sense of certain large-scale basic goods deficits. It seems to me that there are instances where institutions are not causally responsible for a basic goods deficit, yet this deficit ought to evoke human rights claims. Here, I will motivate this claim and argue that his approach cannot formulate these deficits in terms of human rights deficits. And insofar as his approach cannot include such large-scale deficits, it gives one reason to prefer a stronger account of human rights.

Imagine that you are an American living in Southern California. One morning you and your family wake up to your entire house violently shaking; pieces of furniture are on the opposite side of the room and nearly everything hanging on the walls is now smashing into the ground. Having lived in California for several years you have experienced your fair share of earthquakes. Fortunately, because emergency response is prompt and well-organized, you have never found yourself having to live without access to basic goods. However, as you and others around the country soon realize, the devastating effects are far from ordinary. With a magnitude of 8.5, this earthquake is much worse than any you have experienced before. Most areas within a hundred miles are heavily affected, leaving you and other residents without adequate access to clean water, food, shelter or medical care. While local agencies normally have the means to provide assistance to those who need it, most agencies have also suffered a significant amount of damage. Imagine also, that the rest of the country offers no assistance, leaving you and the rest to fend for yourselves. Like those living in severe poverty, millions of Californians have found themselves with severely restricted access to basic goods. In a situation like this, one may be inclined to say that other parts of the country have a duty to respond to the crises in some minimal way. However, it is not clear on what ground they

have this duty. That is, it is not certain whether or not these are *human rights* based duties.

Considering the competing conceptions of human rights, an approach appealing to positive duties can easily make room for such deficits as evoking human rights claims. However, what does adhering to Pogge's approach commit us to? In Pogge's account, one cannot contribute to a system that *restricts* individuals' access to their human rights. Insofar as the institutional order one is a member of does not restrict this access, it seems she is respecting this negative duty. The global affluent are responsible for severe poverty because they impose an unjust global order on the poor. However, in the case of a basic goods deficits resulting from a devastating earthquake, the institutional order plays no significant causal role.²¹ Does this mean then that when the institution fails to respond, it is fulfilling its human rights duties?

To be sure, Pogge does insist that institutions have positive duties, and thus might have a duty to respond, *but* these duties are not based in *human rights*. Pogge writes,

Suppose we discovered people on Venus who are very badly off, and suppose we could help them at little cost to ourselves. If we did nothing, we would surely violate a positive duty of beneficence. But we would not be violating a negative duty of justice, because we would not be *contributing* to the perpetuation.²²

Because the global institutional order does not contribute to the Venus people's suffering, one does not have a negative duty to alleviate their suffering. Given that human rights entail "only negative duties," it seems that in Pogge's approach, one can fulfill her human rights based duties as long as one does not contribute to another's suffering.²³ Respecting one's human rights duties does not require one to respond to naturally caused basic goods deficits. Before drawing any implications, however, let us first examine what a stronger account of human rights might look like.

Here I offer Pablo Gilabert's account of positive duties of justice. Quite un-controversially - even Pogge would agree - Gilabert suggests there are "interpersonal positive duties to rescue those in distress", as well as "institutional positive duties to assist citizens whose disadvantages are morally arbitrary".²⁴ He gives the examples of finding the victim of an accident on the highway and redistributive taxation to benefit the congenitally disabled. Thought of as duties of beneficence, Pogge's account can make room for such duties. However, the point Gilabert wishes to motivate is that these duties are in fact *duties of justice*.²⁵

If we recognize that there are strong positive duties at the local interpersonal level and at the institutional domestic one, why not claim that they also exist at the level of relationships and institutions of global scope? We can say that certain global positive duties of justice to protect and to aid exist at the global level without being contingent upon the violation of negative duties not to cause undue harm.²⁶

Remember, Pogge claims that in order to determine whether or not we harm the poor, we must first determine whether the institutional order is just. By failing to appeal to positive duties however, Gilabert argues that Pogge's account of justice is far too weak. Like Gilabert, I find evaluating the justness of an institutional order based solely on its compliance with negative duties to be inadequate. To properly account for human rights deficits resulting from, say natural disasters, an account of human rights ought to include the degree to which a system demonstrates concern for and willingness to respond to morally arbitrary deficits

it did not cause. To elucidate what is at stake here, imagine that you stumble upon a starving individual. By giving this individual the granola bar you have in your book-bag, you could easily alleviate her suffering at a very small cost. Imagine however, that you tell this person, “While I respect your human right to the secure access of basic goods, I did not cause this suffering and thus you do not have a human right to my granola bar.” It seems odd that one could coherently claim to respect another person’s human rights, and then proceed to watch the individual starve. Analogously, when the rest of the United States fails to aid the victims of the earthquake, it seems odd to say that is consistent with a respect for human rights. If millions of people are falling below their human rights threshold, it seems that a proper account of human rights ought to be concerned with such a deficit, regardless of what caused it.²⁷ Adhering to Pogge’s approach, however, may get us quite a different conclusion. While one may have a human rights based duty to protect the global poor, it is not clear that one has a human rights based duty to assist those who are falling below their human rights threshold because of a naturally caused disaster.

Climate Change and Human Rights

I argue in the previous section that, in cases of basic goods deficits resulting from natural disasters, one cannot implicate the institutional order in the suffering of individuals. Therefore, in Pogge’s account, these cases do not give rise to human rights claims. While one may recognize that this is a weakness of his approach, one might still argue that, all things considered, what we gain vis-à-vis moral efficacy—getting libertarians and citizens of affluent nations on board—is significant enough to speak in favor of Pogge’s view. However, as I previously suggested, one ought to consider the consequences of climate change and the implications they could have for the debate. As I will later show, due to more extreme weather, experts predict that a very large number of human beings will fall below their human rights threshold. And given our inability to demonstrate that any given disaster is a result of human-induced causation, I will argue that it is difficult to formulate such deficits in terms of human rights deficits in Pogge’s account. One might worry then, what Pogge gains by appealing to the libertarian, he loses in terms of the requirement to aid the millions of people who will, arbitrarily, find themselves with severely restricted access to the most basic goods.

To begin, let us consider reports on global climate change and poverty. Recently, the World Bank published a report explaining the staggering consequences of only a 4°C increase in temperature. In recent decades - according to the report - food shortages, rising sea levels, heat waves and droughts have “adversely affected economic growth in poor countries”.²⁸ According to the UN’s Human Development Report from 2008, when climate change makes “certain parts of the world much less viable places to live” people are forced to move.²⁹ In 2010 alone, more than 38 million people were displaced by “sudden onset, climate-related natural hazards”. Even more unsettling, the UN estimates that we can expect to see 50 million climate refugees by 2020 and approximately 200 million by 2050.³⁰ In combination with the fact that climate refugees currently outnumber political refugees 3 to 1, one can see that climate change will surely cause a basic goods deficit for a large number of people.³¹ Furthermore, it seems that this is something a proponent of the human right to the access of basic goods ought to take seriously. An adequate account of social justice must be able to formulate such basic goods deficits as *human rights deficits*. So when institutions fail to respond to such deficits, they are not fulfilling their human rights duties.

One might argue however, that Pogge's account can easily handle the climate change worry. Given that affluent nations are the biggest contributors of greenhouse gases, Pogge can claim that the citizens of affluent nations significantly contribute to the severe weather events caused by climate change. Thus, basic goods deficits resulting from these disasters indeed evoke human rights based duties. However, I would caution that the causal claim is not as easily met here. According to a number of climate scientists, while global warming is responsible for more extreme and devastating weather *patterns*, this does not mean that climate change is responsible for every particular weather *event*. So while one knows that one can expect to see more frequent and more severe storms as a result of climate change, it does not follow that one knows *this* hurricane, or *that* earthquake falls within that pattern. In fact, a number of climate scientists maintain that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether a single instance of severe weather is a result of climate change.³² One who denies positive duties might then have a reason to change her behavior, so as to no longer contribute to global warming. But in order to convince her that she has a duty to respond to the suffering caused by the disaster, one must first convince her that she contributed to the suffering.

While it may be possible for Pogge to argue that affluent nations have a negative duty in cases of natural disasters, it is not clear that he can do so. Thus, it seems Pogge must either show us how his approach can formulate certain naturally caused basic goods deficits in terms of human rights deficits, or appeal to a higher standard of justice that takes into consideration positive duties. While it may be true that "negative duties alone can give affluent people a moral reason to work for the reform of human-rights violating social institutions," it seems that they alone cannot give people, particularly libertarians, reason to assist the millions of people who—because of global warming—will find themselves falling far below their human rights threshold.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show that Pogge's modest account, despite its strength vis-à-vis moral efficacy, ought to be stronger. It is not only a philosophical disagreement but a practical one. In attempting to motivate citizens of affluent nations to recognize their responsibility to the global poor, Pogge may reject an important conclusion. A system that does not respond to shortfalls of basic human needs, whether or not it is the cause, is not fulfilling its duties in regards to human rights. How a system fosters the development and acquisition of human rights for all humans is just as important as its securing them for those in the system; it ought to show concern for the flourishing of *all* humans. So then, whether we are imposing a global order on the poor, or are merely bystanders, massive human rights deficits is a moral problem we ought to take seriously and properly respond to. Insofar as we can provide the basic goods to those with insecure access, we are not respecting the human rights of the severely impoverished when we fail to do so. While we ought to commend Pogge's intent to provide an efficacious approach to alleviating severe poverty, one should worry whether this approach will, rather than promote human rights claims, leave important ones out. Rather than trying to appease the libertarian, it seems we need to convince him that international and domestic justice requires one to recognize both negative and positive human rights duties.

Notes

1 Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 104.

2 Additional statistics on the extent of severe poverty include the following estimates: “13 percent (830 million) of all human beings are chronically undernourished, 17 percent (1,100 million) lack access to safe water, and 41 percent (2,600 million) lack access to basic sanitation. Some 16 percent (1,000 million) lack adequate shelter. About 31 percent (2,000 million) lack access to essential drugs and 25 percent (1,600 million) lack electricity. Some 17 percent of adults (744 million) are illiterate, and 14 percent of children between five and 17 (218 million) are child laborers—often under harsh or cruel conditions: as soldiers, prostitutes, domestic servants or in agriculture, construction, or textile or carpet production” Ibid., 103.

3 A person living in severe poverty can purchase, in a year, \$400 worth of goods in an affluent nation, or approximately \$100 worth of goods in a poor nation.

4 Ibid., 104.

5 In this paper, I will rely on Pogge’s conception of human rights. This conception will be explained in the following section.

6 Libertarian thinkers for instance, might argue that “human rights require that we do not harm others in certain ways—not that we protect, rescue, feed, clothe and house them”. Ibid., 73.

7 Think here of a negative duty *not to harm* vs. a positive duty to *help those being harmed* by others.

8 Indeed, according to Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* is an attempt to conceive of a “widely accepted core criterion of basic justice that assesses social institutions,” 43.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 44.

11 Pogge—in line with his modest proposal—is concerned with institutions meeting a minimum threshold. Institutions must ensure that individuals have at least reasonably secure access to “minimally adequate shares” of only the most basic goods. Ibid.

12 Ibid., 44.

13 Ibid., 70.

14 The notion of collaborate, or contribute to, is an extremely thin notion. Ultimately, the only way for an individual to ‘not contribute to an institution’ is by withdrawing completely from society and living as a hermit.

15 Ibid., 76.

16 Ibid., 118.

17 Nigeria for example, for 28 of the last 38 years has been ruled by military persons who acquired their power through force.

18 Ibid., 121.

19 Ibid.

20 See chapter four of *World Poverty and Human Rights* for a complete analysis.

21 Imagine here that the buildings are up to code, and that the state of California does not allow homes to be built near fault lines. For concerns of this sort, the example may be changed to describe a tsunami, tornado, hurricane, et cetera.

22 Ibid., 204.

23 Ibid., 72.

24 Pablo Gilabert, "The Duty to Eradicate Global Poverty," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* (2004): 545.

25 Ibid., 546

26 Here, one finds a flaw in Gilabert's reasoning. Gilabert is wrong to assume that Pogge has the resources to claim there are positive duties even at the institutional domestic level.

27 Of course, one may wish to fast, or live an impoverished life for personal/religious reasons. It seems cases in which individuals choose to fall below their human rights threshold do not represent human rights deficits.

28 World Bank, "Turn Down the Heat", 17.

29 Oli Brown, "Climate Change and Forced Migration" (background paper for UNDP's Human Development Report 2007/2008, 2007), 9.

30 Ibid., 5.

31 "Legal Recognition and Protection for Climate Refugees," Environmental Justice Foundation.

32 Leo Hickman, "Is it Now Possible to Blame Extreme Weather on Global Warming?" *The Guardian* (2012).

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Israel contra Becker: Rescuing the Enlightenment? >>> Emmy Hammond

In 1932, Carl Becker in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* famously argued that the eighteenth-century philosophers, long considered the wellsprings of modernity, were in fact more closely aligned philosophically with the medieval than with the modern mindset. According to this irony-laden interpretation, the philosophers who were so keen to attack medieval superstitions and privileged institutions “demolished the Heavenly City of St. Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials.”¹ Another historian of the Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel, has in roughly the last decade published a massive trilogy of books (*Radical Enlightenment*, *Enlightenment Contested*, and *Democratic Enlightenment*), as well as a single smaller volume that serves more or less as a summation of his key thesis, *A Revolution of the Mind*, which argue just the opposite. Whereas Becker endeavors to show just how far the Enlightenment figures were from the modern mindset, Israel makes an impassioned defense for understanding the ideas of the Radical Enlightenment (carefully severed from their counterparts of the mainstream Enlightenment) as the most important foundational source for our contemporary democratic and egalitarian values and the greatest precursor to the modern era. Israel’s argument is predicated on an all-important first premise, namely that the Enlightenment must be understood in light of a constant and under-acknowledged intellectual fracture between the radicals, those who advocated the titular “revolution of the mind” and the re-building of society from scratch, and the moderate adherents of the mainstream Enlightenment who propagated relatively progressive ideas and supported reform, but only within the existing structures of society. For Israel, this rift was no mere matter of degree. The two camps were “diametrically opposed to each other,” defined by their very opposition, and between them “obviously no compromise or half-way position was ever possible, either theoretically or practically.”²

We can gain valuable insight into the historiographical split of the Enlightenment as a whole into a distinct and irreconcilable “Radical Enlightenment” and “Moderate Enlightenment,” as epitomized by Israel, through a comparison of it with Becker’s contrary assessment of the Enlightenment in the 1930s. Becker’s is a text of disenchantment, in which it is possible to read strong influences of the inter-war mentality of disillusion with modern ideals or at least with the execution of those ideals. Israel’s work reads instead as supreme enchantment with the principles of the Radical Enlightenment and commitment to the conviction that they are and should be the ideas that the modern world is founded upon and beholden to. This paper is a historiographical reading of the relationship of two influential interpretations of the Enlightenment and some of the most salient implications of the latter one. In this light, my contention is that Israel’s work can be read as a kind of ‘rescuing’ of the Enlightenment from a Beckerian disenchantment with it, as well as from the assaults from other quarters that Israel himself takes up explicitly, particularly postmodernist and Marxist analysis. Further, we can read this ‘rescuing,’ despite its pitfalls which I will elaborate below, as a reflec-

tion of the intellectual and political needs of the twenty-first century, currently characterized by a crisis in democracy and education. Although Israel has written prolifically, my analysis concentrates on *A Revolution of the Mind*, which is his most important piece of work for the topic at hand for two reasons. First, it serves as a concise summary of his key thesis concerning the divided Enlightenment and is the work in which he argues most forcefully for this idea (as Dan Edelstein puts it, the book contains “more than a touch of manifesto”³). Second, it is directed towards a more popular audience than his other massive tomes and thus is a manifestation of Israel putting into action his own convictions about the need to address modern crises not only within the academic community but the larger world.

Though it is Israel who, arguably more than any other historian, insists on the divide between Radical and Moderate Enlightenment and the irreconcilability between them, the historiographical distinction did not begin with him. Margaret Jacob, with her 1981 book *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, can be credited with coining the term “Radical Enlightenment” itself, and for placing those who composed it “on a par with the familiar, canonized Enlightenment” of Paul Hazard and others. In the fact that a large part of Jacob’s argument is that the previously understood, “mainstream” Enlightenment was often concerned with and shaped by a need to restrain what they saw as the “radical” people and their ideas, there is much in Jacob that serves as the stepping-off point for Israel.⁴ Jacob herself has said, in a review of Israel’s work, that “In 2001 it was no small pleasure to see the thesis of 1981 affirmed by the prolific historian Jonathan Israel.”⁵ However, Jacob’s assessment of the division of the Enlightenment proceeds from a perspective more reliant on social history, though certainly mixed with intellectual, whereas Israel’s is consciously focused on intellectual history to the greatest possible extent. He calls for a “reverse shift of emphasis back to the study of ideas in their historical setting”; in opposition to the focus on social history that motivated Jacob’s foundational book, he focuses on intellectual history instead in order to address what he sees as a relative lacuna in historiography of the Enlightenment.⁶ In Israel’s case especially, the division functions also as a response to several preceding historiographical trends that divided the Enlightenment differently, namely the “national Enlightenments” school of thought and the “family of Enlightenments” school of thought.⁷

Though Carl Becker’s work was written nearly eighty years ago now, his descriptions of the contemporary “climate of opinion” are almost eerily descriptive at times of today’s world, and so I believe are relevant in understanding the modern intellectual and political crisis that Israel’s work contends with. After all, who in today’s world of omnipresent social media, of revolutions in Egypt and Libya in which people around the world participate in toppling regimes almost overnight, of technology moving at such a pace that even those seemingly born cell phone in hand can hardly keep up with it, could not find relevance in Becker’s assessment that “we cannot seemingly understand our world unless we regard it as a going concern,” or that “What is peculiar to the modern mind is the disposition and determination to regard ideas and concepts, the truth of things as well as the things themselves, as changing entities...”⁸ Becker, in a reflection of this constant change and the doubts and insecurities it engenders, carries in his argument an implicit insistence on the dangers of feeling too intellectually secure. Indeed, that is precisely what he chides the eighteenth-century philosophers for: their absolute assurance in their own ideals, precisely what allowed them to make their own philosophy into something quasi-religious to replace the actual religion that they attacked.

In stark contrast to Becker, many reviewers have noted in Israel's work the same kind of absolute conviction in the ideas that he finds in the Radical Enlightenment; his is work that leaves little if any trace of doubt or humility in his own intellectual convictions. Becker's assertion that the medieval climate of opinion (which he compares the eighteenth-century philosophers to) was such that "they could afford to ignore that factual experience of mankind since they were so well assured of its ultimate cause and significance," could apply to Israel in spirit if not in letter.⁹ A number of scholars have commented on his simplifications of history for the sake of his ultimate motives. Darrin McMahon, for example, while saying that he himself "does not begrudge Israel his values or evident sympathy for the Radical Enlightenment," highlights in Israel's work "a candid admission of the teleological imperative at play."¹⁰ Israel himself as much as admits his own intellectual assurance, as when he writes, responding to the idea that the Enlightenment is the indispensable foundation for any viable progressive politics, that "To anyone authentically committed to democracy, toleration, and personal liberty this seems undeniable..."¹¹

It is not surprising that Israel can be read as a kind of refutation of Becker considering that one of the trends against which Israel reacts most viscerally is that of postmodernism, and a convincing argument can be made for a reading of Becker as precursor to postmodernism or a "pre-postmodernist" as Johnson Kent Wright calls him. Wright describes *The Heavenly City* as an "almost uncanny anticipation of the postmodern 'reading' of the eighteenth century," pointing out that postmodernism's (in)famous declaration of the Enlightenment as "obsolete" was essentially predated by Carl Becker's similar assessment roughly a half century earlier.¹² Though we should not do Becker the disservice of burdening him with the baggage of a school of thought which had not yet formed, nonetheless his 'pre-postmodernism' is manifest in his disillusion with the purportedly 'modern' philosophers, his disapproval of their intellectual self-assurance, and his own emphasis on relativization and understanding people and ideas within their respective "climate of opinion." Contrast this with Israel, for whom postmodernism's perceived slights against the Enlightenment are clearly a slight obsession, as he brings them up in each of his major works and often explicitly references postmodernism as one of the threats to which modernity is currently subjected. In the preface to *A Revolution of the Mind* he charges that the "modish multiculturalism infused with postmodernism" of the 1980s and '90s is "among the foremost challenges to Radical Enlightenment principles, and one particularly threatening to modern society."¹³ Previously, in *Enlightenment Contested*, he opines that "while it has been fashionable in recent years, above all (but not only) in the Postmodernist camp, to disdain the Enlightenment as biased, facile, self-deluded, over-optimistic, Eurocentric, imperialistic, and ultimately destructive, there are sound, even rather urgent, reasons for rejecting such notions as profoundly misconceived..."¹⁴ These are but two examples of a theme that pervades all his major work. In his own approach, an approach described by Siep Stuurman as "miles away from the post-modern 'hermeneutics of suspicion,'" Israel seems almost to have overcompensated for the postmodernist tendency to over-relativize, over-doubt, and under-judge.¹⁵ He in fact does the exact opposite of all three tendencies, leading to a history which is less historical, less humble, and less objective than it could be.

Furthermore, in Israel's efforts to use the history of the Enlightenment to serve a political and intellectual purpose in the modern world, his work understandably attempts to tie together philosophy and history. *A Revolution of the Mind* he declares to be his attempt,

in homage to Isaiah Berlin's efforts to do the same, to "draw philosophy and history into a closer, more meaningful partnership."¹⁶ Despite the worthiness of this goal, in attempting to tackle both history and philosophy simultaneously Israel ends up neglecting at times the most basic attitudes of proper historical understanding because he is too focused on his own *idée fixe*. There are essentially two conceptions of modernity that Israel contends with, historical modernity and philosophical modernity, and though his work is presented as history, his argument really proceeds more from an understanding of philosophical modernity. McMahon notes this, stating that Israel's historical work is marred by his being "perhaps slightly more interested in philosophical modernity (theory) than in historical modernity (practice)."¹⁷ The same tendency is picked up by La Vopa, commenting that:

Historians may regard Israel's failure to demonstrate the unity and coherence he claims for radical thought as a minor lapse, but it is not. Throughout his narrative, the attribution of a singular coherence to radical thought underpins a philosophical logic of explanation and interpretation. It grounds an apparently historical argument, drives it forward, and sometimes surfaces with unapologetic explicitness.¹⁸

Combining substantive history and philosophy is certainly a tall order, and Israel's efforts to do so are laudable enough, as are the more political motives that clearly underlie those efforts. However, in this instance the combination seems to have done damage to at least one and perhaps both, for his ostensibly historical argument is flawed because of its foundation in, and subsequent service to, a philosophical premise. Ironically, in light of repeated comments from other historians that his premise is foundationally un-historical, Israel himself raises "The risk in considering our core values as purely abstract concepts that do not require examination in their historical context."¹⁹ La Vopa concludes that the result of Israel's ideological goals is that his history amounts to an "exercise in presentism," comparatively devoid of a properly relativist understanding of the ideas of the Enlightenment as they functioned within their multi-determined historical context.²⁰ While Israel's argument is obviously meant to be historical, it is in fact grounded in an un-historical premise, the normative assumption that the Radical Enlightenment *should* be the basis of modernity, and proceeds then from a philosophical rather than a historical basis.²¹

The end result of this conflation of historical and philosophical method and of the overcompensation against relativism is that Israel's entire work stands upon an overly simplified division of the Enlightenment. Again and again, Israel uncompromisingly insists on the depth and bitterness of the division, arguing that the two sides were not only very substantially different but that they were defined in opposition to each other, "diametrically opposed."

A diffuse, highly complex and wide-ranging phenomenon such as the Enlightenment, we are apt to think, must reflect a great variety of shades of opinion and so it does. But when it came to the most crucial questions, as we shall see, both logic and circumstances precluded any real spectrum of opinion. On the main points, bridging the gulf between Radical democratic Enlightenment and moderate antidemocratic Enlightenment was literally inconceivable both philosophically and practically.²²

The *only* thinker, Israel goes on to say, that attempted to bridge this so un-bridgeable divide was Kant, and he was ultimately unsuccessful.²³ The division between the two Enlightenments constituted “both intellectually and socially an unbridgeable, polarizing dichotomy that no one could evade.”²⁴ Israel almost certainly commits a teleological sin when he further says that “Beyond a certain level there was *and could be* only two Enlightenments [italics added],” Moderate and Radical.²⁵ Even among those more favorable to his work, there is a broad consensus among commentators that this iron-clad bipartite understanding of the Enlightenment, as well as the intellectual cohesion and emancipatory quality that he claims for the Radical side, is oversimplified. Realistically, the actors of the Enlightenment and the ideas they propagated were far too complex and over-determined to fit neatly into Israel’s classifications. Stuurman, for example, uses Locke as an example of Israel’s oversimplification, noting that there are really “two Lockes: the moderate philosopher and the radical political theorist...[and] by situating Locke unambiguously in the camp of the ‘moderates’ Israel somewhat simplifies a highly ambivalent theorist.”²⁶ In order to justify his theoretical framework, Israel is forced to simplify many key actors of the Enlightenment individually and collectively, and to consistently overstate or understate the “radical” or “moderate” elements of their respective thinking.

These are some of the basic defects of Israel’s premise and methods regarding the historiographical division of the Enlightenment into radical and moderate. Perhaps the most important point, though, is what that premise serves, going back to the thesis that Israel’s conception of the Radical Enlightenment is a kind of rescuing of Enlightenment principles best understood in contrast to a Beckerian disappointment with them. Israel is often explicit in what he sees as the goals of his work; laying out what he considers to be the core principles of the Radical Enlightenment, he observes that “These principles, broadly accepted nowhere in the world before the American Revolution...are only very patchily accepted by societies and government in much of the world today.” This, clearly, is what he wishes his work to aid: the broader and deeper acceptance of the Radical Enlightenment’s principles across the world. The need for a revitalization of such principles is a reflection of what Israel and others perceive as a crisis in liberal and democratic ideals and practice in the twenty-first century. Israel is hardly alone in perceiving trouble for democracy and egalitarianism today; Russell Shorto, for example, also explicitly opens his monograph on Descartes with a similar sense of urgency and necessity, as well as concern for the idea of modernity: “Today, the very idea of modern society—which, at least in theory, relies on the tool of reason and notions such as equality to solve problems and lumber forward—seems to be under assault from several directions,” including but hardly limited to ever-present attacks from religious fundamentalism and postmodernism.²⁷ In such a climate, he contends, we must ask ourselves again some hard and basic questions, about modernity, progress, and history.²⁸ Israel’s assessments of the modern crisis read similarly, when he raises concerns about not only postmodernism, as already discussed, but other threats such as the “informal aristocracy” of America or the nationalistic tendencies that have inhibited democratic progress.²⁹ Against such threats, he sees the values of the Radical Enlightenment as “the chief hope and inspiration of numerous besieged and harassed humanists, egalitarians, and defenders of human rights” who are even today deep in battle against “the resurgent forms of bigotry, oppression, and prejudice that in much of the world today appear inexorably to be extending their grip.”³⁰ Israel further insists that it is not, as some contemporary historians would have it, overly optimistic or

naïve to go back to these principles of the eighteenth-century radicals.³¹ La Vopa perceives in Israel's work a sense of the "measure of modern democratic liberalism's disconnection from its true origins [in the Radical Enlightenment],"³² while Charles Sullivan notes that Israel "hopes that the tradition of the radical Enlightenment might provide resources to resist contemporary forms of religious fundamentalism and contemporary threats to civil liberties."³³

Against this backdrop of a modern crisis in democratic ideals, the necessity of not only finding a true understanding of the Enlightenment but extending it from academia to the wider public is an idea that pervades Israel's work. It is also one for which he finds abundant support in the project of the Radical Enlightenment. It is not difficult to see Israel's own concern for radical education on a mass scale in his discussion of the radicals; Diderot and D'Holbach, two of the most important radical philosophes for Israel, are both discussed in connection with the radical valuation of mass education as critical for creating a democratic republic. For Diderot, he says, it was "reason reinforced by education, together with fear of dishonor and punishment" that produced good citizens,³⁴ and for d'Holbach it was through "general education" that people would learn the virtues and responsibilities of true liberty and democracy.³⁵ On his own views, Israel directly states that it is not only the academic community but the "general reading, debating, and voting public" that is in need of an increased consciousness of the history behind "the tremendous difficulty, struggle, and cost involved in propagating our core ideas."³⁶ In this sense, Israel is putting his own ideals to action in writing *A Revolution of the Mind*, a book that is highly readable in both length and content for a wider public as well as for academics, and is clearly meant to function as a preliminary but highly charged introduction to the key values of the Radical Enlightenment. All of this echoes another of Israel's key theses, his argument that it was the eponymous intellectual "revolution of the mind" that preceded the "real" revolution, namely the French Revolution (the American Revolution he sees as a child of the mainstream, not radical, Enlightenment).³⁷ Thus, political change came through intellectual change and intellectual change on a large scale through education, all in a dialectic process: for the radicals "Re-educating the public, accordingly, seemed the crucial first stage toward renewing society in a fairer way. Helvétius, who was a strong advocate of education as a tool, realized that instituting the right kind of general education was an unattainable goal without its being accompanied by a thoroughgoing political revolution..."³⁸ Israel often uses the idea of education to draw a distinction between the radicals and moderates. While the moderates were concerned with the pursuit of knowledge and truth, they wished to disseminate it only within a small elite of men thought capable of receiving and putting to good use such knowledge, men capable of being "enlightened." The radicals, on the other hand, staunchly defended the idea that truth and knowledge were the domain of all and should be spread as widely as possible, because all were capable of being enlightened. Israel speaks at length about the German radical philosopher Johann Weishaupt, who objected particularly strongly to contemporary university education as a bulwark of *ancien régime* society: "Enlightening a few, he objects, merely to keep others in error...generates power and actively promotes social subordination. Only Enlightenment to enlighten others generates freedom..."³⁹

Along with education, another theme of the general condition of modernity that Israel seeks to address has to do with economics. He argues that classic laissez-faire capitalism is a direct child of the moderate, mainstream Enlightenment, "one of its chief intellectual triumphs," while the Radical Enlightenment was seriously distrustful of such economics. In

Israel's narrative, the rise of an economic science functions as one of the most important insights into the rift between radical and moderate Enlightenment because this rise was almost exactly contemporaneous with the incipience of the radical critique of inequality as a social, as opposed to a moral or political, reality.⁴⁰ Diderot, Helvétius, and d'Holbach, three of Israel's leading radical figures, he describes as insisting that "It is useless to strive for the moral improvement of men and society...as long as the material interests and prejudices of the strongest are organized in such a way as to pervert both morality and society."⁴¹ On the other side, he says of Turgot and Smith that they were "unquestionably economic geniuses and the preeminent founders of classical economics, but they were also, and not unconnectedly, amongst the chief conservative social theorists of the mainstream Enlightenment."⁴² The debate he sees here in the eighteenth century clearly underlies his concern about the 'informal aristocracy' of modern America. Modern economics of runaway, deregulated capitalism and the vast disparities of wealth (living standards, education, etc.) that it has engendered both in America and globally are an integral piece of the crisis of modernity that Israel intends to combat through the values of radical Enlightenment. We are currently living through a crisis precipitated by the kind of economics that Israel not only links to the moderate Enlightenment but regards as one of its greatest "triumphs." If these economics stem from the Moderate Enlightenment, then logically Israel's solution to combat them is the system that he argues so forcefully as being "diametrically opposed" to them, the Radical Enlightenment.

As I have argued in this paper, the recent historiographical division of the Enlightenment into Radical and Moderate camps, begun by Jacob and in the last decade amplified by Israel, can be read as serving to address intellectual and political needs of the current era, particularly a perceived crisis in democratic and egalitarian ideals. Israel's arguments in *A Revolution of the Mind*, and this purpose that they serve, can be most insightfully understood through a comparison with Becker and *The Heavenly City*. One is the ultimate manifestation of disenchantment with the Enlightenment, the other attempts almost desperately to rescue the Enlightenment from its critics; one is the ultimate argument of relativism, the other takes a disappointingly presentist approach to a historical phenomenon; one is a kind of precursor to postmodernist analysis, the other deeply concerned with postmodernism's assault on the Enlightenment and modern ideals. It is for one of the cardinal sins that Becker finds in the eighteenth-century philosophes that Israel himself can perhaps be most criticized for: an utter conviction in his own principles and a willingness at times to bend history into whatever shape needed to fit those principles, laudable though the principles themselves may be. This paper has explored several aspects of how Israel's work is meant to address the general crisis of the twenty-first century, as in education and economics. Further, it has shown some of the weaknesses that manifest in Israel's work as a result of these philosophical and political convictions and the oversimplified division of Radical and Moderate Enlightenment that Israel supports his convictions with.

- 1 Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 31.
- 2 Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 12, 17-18.
- 3 Dan Edelstein, Review of *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* by Jonathan Israel, *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 1 (2011): 143.
- 4 Siep Stuurman, "Pathways to the Enlightenment: From Paul Hazard to Jonathan Israel," Review of *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* by Jonathan Israel, *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002): 230.
- 5 Margaret Jacob, Review of *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* by Jonathan Israel *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 2 (2003): 387.
- 6 Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): x.
- 7 Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): v, 18.
- 8 Becker, *Heavenly City*, 19.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 10 Darrin McMahon, "What Are Enlightenments?" *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 3 (2007): 614.
- 11 Jonathan Israel, "Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment?" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 3 (2006): 524.
- 12 Johnson Kent Wright, "The Pre-Postmodernism of Carl Becker," in *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History*, ed. Daniel Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2001), 162.
- 13 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, xiii-xiv.
- 14 Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, v.
- 15 Stuurman, "Pathways to the Enlightenment," 228.
- 16 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, xiv.
- 17 McMahon, "What are Enlightenments?" 614.
- 18 Anthony La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History? Jonathan Israel's Enlightenment," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 725.
- 19 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, x.
- 20 La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History," 719-720.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 722-723.
- 22 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, 12.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 26 Stuurman, "Pathways to the Enlightenment," 232.
- 27 Russell Shorto, *Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason* (New York: Doubleday, 2008): xvii-xviii.
- 28 *Ibid.*, xix.

29 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, xii-xiii.

30 Ibid., xi.

31 Ibid., 194.

32 La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History," 718.

33 Charles Sullivan, Review of *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* by Jonathan Israel, *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 2 (2012): 380.

34 Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, 168.

35 Ibid., 199.

36 Ibid., x.

37 Ibid., 46.

38 Ibid., 53.

39 Ibid., 80.

40 Ibid., 94.

41 Ibid., 95.

42 Ibid., 114.

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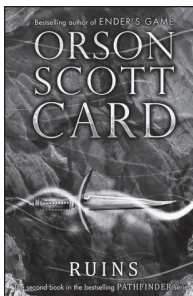
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Book Review >>> Zachary Alexander

Ruins

Orson Scott Card. New York: Simon Pulse, 2012. 544 pp.

Orson Scott Card, author of the *Ender's Game* series of young adult sci-fi, has a knack for creating a great universe. It is something that, across all his novels and series, every one has in common. Card is a genius when it comes to complexity with plotlines; his books require readers to be engaged and constantly involved with the universe through the actions of the hero. Card is a gifted writer not because of an elevated level of prose nor a unique understanding of his audience, though the latter does play into his writing style, but because of his innate ability to write involving stories with complex plots.

In the novel *Ruins* and its predecessor *Pathfinder*, Card has managed to compose another captivating science-fiction series. On the surface the series revolves around a young boy, Rigg, learning about himself and his hidden, seemingly magical ability he has to see the paths of every living being, and what that discovery means for his friends and everyone on his world of Garden. In *Pathfinder*, Card presents the world of Garden, a colony sent back in time 11,000 years and separated into nineteen "wallfolds," each unable to communicate with the others. We see fantastic self-repairing robots, empty cities devoid of human life made entirely of stone, and creatures that latch onto faces, somehow enhancing their human hosts. Card has the unique ability to imagine worlds so rich in detail, the reader easily gets lost in the realistic dialogue and pace of the books. The themes the novel *Ruins* illustrates, and the questions it raises for the reader are young-adult in nature, and while there are universal themes the book challenges, most of the book faithfully follows a young boy's journey through maturity and responsibility.

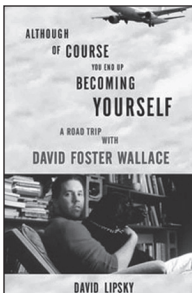
Card maintains in his novels a sense of a struggle with authority, with his hero characters usually stereotyped as the role of the outcast in society, the youngest child, the runt of the litter. His characters oftentimes have to fight to overcome the bullies of the world, and work to attain the position of authority they are given, however insistently humble they may be about not taking charge. Rigg fits every one of these stereotypes Card has created for his characters, looking like a sad Ender Wiggin copy in the end. But, true to his style, Card shows us in his second novel how his heroes can overcome even our stereotypes, because Rigg ends up astounding even me at times in the second novel. Rigg helps the group of travelers shed the position society has placed them each in, and work together as a team of individuals with strengths.

There is a great deal of focus on the battle between good and evil, which manifests itself in *Ruins* as Rigg's conflict with the truth. The main character of Rigg, an adolescent boy, finds out his father was actually a human-like machine created to protect the human colonists within their wallfold. Initially he was created along with eighteen other identical copies,

one “expendable” for each of the nineteen sections of the planet. This change in Rigg’s understanding of his perception of reality makes him question every piece of information he is given by one of the expendable creations, and the computer that rules over them, even after being assured he has full control. It is through that strong mistrust of authority that Rigg learns the value of searching for his own truth, and he is able to mature to the hero he needs to be and put things back to order in the end of the book.

This book also deals largely with the motif of disaster, fitting with the title *Ruins*, and specifically with the notion of impending apocalypse. Card especially likes to play with the deconstruction of human free-will and the ever-present notion of fate in his novels, and he steps into the realm of the disaster narrative in this book. The overarching plot of the novel focuses on why Rigg exists, and his part in a plot to save the planet from an apocalypse that has already occurred nine different times. Rigg’s life has been planned out and his birth was set in motion thousands of years ago by a large group of genetically-altered, time-manipulating mice. Rigg is challenged yet again when he learns these facts, and is forced to make the realization that his life has been entirely the product of outside forces acting on his life and no choice had been his up to this point. His humanity is challenged in that moment, and at the end of the novel he takes initiative to go back in time to a place where two of him exist in order to stop himself from committing a murder he will regret.

Orson Scott Card’s talent lies in his ability to create depth in his book-universes through the development of his characters’ rich histories. Card retains his ability to fashion strange and original cultures and make them recognizable to his reader, and he has an uncanny ability as an author to continuously deliver a young-adult book that can speak to any generation. On the surface, Card’s *Pathfinder* series is no different than any other of his other young-adult science-fiction novels, besides a different storyline and characters. However, his message in this series comes out of the understanding he has gained for his fan-base, and for the young-adult audience out there looking for good, old-fashioned science-fiction. If you want to indulge in a science-fiction series, you live for character development and universe exploration, and love the idea of how time travel works, *Ruins* presents itself as a sophomore novel in a series worth more than just a look at.



Book Review >>> Toshia Fries

Although Of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: A Road Trip With David Foster Wallace

David Lipsky. New York: Broadway Books, 2010. 320 pp.

David Lipsky's New York Times Bestseller *Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: a Road Trip with David Foster Wallace* chronicles five days in the life of David Foster Wallace as he completes his 1996 book tour for his magnum opus, *Infinite Jest*. Comprised of transcripts of taped conversations between Lipsky and Wallace, *Although of Course...* presents Wallace in a sympathetic, vulnerable light. He has a Barney towel covering a window in his bedroom; Alanis Morissette posters line his garage. He loves his dogs, Drone and Jeeves, more than anything. Chatting their way from airport to airport, Lipsky and Wallace banter like old friends, discussing everything from Wallace's childhood to the future of fiction to the philosophical implications of Wallace's iconic bandana.

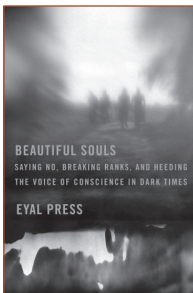
Published two years after David Foster Wallace's suicide, Lipsky seems to search for poignancy in every facet of his interactions with Wallace. The free-flowing transcriptions are frequently broken up by bracketed descriptions of Wallace's gestures, tics, and pauses. Presumably Lipsky was trying to paint a full picture of Wallace, depicting him as a man fraught with nervous habits, his articulate and confident speech betrayed by uncertain body language. However, the physical descriptions detract from the power of the text; meticulously documenting every lit cigarette and scratched itch seems a desperate attempt to find answers and meanings where there are none.

In the book's afterword, Lipsky makes a chilling observation about Wallace's death: "Suicide is such a powerful end, it reaches back and scrambles the beginning. It has an event gravity: Eventually, every memory and impression gets tugged in its direction" (xv). It is true. Though Wallace and Lipsky's conversations took place in 1996, the fact that they were compiled and published in 2010 casts the book in the shadow of Wallace's 2008 death, and it is difficult not to let the knowledge that Lipsky is talking to a now-dead man affect your reading experience.

Wallace's work dealt with depression and existential dissatisfaction in a myriad of forms. *Infinite Jest* alone has its fair share of suicidal characters, one of whom does the deed by putting his head in a microwave oven. Mental illness, then, seems an unavoidable topic as Lipsky and Wallace travel the long stretches of highway between book signings. Wallace details his 1989 stay at Harvard's McLean Hospital, sheepishly telling Lipsky how his agent, Bonnie Nadell, acquired a pair of scissors during her first visit there and used them to cut his trademark long brown locks (xxxii). His depression has retroactively become his defining feature, the "event gravity" of his suicide eclipsing every other aspect of his personality. But the David Foster Wallace that David Lipsky travels with is hopeful, riding the high of *Infinite Jest's* success. His insight into the human condition is moving: he tells Lipsky that the secret to lov-

ing yourself is “to treat ourselves the way we would treat a really good, precious friend. Or a tiny child of ours that we absolutely loved more than life itself. And I think it’s probably possible to achieve that” (293). He is a man tentatively learning to love himself and his achievements, overwhelmed with his early success but eager to explore his future. He tells Lipsky of his dreams to marry and have children. He looks at his past at McLean, his depression and alcohol abuse, with sadness and regret, but expresses his pleasure at being past those days. David Foster Wallace is no longer a sad story or a photograph on a book jacket. *Although Of Course...* portrays the author as a philanthropic and wise young man, chain smoking and conferring with Lipsky about everything from R.E.M. to the meaning of life.

This book is a fascinating biographical study of David Foster Wallace, crystallizing five days of happiness in Wallace’s life. It is a must read for anyone interested in Wallace and his work, though it is moving to anyone interested in the human condition, in writing, in the way people relate to one another. Lipsky as friend and interviewer provides the reader with a neutral slate upon which they can project themselves; by the last page, one feels like Wallace’s close confidante. *Although of Course...* is a 320 page journey that perfectly captures the feeling of traveling with someone fascinating and compelling and charismatic—the pages go by as quickly as the miles pass beneath the airplanes and cars in which Lipsky and Wallace converse. Wallace’s portrayal as a down to earth, relatable man makes his cerebral and frantically sincere body of work even more complex and insightful. It also makes his tragically early death even more painful. Wallace’s best friend, fellow best-selling author Jonathan Franzen, said “losing David had been like watching a science fiction movie, when a small figure gets sucked out of the airlock. An abrupt, absolute, quiet disappearance” (xxxii). The reader feels that chilling quiet upon closing the last page. Being privy to Wallace’s hopes and fears, and then realizing that those hopes and fears will never again be expressed, hurts. David Lipsky’s book is a gorgeous memorial to Wallace with a bittersweet aftertaste. David Foster Wallace’s death marks not just the loss of one of America’s most innovative young writers, but the loss of an admirable and beautiful human being.



Book Review >>> Beth Dwyer

Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times

Eyal Press. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012. 196 pp.

This time Avner was in front, face to face with a young officer. As their eyes met, he felt a flash of recognition, as though he were looking into the mirror, at his doppelganger. He wanted to engage the officer as a comrade, to let him know he was not some *yafeh nefesh*-the Hebrew expression for “beautiful soul,” which in Israel connoted being naïve-but a kindred spirit. Instead, he found himself staring at a clutch of video cameras-the troops began recording the altercation as a band of settlers brandishing large sticks and M16s stood in the near distance, gloating. Avner shuffled back to the bus with a sinking feeling, realizing the soldier in whom he’d seen his reflection was *just following orders*, just doing his job. (91)

In *Beautiful Souls*, Eyal Press tells the real life stories of four individuals in morally compromising situations who, despite the extremely high costs, choose to act rightly. In some cases, this choice runs the risk of being shunned from one’s community, and in other cases, acting rightly threatens careers, reputations and even lives. Moreover, these individuals are in situations where acting otherwise, acting against one’s conscience, is in fact an order. To follow orders means to defy one’s conscience. And though it may be easier to defy orders that conflict with one’s values in cases where one sees no justificatory reason to comply, in many cases, these individuals indeed see such reasons. How then do they gather the courage to defy orders, when countless others cannot? *Beautiful Souls* is an attempt to answer this question, telling the stories of four individuals who were able to, as the title suggests, say no, break ranks and heed the voice of conscience in dark times.

In attempting to discover how individuals are motivated to defy orders in such situations, Press is also exploring the moral necessity of disobedience. That is, Press is exploring the idea that individuals have a moral duty to defy immoral orders. For this reason, *Beautiful Souls* is in some way meant to show that, despite the difficulty in doing so, defying orders in difficult situations is possible. Here Press’ book can be seen as engaging the theory known as situationism. This theory suggests that the “power of the situation”, rather than an individual’s character traits will usually determine how an individual will behave. Citing several experiments familiar within the situationist literature-including the infamous Milgram experiments-Press however draws the opposite conclusion. Quoting Christopher Browning, Press writes that those who choose to obey “cannot be absolved by the notion that anyone in the same situation would have done as they did. For even among them, some refused to kill and others stopped killing” (10). By telling the stories of individuals who defy immoral or-

ders, Press offers something he believes is “too often lost in contemporary accounts of evil”; writing that “deciding whether to conform or resist is just that: a choice” (9).

Rather than exploring the moral necessity of disobedience in an abstract way that is removed from reality, *Beautiful Souls* tells the stories of real individuals who defy orders in light of both extreme and ordinary circumstances. First, readers learn of Paul Grüninger, a commander of state police in St. Gallen in Northeast Switzerland during World War II. Grüninger falsifies the documents of hundreds of refugees, showing that they arrived in Switzerland before a restriction that allowed only refugees who received an entry visa to enter the country went into effect. Then there is Aleksander Jevtić, a Serb who saves dozens of Croats during the civil war in Yugoslavia by fooling Serbian soldiers. In an attempt to separate the Serbs from Croats in a group of prisoners, a task only someone from the area could accomplish, soldiers order Jevtić “to choose carefully.” Jevtić however goes on to point out many Croats to the soldiers, addressing them by traditional Serbian names, until “no more bodies could be squeezed into the area designated for ‘Serbs’” (49). Press then tells the story of Avner Wishnitzer, a young man who spent several years serving in the most elite force in the Israeli Army. After attending a lecture regarding the mistreatment of Palestinians at the hands of Jewish settlers, he joins a convoy mission delivering blankets to Palestinian farmers in the West Bank. He is confused how, in an area guarded by Israeli soldiers, inhabitants could be treated so poorly. After visiting areas like this several times, Avner realizes the state and army’s role in the occupied territories. He decides to quit the force, and along with 12 others, sends a letter to the Prime Minister addressing their outrage. Finally, there is Leyla Wydler who works for the Stanford Group Company, a prestigious broker-dealer in Houston. Leyla and the other employees at Stanford are pressured to sell ‘certificates of deposits’ to their clients, a safe and lucrative investment they are told. Skeptical of these CDs however, Leyla refuses and continues to probe her superiors for more information. Years after being fired for her noncompliance, her reservations are confirmed when it is discovered that Stanford is actually the second largest Ponzi scheme in US history.

The title of Press’ book is slightly misleading. Though the Hebrew phrase has a rather negative connotation, the stories of Press’ beautiful souls are incredibly positive and inspiring. By forgoing a technical or abstract approach, and instead telling richly detailed stories of individuals who risked their reputations, careers and even lives to protect fellow human beings, *Beautiful Souls* easily appeals to a wide range of audiences. More importantly, Press shows readers that these individuals are not moral saints, but ordinary people. It seems then that what ties these individuals together is not a naïve nature, or even a super-human power to defy authority. Rather as Press maintains, individuals display a trait that is in some sense, non-rebellion: a commitment to values they regard as inviolable.

Mortality

Christopher
Hitchens

Book Review >>> Emmy Hammond

Mortality

Christopher Hitchens. New York: Twelve, 2012. 104 + xv pp.

Christopher Hitchens' parting gift, *Mortality*, might best be described as an exploration of the psychology of dying, living, and, to use his own characteristically dryly unadorned phrase, "living dyingly." This slim, austere black volume posthumously published in 2012 is composed chiefly of seven essays written by Hitchens during the last eighteen months of his life, following a diagnosis of stage IV esophageal cancer, and originally published in the magazine to which he had been a longtime regular contributor, *Vanity Fair*. While worthy of any curious reader's time the collection will undoubtedly carry more weight for those who kept up with Hitchens during his lifetime, reading his books and magazine pieces, watching his debates, becoming familiar with his style—witty, dry, deliberately contrarian, offensive sometimes even to his most ardent admirers but always thought-provoking—as well as his pet subjects, favorite anecdotes and arguments. *Mortality*, beginning with its rather uncomplimentary title, is bittersweet: a resounding last manifestation of Hitchens' force of character and intellect while also showing a more introspective and personal side of the author.

Down to his last words, Hitchens was at no particular pains to make himself more likable, nor would the man who notoriously lambasted Mother Theresa have wanted to be canonized after his own death. *Mortality* is no exercise in conciliation. Much of its strength lies in how eminently and unapologetically human it is, as Hitchens spares himself few details in recounting and exploring the banalities, the contradictions, and the worst truths and hardest questions about illness and death. The book's sixth essay centers around the so often (and so often mindlessly) invoked dictum that 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger,' asking the very simple but somewhat uncomfortable question, *does it?* Hitchens concludes that, no, what doesn't kill you may very well make you stronger but it may just as soon make you weaker, more scared and more frail than ever before. So much for one of the most cherished adages which we often tell ourselves and each other in the worst of times even as we may know the words are empty; in its place we are left with Hitchens' comfort that "Whatever view one takes of the outcome being affected by morale, it seems certain that the realm of illusion must be escaped before anything else" (75). And, true to form, Hitchens has choice replies for those who would say that the cancer is God's punishment ("The vengeful deity has a sadly depleted arsenal if all he can think of is exactly the cancer that my age and former 'lifestyle' would suggest that I get.") or who predict a deathbed conversion from atheism (wryly noting that no matter what sect he might hypothetically convert to he would probably lose as many of those claiming to pray for him as he would gain, "I sympathize afresh with the mighty Voltaire, who, when badgered on his deathbed and urged to renounce the devil, murmured that this was no time to be making enemies.") (13, 17).

The stories and thoughts that Hitchens recounts from these last eighteen months range from difficult and personal to downright funny, sometimes all at once. Some are simply candid observations on his own and others' way of thinking and coping. Recounting a conversation with a close friend who remarked somewhat too candidly that, "Yes, I suppose a time comes when you have to consider letting go," he recalls thinking "How true, and how crisp a summary of what I had just said myself. But again there was the unreasonable urge to have a kind of monopoly on, or a sort of veto over, what was actually sayable" (42). One preoccupation threading the essays is the relationship of body and mind, more precisely what it's like to be an intellectual brought low by one's own body. Reading Hitchens relate the psychological torment of losing his voice—he, who in better times had debated with some of the most famous intellectuals and statesmen in the world, he who was renowned as one of the greatest orators and conversationalists of our time, not to mention he who notoriously delivered verbal dressing-downs of any number of prominent, well-respected and even well-loved figures—is a slightly surreal and vaguely humbling experience. He recalls, longingly, "...the exquisite moment when one can break in and cap a story, or turn a line for a laugh, or ridicule an opponent. I lived for moments like that" (48). Mortality, indeed.

But perhaps the most poignant and provocative moments come in the last nine pages, the eighth and final part of the book composed of never before published fragments taken from Hitchens' notebooks at the time of his death. Unpolished for publication, inserted without preamble and seemingly with little order, these fragments have a stream of consciousness feel about them. Notes on the cancer's crude physical effects alternate with startling, sometimes indignant observations ("...will I outlive my Amex? My driver's license? People say—I'm in town on Friday: will you be around? WHAT A QUESTION!") and what were clearly notes to himself for future thought ("See Symborska's poem on torture and the body as a reservoir of pain.") (90-91, 92). Together, these fragments are startling in their honesty and tantalizing in the raw glimpse they provide into the agile mind of the great provocateur.

Its brevity, at just over a hundred pages, and universal topic make this little collection accessible—if hardly light reading - and afford it the potential to serve in the future as a suitably intriguing and thought-provoking introduction to the infamous polemic often affectionately dubbed "Hitch" (those whose interest has been piqued might then move on to his biblical but brilliant definitive collection of essays, *Arguably*). For the rest, the essays comprising *Mortality* form a satisfying sort of coda to his life, touching on familiar themes and arguments with a new take and flitting effortlessly from enlightening and witty to polemical and unceremonious, as was always Hitchens' style. Either way, *Mortality* will be worth returning to.



Book Review >>> Whitney Reed

Gone Girl

Gillian Flynn. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012. 215 pp.

Gillian Flynn's latest novel, *Gone Girl*, unquestionably follows her previous dark crime thrillers, *Dark Places* and *Sharp Objects*. This novel picks up the reader and entangles them within the hidden depths of despair that reside within silent souls—and the disturbingly empty reservoir of feeling in others. It is a novel that explores the traditional marriage track as well as the complications arising from the economy's latest bust, and the questions faced to the new middle aged citizens as they find themselves outsourced, replaced, and relegated to obscurity.

Nick Dunne is a golden boy of the 90s. He was a successful movie critic with classically good looks. He married Amy, the star of the Amazing Amy children's books and an enigmatic enchantress personality quiz writer, who has the capability to charm on command. Their life was idyllic, until their New York lifestyle was bludgeoned by their sudden state of unemployment and lack of finances. Forced to move to Nick's "hick" country hometown of North Carthage, Missouri, Amy's dissatisfaction with their life and their mounting marital/financial trouble reaches new depths until suddenly, Nick is faced with something far graver. Returning home from his bar on their fifth anniversary, Nick discovers his wife is missing and from this moment on, the reader is engaged in the race to discover what has happened to Amy and who is behind her violent disappearance.

And the prime suspect? Readers are jilted from character to character, mainly settling on the man of the hour, Nick himself. Working without an alibi and facing considerable suspicious evidence, the reader must follow Nick on the path to proving his innocence—all the while, unsure of his motives. Complicating the plot further, comes the split point of view of the novel. Nick's current point of view alternates with Amy's diary entries starting the day of their first meeting. Throughout the novel, multiple insights are offered into both Nick and Amy's character, allowing the reader to begin to understand the grime beneath the polished surface of their relationship. Following the clues left from Amy's anniversary scavenger hunt, the reader pieces together the mystery of Amy's disappearance as Nick attempts to convince the world of his innocence.

Fans of the classic mystery novel will love this new twisted creation of mystery and psychopathy that spins the reader into dizzying circles, all the while, introducing contemporary issues of unemployment, re-patching a crumbling marriage, and finding stability after losing oneself. Flynn examines the new redundancy shocking many middle class Americans out of their once-necessary professions. New Carthage, Missouri provides a microcosm of the typically rundown Midwestern town, complete with an unemployed population de-

pressed by the recent closure of their blue book factory. Nick and Amy find themselves stuck in this town, forced to re-evaluate their careers as well as their marriage. The novel also tackles themes of depression, performance anxiety, childhood abuse, and sociopathy as Nick and Amy's personalities become unveiled.

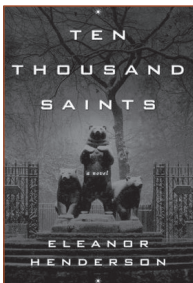
Gone Girl calls into question the typical societal manners associated with marriage as well as the way the media can manipulate and interpret the divergence from those manners when something goes terribly wrong.

The novel is 415 pages and broken down into three major parts. The first part of the novel is largely reminiscent of the Scott and Lacey Peterson case which was popular in late 2002 and early 2003. Though it is tempting to rack this novel up with a predictable, fictionalized version of this sensationalized crime, reading on will be well worth the déjà vu. Though some parts appear similar, Flynn writes through those similarities with time, giving the reader a shockingly new mystery novel complete with false testimony and hidden secrets.

No one and nothing can be trusted in this story of telling sides and proclaiming the truth. That is what makes this novel such an inviting and interesting read until the last page is turned. Margaret Atwood's style of creating a distrust in the narrator is slowly invoked at the same time that the reader is drawn in to each new web of deceit. Nick begins the novel by saying, "I'd know her head anywhere," (3) but the truth is, Nick knows as little about Amy, as the readers do about any of the characters. This is not a story where answers are easily obtained. Readers must work through the rocky terrain of the past and the skeptical description of the present to uncover the truth about Amy's disappearance.

Any reader who enjoys a great mystery or study of the human mind will be fascinated by this mind-bending thriller which builds slowly, but steadily until the reader is faced with the truth—an unspeakable horror that, after all the reader has been through, still manages to reveal a new depth to the evil lurking beneath a beautiful face. The pacing is slow at first, but rapidly and determinedly builds to a frenetic pace halfway through the novel which never breaks.

The idea that you never truly know anyone is embraced and emboldened by this crime narrative—as well as the idea that the power of love can be dark. Amy says it best when she concludes, "I was told love should be unconditional. That's the rule, everyone says so. But if love has no boundaries, no limits, no conditions . . . It makes me think that everyone is very wrong, that love should have many conditions . . . Unconditional love is an undisciplined love" (414). Gillian Flynn guides the reader through the dark and spiraling revelations of exactly what is possible with undisciplined love. This is a must read novel that showcases the world for a middle class American couple after the honeymoon, in a broken down town that jumps at the opportunity to feed on the devastating ravages of their unhappy union. Everyone wants to know, *what happened to Amy* . . . but the answers that are craved, and eventually discovered, will disturb the mind, long after the book is closed.



Book Review >>> Beth Gier

Ten Thousand Saints

Eleanor Henderson. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. 388 pp.

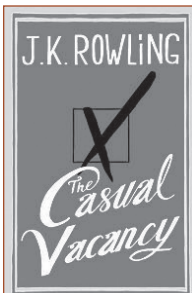
In her 2011 debut novel *Ten Thousand Saints*, Eleanor Henderson tackles the issues of adolescence and parenting in the morally ambiguous era of the late 1980s. *Ten Thousand Saints* features a large cast of characters, whose personal dilemmas and thoughts Henderson deftly maneuvers between, but the story mainly revolves around Jude Keffy-Horn. Jude and his best friend Teddy turn to drugs to escape the monotony of being fifteen in a sleepy Vermont town and relieve the tension of their strained family relationships. But when Eliza, the almost step-daughter of Jude's pot-dealing father, visits Teddy and Jude for a night, a first sexual encounter and drug binge link the three teenagers forever. After Teddy dies from an overdose, Jude sinks into an emotional stupor. When his mother Harriet no longer believes she can give Jude the kind of help he needs, she sends him to live in New York City with his father to rehabilitate from his increasingly drug-dependent lifestyle and get his priorities in order.

While living in New York, Jude reunites with Teddy's half brother Johnny, who introduces Jude to straight edge culture and Krishna. To atone for his part in Teddy's death, Jude devotes himself to straight edge and begins to preach the words of abstinence, veganism, and sobriety. Along with Johnny and Eliza, with whom Jude reconnects while in New York, Jude endeavors to spread straight edge to the youth of the world in memory of Teddy. Jude and Johnny even form a straight edge punk band and recruit other teenage boys to pursue their cause. Jude, Johnny, Eliza and the crew of followers they gather explore themselves as much as they explore the country on their summer music tour and other exploits. However, the crew runs into problems when Jude uses his straight edge persona to justify violence against people who either disobey straight edge philosophy or wrong him personally. Disagreements arise within the group and the group dynamics become complicated as the ragtag group of misfits struggle with the challenges of growing up.

Ten Thousand Saints bares some thematic similarities to Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. Palahniuk's novel features men who pummel each other in devotion to an ideal that takes on religious proportions and calls for them to relinquish their devotion to commercialistic goods so they can escape the monotony of their lives. Johnny, Jude and the rest of the boys who take the straight edge oath are searching for the kind of discipline and restraint missing from their lives that resembles the search for meaning by the men who enter Fight Club. The plunge into straight edge culture proves to be a cleansing experience that gives Jude and the other teenagers the kind of power over their lives that was previously absent. Jude admits that he would be "lying if he said the Krishna stuff didn't weird him out a little, but he did feel immortal, he felt fabulous, indestructible, he was a straight edge god...he felt

a rush of righteous adrenaline in his veins” (246). The straight edge group also provides the familial bonding and warmth that most of the members desperately crave. When adolescent recruits recount details of their veganism and self-restraint “they’d get noogies and ass-slaps...more approval than they’d gotten all year for their mediocre performances as students and athletes and sons, and they’d come in the next day as though they had no other place to be” (246). The straight edge experience that Jude offers becomes a safe zone for all of the abandoned, misfit youth that the boys encounter as well as a philosophy that they cling to in order to escape their empty, directionless lives.

Although it features a predominantly teenage cast of characters, *Ten Thousand Saints* is marketed as adult fare rather than a young adult novel. The emotional struggles that the parents of the straight edge adolescents cope with are given an adequate amount of exploration, which may cause the book to be labeled as adult fiction. However, teenagers who enjoy books like *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Fight Club*, or Nick Hornby’s *High Fidelity* will find interest in the mature dilemmas faced by both the teenaged and adult characters in the book. *Ten Thousand Saints* is a great read for any person nostalgic for the sweaty mosh pits at CBGB or romantic dreams of being a starving artist. While *Ten Thousand Saints* covers important issues like finding one’s identity and navigating adolescence, one might wonder whether anything new can be added to those familiar topics. But Henderson writes emotional and introspective reflections of the usual problems in coming-of-age novels that at the very least provide the reader with entertainment if not a new view of those well-tread themes. Not all of the insights into growing up are groundbreaking, but the adept way that Henderson isolates and elevates emotions that both the teenaged and adult characters feel sets *Ten Thousand Saints* apart from mediocre coming-of-age novels. At nearly 400 pages, Henderson spares no detail about a setting or a character’s thoughts; the biggest criticism of the book is that she could have and probably should have cut some of those details. The choice to include so many different perspectives further prevents *Ten Thousand Saints* from fading into the background of coming-of-age literature, but Henderson creates a massive novel with an enormous amount of characters and side-plots to manage that could overwhelm even an experienced reader. Yet *Ten Thousand Saints* is not a slow read even with Henderson’s tendency to overindulge the reader in details. Henderson moves quickly through the story, her style efficient yet emotional; it is the sheer enormity of the plot and the amount of characters that may bog a reader down, not sluggish pacing. But despite its bulk, *Ten Thousand Saints* is an emotionally raw novel about finding acceptance and purpose that is as wonderfully—and at times tragically—complicated as growing up.



Book Review >>> Lacy O'Alde

The Casual Vacancy

J.K. Rowling. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2012. 512 pp.

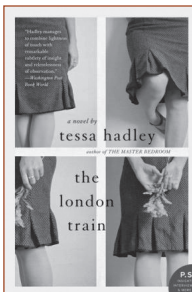
"A casual vacancy is deemed to have occurred: a) when a local councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office within the proper time; or b) when his notice of resignation is received; or c) on the day of his death..." and so sets the mood for the whole of J.K. Rowling's novel, *The Casual Vacancy* (1). *The Casual Vacancy* is Rowling's first novel for adults and definitely leaves behind the magical realms in which she first captivated the world with the *Harry Potter* series. For while it is impossible to talk about J.K. Rowling without mentioning her previous novels, *The Casual Vacancy* sets Rowling apart from children's literature and her literary genius is well exercised. The novel stands on its own apart from her previous work, as it should, and makes quite a claim for itself.

The novel is set in Pagford, a small and quaint English town that on the surface seems to be quite lovely with its picturesque rolling hills and town square. As we soon come to find out, the town is inhabited by citizens who have nothing better to do with their lives than plot and plan how to get their way with the city's Parish Council board. Overshadowing the whole of the novel is the untimely and shocking death of Barry Fairbrother, a council member on the city of Pagford's Parish Council, and how those closest and acquainted to him deal with his absence. The novel is split into seven different parts, a number that Rowling seems to be obsessed with, and within these seven parts there are numerous chapters each focusing on a certain character and their inner thoughts and feelings told through an omnipresent narrator. Through these glimpses into various character minds, we slowly start to form a complete picture of what life is like for a Pagfordian, and it is almost always not pretty. The women of Pagford are either completely and a little too devoted to their husbands or they are wishing that they could leave it all behind and be free. The husbands concern themselves with matters outside of their family life and in turn cause disappointment and dis-ease at home. The teenagers are all but shattered and are actually the cause of some of the novel's biggest upsets. All the characters we meet in the novel are either directly or indirectly affected by Barry Fairbrother's death and we see how they cope, and do not cope, with his unexpected death. There is Gavin, who realizes he is in love with the mourning widow, Krystal the promiscuous good hearted teenager who causes quite the controversy, Andrew the acne riddled teen who sets in motion the revolutionary changes in Pagford, Howard the booming overweight council member who actually feels a sense of joy at the news of Fairbrother's death, and Samantha, Howard's daughter-in-law, whose sexual daydreams seem to get the better of her. These are just a few of the characters whom readers are introduced to and get to know throughout the course of the narrative.

The town is unevenly split into two different parts that each want different outcomes for the the Fields, the outlying part of town that houses the poor working class (the majority of which happen to be drug and alcohol abusers). One side would like to see the Fields cleared out and restored while the other part would like to see the inhabitants of the Fields get adequate help and support. The adults who campaign for each side are at war with one another and are so wrapped up in the issue that they seem to cause wars with their children. These teenagers who are so hurt, literally and figuratively, by their parents decide to take matters into their own hands and cause destruction for their parents and ultimately for themselves. The novel moves at a pace that sometimes seems sluggish, with all the social commentary on the politics of the town making it a bit dry, but quickly picks up and leaves one winded and exhausted.

The Casual Vacancy is littered with humor, although be it dark and incongruous. On several occasions I found myself so aghast at what I was reading and at the actions of the characters, my jaw dropped and momentarily lost its function. The novel does create an unsettling feeling and leaves the reader pondering. Rowling is not one to just skim the surface of heavy topics and *The Casual Vacancy* does not shy away from hushed topics such as: suicide, drug abuse, self injury, domestic violence, sexual exploits, or vulgarity. The ending of the novel is harsh and abrupt, concluding with death, just as the beginning had done. After some thinking, it seems only fitting that Rowling would choose such an ending and it is one that is necessary for the characters within the story.

J.K. Rowling always seems to instill her novels with meaning and her understanding of the human condition flows throughout the novel. I do exercise a cautionary warning to those who quickly pick up the novel, expecting to find the same J.K. Rowling of the *Harry Potter* novels. *The Casual Vacancy* is definitely a departure from Rowling's previous work but, and should not be, cast aside without attempting to be read with an open mind. Although quite a divergence from the Rowling I grew up and fell in love with, her latest novel, *The Casual Vacancy*, is an achievement. I recommend the novel to anyone wishing to expose themselves to literary eloquence, intelligence, and the captivating reality that is human existence.



Book Review >>> Megan Gray

The London Train

Tessa Hadley. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011. 352 pp.

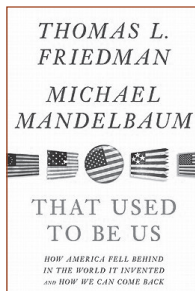
I often thought it was impossible to be satisfied with a story that seemed to have no real beginning or end; a story that just *was*. On the surface, *The London Train* appears to be such a story; we are thrown in, shown around, and then suddenly taken away. Tessa Hadley, the author, introduces and gives an account of two people, Paul and Cora, who live and lead separate lives, but who find themselves momentarily, by chance, connected. Hadley, professor of literature and creative writing at Bath Spa University, has honed her craft so well that I would liken her to some of the modernist writers of the past, such as Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf, whose talent for capturing essences of life made them some of the most respected writers of their time. The two sections of the novel, one for Paul and another for Cora, stand alone in and of themselves, as glimpses of life. The purpose, it seems, of this novel is not to tell the story of Paul or Cora, but to reveal to us a process of life: a moment, no matter how long or how it happens, can have lasting effects in the lives of those people thrown into them.

Though the novel is presented in two main sections, clearly either about Paul or Cora, both can be found within the other. Not only are there eerie similarities between their two lives that can be seen, but Paul and Cora are literally present in each others' story via a chance meeting on the London train. Paul, preoccupied by his mother's death, seems to be searching for meaning and purpose in his life. His aimless attempts lead him dangerously away from his true purpose: being a husband to his wife, and a father to his children. Hadley seems to emphasize that we often forget and take for granted what our lives actually are; that despite having meaning and purpose, we continue to seek out what we think is the real meaning and purpose of life, not realizing that we might already have it. Paul is a wonderful vessel for this message: flawed, careless, desperately frightened and hopeful. Readers will find themselves horribly repelled by him, both because of his acts and also because of his likeness to the rest of us. There is not much dialogue throughout the novel, but when Paul does speak or think within the text he is often reflective and sometimes cynical about life and what it means to live; he is a person who is questioning, unsure, and most importantly, human. He is at times surprisingly tender and tragic, wanting "to protect [his daughters] from hearing that all the beauty of the world was spoiling, its precious places being built over or cut down, its animal life poisoned with pollution" (75). His qualities are what make him both an individual and a universal figure. We might not make the same choices he makes, but we likely have felt and thought many of the same things he thinks and feels.

Cora also finds herself on the brink of crisis; separated from her husband, she is seeking out her place in life. Cora is overwhelmingly consumed with presumptions of what

other people must be thinking; she is paranoid of their judgments even to the point of doubting whether her own actions are unconsciously horrible and unfeeling. Her story steers around the degradation of her marriage, beginning on the eve of her wedding and winding through all of the doubt and worry to come since. The lack of communication between Cora and her husband Robert is shown by the small but vital snippets given from Robert's perspective. Cora feels for certain he is ashamed of her, disappointed but too proud or embarrassed to show it; in reality, Robert is so fearful of upsetting Cora's feelings, that he does whatever he can to prevent her from feeling anything unpleasant. His distance is often misinterpreted by Cora, who reacts in a way that Robert in turn misinterprets, an ongoing avalanche until they both find themselves hopelessly stuck exactly where they don't want to be. Their gross lack of understanding is painful to follow, but also one that readers will recognize. We are all guilty of making assumptions without bothering to determine whether or not our assumptions are accurate. If we do this too often, misunderstandings are bound to occur, in this case, the magnitude of such a misunderstanding is titanic. Again, Cora, though presented as an individual, is also a universal figure to which readers can identify.

Without giving away the entirety of the "plot" of the novel, I hope I have at least given a taste of the message and purpose of Hadley's novel. Unique in its presentation, *The London Train* tricks us into analyzing our own lives, actions, and purposes through our encounters with Paul and Cora, and their encounters with each other-the implications and their impact. To me, their actual connection with each other is not meant to be a focus of the overall novel; rather the point is to recognize how we move on from such a moment: do we remember a name, a face? Are we haunted or grateful? Moments have the power to destroy us and to heal us; Hadley demonstrates this as a powerful and captivating novel, full of the familiarities of life and what it is to be a human caught in its forces. What draws us in and satisfies us about this novel is its uncanny likeness to a real moment in a person's life. She is successful because we are satisfied; we are satisfied because we know that life, while it is being lived, is an unfinished story. *The London Train* is a life unfinished, and that is what makes it complete.



Book Review >>> Meghan Crawford

That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back

Thomas L. Friedman & Michael Mandelbaum. New York: D&M Publishers Inc., 2011. 402 pp.

In a November 2010 address President Barack Obama noted that “It makes no sense for China to have better rail systems than us, and Singapore having better airports ... And we just learned that China now has the fastest supercomputer on Earth—that used to be us” (Friedman and Mandelbaum epigraph). President Obama’s remark addresses an important issue America faces today, a challenge to the assumed exceptional status of America and its world dominant position. In recent years the country has been outraced by hyper-industrializing countries like China. Questions have emerged as to how America will respond to the threat and challenge it faces from a swiftly globalizing world and where the nation will stand in the 21st century’s new world order. President Obama spoke to the fear permeating throughout America, a fear that the once exceptional nation’s greatest days were behind it and such assumed rights of American exceptionalism and the American Dream were no more. Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum address such fears in their nonfiction text *That Used to Be Us*.

Through an analysis of the nation’s recent past, Friedman and Mandelbaum show how America has fallen behind today and attempt to present a possible path for recovery. They mark the fall of the Berlin Wall as a pivotal moment in the nation’s history that not only brought an end to the Cold War conflict, but ushered in a new era. The demise of communism dramatically accelerated the globalization process as more nations were brought into the global market, increasing competition and flattening the market. At a time when the country should have been fighting to remain ahead of the pack, it rested and fell back in the race. It had won the struggle for global supremacy and grew overconfident, failing to notice the great challenges emerging at the century’s close.

The authors identify four major challenges the country faces today: globalization, the information technology (IT) revolution, the nation’s chronic deficit, and global climate change, which must be properly addressed to maintain the American Dream and the nation’s exceptional status. This decline of America has resulted in a strong impulse to rebuild and regain American dominance. In order to do so it is argued that America must look inward, not outward for direction. The country’s greatest problem is not that it’s failing to keep up with China but that it has strayed from its own best practices, the challenges it faces being internal and only resolvable through a shock to the political system. They claim that the greatest deterrent to America’s prosperity is the current divide between Democrats and Republicans which has distracted the nation from facing the major challenges. The essential shock would

come from a strong third party presidential candidate who, Friedman and Mandelbaum note, "... succeeds not by winning elections but by affecting the agenda of the party that does win" (336).

The authors show that the time is ripe for a change in government, due largely to the public's collective dissatisfaction with Congress, yet they rely on the limited success of third party candidates in a few past elections to defend their argument. No actual concessions by the winning party are cited, no proof is shown that third parties have made a difference in the political agenda of winning candidates. This failure to provide substantial, factual information is found throughout the text and is one of its greatest flaws. The authors depend on anecdotal evidence and generalizations to support what becomes a rather weak argument. *That Used to Be Us* is an introductory text, an outline of the current issues facing the nation. It is a great starting point for those interested in learning about the development or rather underdevelopment of 21st century America. However by trying to offer an answer to the nation's woes, Friedman and Mandelbaum exceed their intellectual capability. They try to offer solutions to issues they are not fully educated about like the environment. Rather than cite experts on the matter, they choose instead to tell amusing stories. While making the read more entertaining and enjoyable, such an approach makes the book fall short of being a scholarly and reliable resource.

The text's unreliability is furthered through the authors casting themselves as "frustrated optimists" who, although disheartened by the nation's recent activity, still retain hope for the future. In *That Used to Be Us*, American exceptionalism and entitlement to the American Dream is an underlying theme, the structure through which the authors' argument is framed. They claim that in order to retain its exceptional status the country must effectively respond to the four major challenges with the fate not only of the nation but the world depending on it. In their opinion no country is prepared to fill the United States' shoes as the world's leader and that the world will essentially crumble if the US doesn't recover. Such claims are exaggerated and prejudiced, relying on rhetorical manipulation to instill fear in the hearts of Americans. In their claims of global disarray, Friedman and Mandelbaum take on an elitist and biased attitude. Although noting that American exceptionalism is not an entitlement for Americans, that it has to be earned through a bit of sweat and brainpower, they never question whether there is actually something truly exceptional about America.

The frustrated optimists, Friedman and Mandelbaum believe that America will regain "the pioneering spirit that made us (once) the greatest nation on earth, one that others looked up to and called 'exceptional'" (6). They are biased in their claim, clouded by their own patriotism and do not provide a realistic assessment of the nation's current predicament. Although the authors address the nation's current faults they retain an overly optimistic perception of its past and future. *That Used to Be Us* merely echoes the alarm raised by President Obama on America's current predicament, failing to provide an accurate assessment of the nation's challenges and an adequate strategy for America's recovery.

Contributors >>>

>>> **Zach Alexander** is a recent graduate of Otterbein University! He graduated in Fall 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and a minor in Arts Administration. While attending Otterbein, he was a member of Sigma Delta Phi, worked a part-time job, and held two internships with prominent arts organizations in Columbus. After graduation, Zach was able to land a job at a successful mid-sized company and is currently pursuing his dream of becoming an Arts Administrator by learning valuable skills in the business administration field.

>>> **Meghan Crawford** is a junior History and English double major with a double concentration in Creative Writing and Literary Studies. In addition to her work with Aegis, Meghan is an assistant to the Editor of *American Imago*. She enjoys volunteering at CHA animal shelter and the Ohio Historical Society. After graduating from Otterbein, she hopes to pursue her Ph. D in either Public History or Modern European History, continuing her undergraduate research on Holocaust education and literature.

>>> **Beth Dwyer** is a senior Philosophy major and Political Science minor. She has a particular interest in social and political philosophy, as well as ethics. In the fall of 2013, she will be attending graduate school in philosophy at either Georgia State University or the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (still deciding).

>>> **Toshia Fries** is a junior Theatre Design & Technology major with a minor in Studio Art. She is the head of Otterbein's GLBTQ Resource House and is involved with Otterbein's GLBTQ Advisory, FreeZone, and the Otterbein Host & Tour Program. She will be doing a scenic painting internship in either New York City or Boston this fall.

>>> **Beth Gier** is a junior double major in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing, and English with a concentration in Literary Studies. In addition to serving as Aegis Co-Editor, Beth is a consultant for the Writing Center and Co-Leader of the Association of Fundraising Professionals at Otterbein. She hopes to be spending her summer as an intern and is looking forward to finally having the time to work on her Honors thesis project.

>>> **Megan Gray** is a junior Creative Writing and Psychology double major currently working on her Honors Thesis. She works as a consultant at the Otterbein Writing Center, is on the executive board of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, and is also an active member in Psi Chi, the Psychology Honors Society. She plans to apply to graduate school programs in Psychology and possibly English as well. She is grateful for the opportunity to be on Aegis this year, and is looking forward to the summer.

>>> **Emmy Hammond** is a senior History and Political Science major specializing in early modern European intellectual history and political theory; she is currently completing her senior honors thesis on utopian political texts and ideas about the nation in 18th century Britain. In addition to Aegis, she is managing editor of American Imago and a consultant at the Otterbein Writing Center.

>>> **Lacy O'Falde** is a senior English Literary Studies major and a Film Studies minor. She is excited to finally reach her last year at Otterbein. After switching majors two times, Lacy found a home in the English department and is especially glad to have been a part of the Film Studies program. While at Otterbein, Lacy is proud to have been a member of Aegis and Sigma Tau Delta. After Otterbein, Lacy will pursue a Disney internship and would eventually love to work on film from screenwriting to the final editing process. Originally from Dayton, Ohio, Lacy is thankful to have spent four years at Otterbein and is looking forward to where the future will take her.

>>> **Whitney Reed** is a senior English major with a double concentration in literary studies and creative writing. Working with the humanities has always been her passion. After graduation, she hopes to join a book or magazine publishing company and continue this passion. She is currently the managing editor of Quiz and Quill, Otterbein's literary magazine and a member of Mortar Board and Sigma Tau Delta.

>>> **Jody Sjogren** is a senior completing her Bachelor of Arts in Music degree in May 2013. Her primary instrument is the cello, which she plays in the Otterbein String Orchestra and the Westerville Symphony. She anticipates continuing her cello pedagogy training with the Suzuki Institute after graduation. She hopes to play her cello in small ensembles and community orchestras, and also with her husband Jack who accompanies her on piano. Jody is grateful to have had the opportunity to study at Otterbein, and she is particularly indebted to Dr. Jim Bates for his encouragement and instruction in music history and string ensembles.

