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Spring 2009

### Otterbein Aegis Spring 2009

Otterbein Aegis

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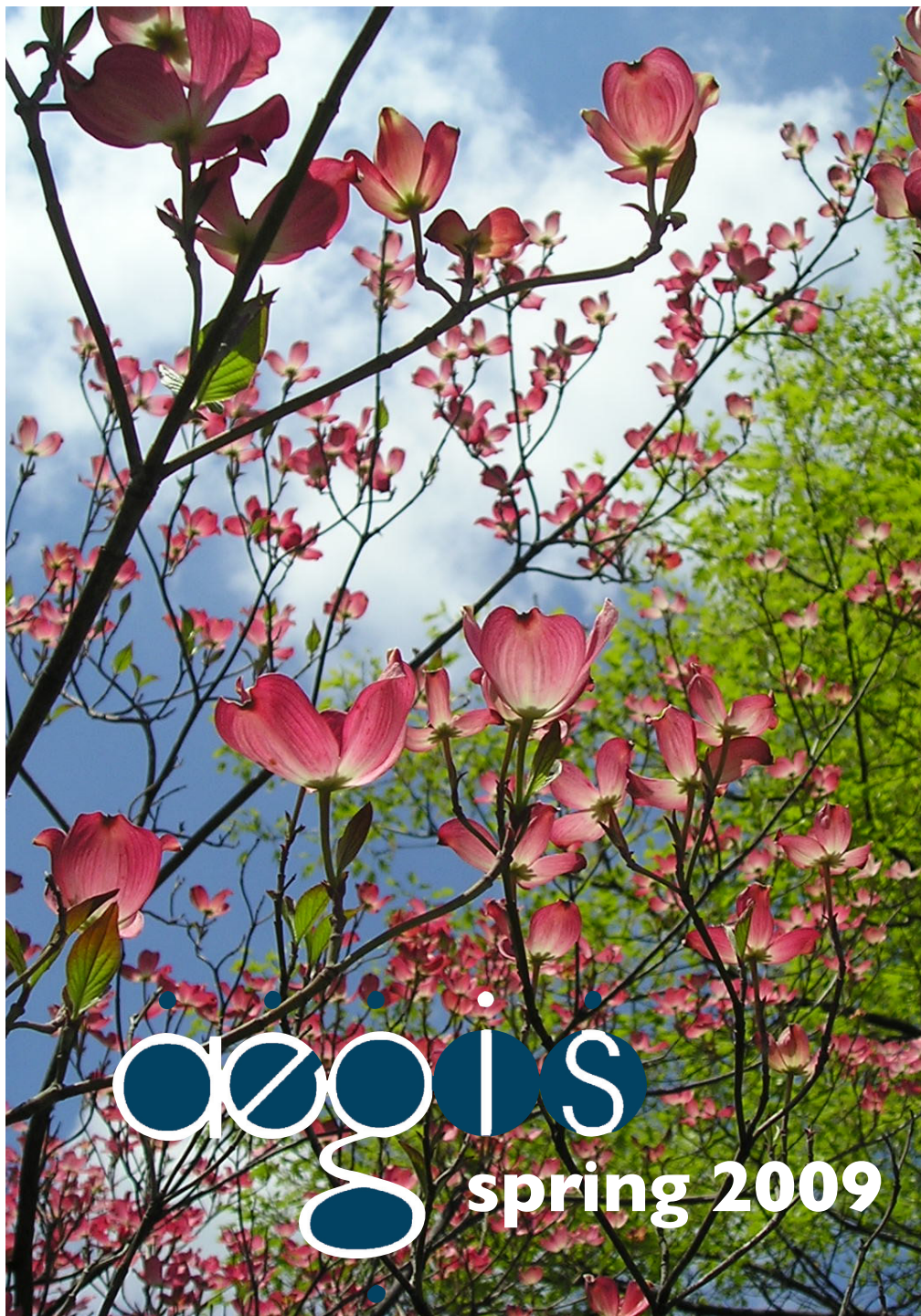
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spring 2009



## **Aegis: The Otterbein College Humanities Journal**

### **Statement of Editorial Policy**

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

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

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

Essays should be between 10-30 pages—in twelve point type, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins. This includes pages devoted to notes and/or works cited pages. Book reviews should be between 1-4 pages—in twelve point type, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins.

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

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

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

### **Aegis 2009 Editorial Board**

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Students interested in serving on *Aegis*' Editorial Board for the 2009-2010 school year should contact Dr. Karen Steigman at [ksteigman@otterbein.edu](mailto:ksteigman@otterbein.edu).

# contents

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## 5 Editors' Introduction

## 6 Interview with Dr. Rita Raley

## 15 Articles

- 15 Gibson Got It Wrong, *South Park* Got It Right: How one animated episode effectively critiques *The Passion of the Christ*—Sarah Martindell
- 21 *Wuthering Heights*: A Psychoanalytical and Masculine Study—Meghan (Johnson) Boyd
- 33 Perseverance through Adversity: The Importance of Unification—Jessica Sheffer
- 38 Liquid Influences—Whitney Prose
- 43 Revisiting van Inwagen, Lewis, and the Consequence Argument—Larsa Ramsini
- 50 Two Worlds Combined: Modernism and Classicism in Stravinsky's *Apollo*—Bonnie Shore

## 58 Book Reviews

- 58 *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*—Will Ferrall
- 60 *Suite Française*—Stephanie Freas
- 62 *The White Tiger*—Zachary Hopper
- 64 *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*—Christine Horvath
- 66 *A Mercy*—Jessica Ramey
- 67 *The Wordy Shipmates*—Larsa Ramsini
- 69 *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*—Jennifer Scarbrough

## 71 Contributors

# Editors' Introduction

● ● ● Zachary Hopper and Larsa Ramsini

As this year's editors, we have the honor of presenting to the Otterbein College community the sixth edition of *Aegis: The Otterbein College Humanities Journal*. The essays included cover a wide range of topics—from *South Park* to the Civil Rights Movement—and are a sampling of some of the best work being done by students in the humanities at Otterbein.

The six essays published in this journal represent a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, English, music, history, and cultural criticism. They were selected both for their quality as well as for their ability to raise questions relevant to the Otterbein community and to our world at large. *South Park* continues to stir up controversy with the beginning of its thirteenth season. Sarah Martindell analyzes the animated sitcom and shows that it is not, as many seem to think, simply gutter humor fit only to decrease the intelligence of those who watch it. Rather, she argues, *South Park* shows evidence of an underlying brilliance to its bitter satire and should be seen as high comedy. As another example, in her essay, "Liquid Influences," Whitney Prose takes Anne Patchett's novel *The Patron Saint of Liars* and extracts the metaphors associated with water to reveal the importance of this symbolism to the meaning of the work as a whole. In reading her analysis one is reminded of the close relationship we as human beings have with our environment and the need to preserve it as we would our own lives. We hope you will find in all of the essays included in this journal a sample of the important questions being raised and arguments being offered in the various humanities disciplines at Otterbein. These works reveal our students' commitment to exploring contemporary issues and to helping others better understand them.

Members of the *Aegis* editorial board have each selected a recently published work to read and review. The novels chosen address such issues as WWII-era film director Leni Riefenstahl, the control that randomness has over our lives, and the Nonseparatist Puritans of the American colonial era. We hope that these reviews give our readers insight into new works of literature and help spark interest in the humanities. It is also our hope that after reading these reviews, you will pick up a copy and form your own critical interpretation of the text.

This year's humanities speaker was Dr. Rita Raley, an associate professor of English at the University of California Santa Barbara, where she researches and teaches in the areas of new media (art, literature, theory) and 20-21C literature in an "international" or "global" context. In the English department at UCSB she is also the director of the Literature.Culture. Media Center (formerly Transcriptions) and co-director of the Literature and Culture of Information specialization. Her recent book, *Tactical Media* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), is a study of new media art in relation to neoliberal globalization, and she has published in leading literary journals, including *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, *Postmodern Culture*, and *Cultural Critique*. Raley is currently a Faculty Fellow at the Humanities Research Institute at UC Irvine.

We, the editors of the 2009 edition of *Aegis*, hope that our readers enjoy this year's selected essays. They cover a wide variety of topics within the humanities and represent some of Otterbein's best students. Our contributors are sure to provide you with a new perspective on the topics they discuss and the issues that they raise, and we hope you appreciate this vantage point as much as we have.

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." —Marcel Proust

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5

Editors



# An Interview with Dr. Rita Raley

● ● ● *Zachary Hopper and Larsa Ramsini*

## **What is your definition of locative media?**

It's a media that uses geographic location data, such as the global position system (GPS) and geographic information system (GIS), for artistic purposes.

## **Is locative narrative a subset of locative media?**

Yes. Locative narrative projects tend to be fictional, for instance, and often single-authored by an artist or a team of artists, whereas locative media may have single artists on the design [team] but depend on user contribution. So if you wanted, you could create your own hotspots for the Yellow Arrow Project or Murmur. The Yellow Arrow Project will distribute stickers so you can choose whatever places are meaningful to you and stick up yellow arrows to tell stories.

## **What first got you into researching locative media?**

I started noticing in this decade how artists were shifting away from the desktop and to handhelds, so that art practices are no longer screen-based. We've started to see a lot of projection based projects. Short Message Service (SMS) projects are pretty ubiquitous. One thing artists will do is take over a street corner and invite everyone to text in, and those messages will be projected onto the façade of a building. If you're in New York long enough you'll see projects like that happening all the time, so it's not only an art practice but it's also a pretty common media practice.

## **As an English professor, could you explain how locative media and locative narrative relate to literary studies?**

Well, one thing that I focus on is electronic literature, which is literature for which the computer is both a composition and a delivery medium. So certainly locative narrative would be an instance of this because we know it's composed on the computer, as are most texts at this moment, but you can only read it on the computer, so born-digital literary works are one thing I focus on. Another thing I like to think about is artists' uses of programming code and the way that they'll compose works out of affective programming language—brackets and slashes and dots and so forth—so I'm interested in the way that artists are using what's happening underneath the screen in this post-screen environment. In general I like to think about language driven media arts practice, so media arts practice that's not strictly about visual culture. As an English professor, I'm invested in getting people to think about language, rhetoric, written signs and symbols, so it makes sense that I would zero in on a particular practice of locative media that's about text. A lot of locative media, let's say haptic interfaces or technologically inflected social sculptures, are not about text at all.

## **Do you teach any courses at UC Santa Barbara related to this type of work? If so, could you describe one of them?**

Sure. I teach electronic literature, so that is one class that I teach fairly regularly. We begin

with hypertext, which has a node or lexia structure, where chunks of text invite the reader to negotiate or navigate her way through. People often compare hypertext to “choose your own adventure” stories, so in theory the reader gets to choose how the story is assembled. That’s often regarded as one of the original moments of electronic literature, but then we also do interactive fiction, text adventure games. This last time I taught it we ended up with post-screen writing, so I had them look at SMS poetry, which of course is a screen but it’s not the desktop screen. We ended up sort of where I am today.

**Aside from being used to make a statement and as a form of art or literature, are there any other uses of locative media, perhaps as a form of recreation?**

Yes, certainly. ARGs (Alternate Reality Games) would have a locative component, so they’ll invite users or players or participants to come to a particular site—often a public site, like a square or a zoo or something—and once there, listen to a message tied to the place or look for clues in the landscape. In a way these projects like Yellow Arrow are about play or recreation.

**You said in your talk that locative media can get us to inhabit the world in a better way and you noted someone who said that we live in a new world of “non-place.” What does that exactly mean?**

His name is Mark Auge and his book is called *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. What he’s interested in are these two conceptual poles between place and non-place. It’s partly impressionistic; it’s not meant to be an empirical study. He recognizes that there is not an actual existing sense of non-place. Auge is interested in non-place as spaces of transit, passage, ephemerality; it’s almost metaphorical. Everyone goes to the airport, if you want an example of dislocativeness, but also spaces in front of screens and shopping malls and so forth. He’s sort of interested in disconnectedness, dislocatedness, you know; many people worry about this. Accepting that impressionistic argument, what I find interesting about locative media—or locative narrative in particular—is it *does* try to give you that sense of rootedness and place.

**In your article “Border Hacks,” you discuss the idea of “symbolic performance” and the fact that border control signs may not just indicate that security measures are being taken, but also that the simple gesture of putting the image up for people to see is an act of attempting to “feign control over the uncontrollable” (199). How do you view these sorts of acts by the state and is your purpose simply to analyze the situation, or is there also a normative claim in your writing? Do you think there is something wrong with “military operations doubl[ing] as public relations campaigns”? (200)**

Certainly. Think about the farce of building a fence that would span the entire U.S.-Mexico border. From the perspective of someone who is living in California, I am aware of the extent to which the populace invests in the idea of a fence as a real entity that somehow protects them. And then, of course—and many people have noted this—we reach the absurd point of building a fence higher and then it’s still penetrated. Then barbed wire is added and that is



penetrated, so then we add drone patrols, but the border is still penetrated, and then we add foot patrols... You just get a kind of intensification of policing on the one hand, and penetration on the other. The fence is more powerful as an idea, as a word, than it is as an actual entity.

**In this same article you discuss Peter Andreas' study "Border Games: Policing the U.S.- Mexico Divide." You write that, concerning border control, "The performance of security is more important than actual security, and the theatrical serves as a substitute for the real." Do you see this mode of thought/action—that of "symbolic performance"—as problematic, and if so, do you see it as spreading or as strictly limited to border control? For example, what would the consequences be if the U.S. government adopted this attitude towards other concerns, such as the war in Iraq, foreign policy, or the economy?**

Could one think of the surge as something quite similar to this? You know, as a sort of symbolic exercise? I would think so; I think that would be a fair analogy, actually. It exists as a PR campaign; there is something physically or materially one could point to. But nonetheless, it's a PR campaign first and foremost. It's all about security; we're securitizing Iraq and thereby securitizing ourselves. It's temporary; it prevents us from seeing other things that have happened, like ethnic cleansing and so forth. Yes, I would think that's a good example of symbolic performance. So yes, I do worry about this notion of total protection, which is what these campaigns seem to offer. How does one fully immunize oneself against risk? Because risk by nature is an external phenomenon; how do you fully immunize yourself against risk?

**Linked to that is the idea that today's citizens are invited to join in the search for the enemy within and assume the role of the proxy sovereign in the witch hunt for the enemy, which are "illegals" in this article. Do you think that this process can be reversed, and if so, how could we reverse that McCarthyist logic? Moreover, *should* it be reversed?**

It can be reversed. If you remember when the governor of Texas advertised a program, he decided he would invite citizens of Texas to watch video footage of the border and report in on the border crossing—precisely this invitation for everyone to be a proxy sovereign. And that was pretty widely critiqued and never amounted to anything. So if the question is: can these things be stopped? One would hope so, and this would be a localized instance of refusal. People nationwide in the press and commentary had said, "You're inviting a condition of universal surveillance, and we worry about turning policing operations over to the citizenry."

**You also explain in this article the fact that there are not only territorial divisions between countries, but that these divisions, by their very nature, create what you call "metaphysical" divisions between people. As you state, the enemy as understood by Carl Schmitt is not simply the individual enemy, but the "public enemy," an understanding that exemplifies the "us" against "them" mentality. Do you see this mind frame prevalent in the United States in areas other than dealing with foreign nations, for example, in conducting a PR campaign against "the other" you may be**

**working against in a campaign, such as against abortion or same-sex marriage, characterizing the individuals for these issues as “the other”?**

In a general sense, certainly. Group identification is often based on negation: we are who we are because we're not like them. I wouldn't say that's necessarily Schmittian, because Schmitt is dealing so much with the problem of political community and sovereignty, issues of nation-state. So he's less interested in social group formation than he is in national or state-based group formation.

**You also write that the hacktivists use a “denial-of-service” tactic that focuses on “interference and disturbance,” which some may consider a new form of social protest. As this method has the potential to hinder the transfer of information and temporarily shut down the communication infrastructure, do you think that the government will increase internet security and reduce the amount of freedom that we have in cyberspace now, which is for the most part fairly unregulated?**

Yes, information security is a huge issue, and a huge area of research in the government. The last figure I saw for government's program in what they call Computer Network Awareness was between four and six billion dollars, probably leaning towards six billion dollars, that they spend on defense of information architecture and attack (it actually has two aims). Most theorists of fourth generation warfare, or warfare in the current moment, however you want to think about it—net war, information war, and so forth—say that networks are a crucial component. They're not additive; they're constitutive. And in the recent skirmishes, the skirmishes between Russia and Estonia, and Russia and Georgia, distributed denial of service attacks were launched on both sides, obviously not by artists. And the point was to cripple the networks of each respective government. We already know that, what I call in this article “hacktivism,” is a part of it, a part of, let's say, warfare in our current moment; what is happening between Russia and Georgia is war—cyber war is another term people use to describe it.

**Do you agree with Stefan Wray's prediction that the wars of the future will be digitally protested via electronic civil disobedience (ECD)?**

Oh sure. I mean, people still do ECD attacks. They're quite easy; after you activate the initial script, it's just a matter of running it over and over again.

**That raises a worry, because it seems that anyone with an internet connection and a grievance can take up one of these and implement it.**

Yes, that's why there's governmental money going into securing, building firewalls instead of fences, or in addition to fences. I should get a more recent figure. I think that is from the budget of 2007 or 2006, but it was between four and six billion dollars then, and probably more now. It's a small percentage, but still, it lets you know that there is an institutional, juridical, governmental investment in information security.

**You explain that these people known as “hacktivists” (204) hack into organizations' websites with which they do not agree on various issues. You state that “a tactical media practitioner acts for the ‘here and now’ with a fragmentary and hopeful vision of an ideal future, one that is not fixed on**

**a future horizon but ever in flux.” It also seems strange that these hacktivists do not have a set-in-stone goal of what they would like to achieve with their actions. Could you explain further their mentality and why they do not have a solid ideal in place, and an idea of the “material effects” (208) they would like to see happen as a result of their activism?**

First of all there’s a difference between tactics and strategy. Tactics are known to be short-term, strategies long-term. And often a tactical media practitioner will say, “Look, I do have a strategic goal.” For example, in the case of Ricardo Dominguez and the electronic civil disobedience collective, they’ll say, “Obviously our strategic goal is to change immigration politics in this country”; but, in a way, that’s a kind of fantasy, or an impossibility—what would that mean? Could we *practically* change immigration politics such that we had no border management or border regulation or immigration regulation at all? No one really believes that would be possible. So, what can they do, they can try to effect some sort of structural transformation with these short-term actions and hope that it’s all in the interest of long-term structural change.

**So they may not have a positive view, but they know that they *don’t want whatever is going on right now, so that’s what they’re going to try to interrupt.***

Yes, but I don’t think anyone would be so naïve as to think one particular distributed denial of service campaign is somehow going to fundamentally change immigration politics as we know them in this country. So there’s a yawning gap between the local tactic, or the local action, and radical structural transformation, which is obviously a goal, but it’s also an abstraction. And what I’ve found is that tactical media practitioners invest more in tactics out of necessity. They are aware of the fact that we exist in the present, that all we can do is act now, with an eye toward the future, an eye toward a possibly better future, but we don’t quite know what that’s going to be.

**We’ll switch gears a bit now and go to another of your articles, “Machine Translation.” You write that “Machine translation brings to our attention in a materially significant manner the ideal of a perfect and fully automated translation from one natural language to another, with both languages considered as neutral and emphasis falling on the process, accuracy, and functionality of the exchange.” Is it problematic to break down something as rich and complex as a language into nothing more than a series of numbers or formulas for transferring information?**

Sure, and “Machine Translation” begins with the idea that in a way one has to eliminate the figurative; it works at the literal register, rather than the figurative register of language, because we don’t have artificial intelligence. Without artificial intelligence we’re stuck at the literal, the level of the literal, at the grammatic rather than the rhetorical—rhetorical being the space of figuration—and it does require AI to deal with the rhetorical. So it’s a necessity, and certainly it’s problematic because, for example, it’s the reason why you don’t use machine translation to translate Dante, let’s say, or Shakespeare; it would be meaningless. Obviously you’re going to lose the text itself. What do you reduce it to? Walking? It’s hard to know what Dante gets reduced to in the end. It’s why machine translation is basically field-based at this

point too. Or with translators like Babel Fish—it's always about basic meaning. Can I get a general sense of what this is saying?

**In this article you argue for a more comprehensive understanding of language translation so as to first, not impose the English language on other languages around the world, and second, to appreciate the differences in “rhetoric and context” that each distinct language offers to its speakers (292). What dangers do you see in the imperialistic notion that English is a “master, universal, über language”?**

Well, the way machine translation works is that it always has to go through English. So if you're going to translate, let's say, from French to Chinese, you go French to English, English to Chinese.

**Why is that? Is it because machine translation began in the United States and we are the ones who control the entire system?**

In a sense. That's why I'm interested in Warren Weaver, who is in a way the conceptual founder of this. His thinking that every language is intimately and ontologically related to English is present in AltaVista Babel Fish today. You can't do any of the translations except through English. So in a way what happens is that you have an idea and then you build an information architecture on top of it, and then that information architecture is sort of inflected with that idea, which is that English is the dominant, the standard, the pivot language.

**Do you really think that a focus on the utilitarian aspect of language, on the grammatical as opposed to the rhetorical, for the purposes of translation will lead to a shift in language toward the more utilitarian ways of speaking apart from translation, devoid of rhetoric and figurative speech? (293)**

Sure. As a literary scholar I have a certain stake in the idea that difficulty is important, complexity is important, and figuration more generally is important. So I worry about that. How can literary scholars make the case that language is about more than just basic functionality when everything we've been taught to believe from Strunk and White (*The Basic Elements of Style*) on forward is that it's all about communication. What's one of the basic tenants of Strunk and White? Eliminate dead wood. What's dead wood? It's rhetoric. You know, if you sit down with those style manuals, they tell you to parrot down, get to your point...

**So how do you think that the actual machine translation is going to affect how we speak in normal, everyday life? Do you think this is actually going to change how we speak, and get rid of the figurative language that we currently use?**

I don't know if I would make that strong claim of strict determinism, but there are linguists who say that it must be the case that technology has altered speech. It must be the case, in a very local way. I think you can say language practice does alter, obviously. None of us has the capacity to alter it, but it somehow does change; it's kind of a paradox. So certainly I would say there must be some changes in language use, but couldn't one turn it back and say, well, doesn't language use itself change? Let's say, our understanding of technology or changes in

the developments of technology themselves. I don't like that strict determinism, but if one were sketching out a picture of the multiple factors influencing language change, I would say machine translation would have to be part of that big picture.

**Do you agree with Jean-François Lyotard in his assertion that “the nature of knowledge has fundamentally changed,” and that if future research is not easily translatable into a computer language, it will be abandoned? (307-8)**

I think so. First of all, in a language context, think of dead languages. The rate of language death is what, two a day? Why? Well, first of all, their speakers die, but they're not written down enough. So extrapolate from that: if you don't have a written record, you don't have history—it essentially disappears. One example that just comes to mind: The William Blake archive, which is the work of researchers at the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina, is about archiving, digitizing Blake's poems, and the big question that they had is how do we digitize these, which are composites of the image of the text? Do we digitize them as single images, and thereby, sort of, flatten out and lose text, or flatten and reduce the whole image to a series of codes? They were entertaining all of these questions. What will be preserved? Because we know the vellum, the page, is going to disappear. So if we don't make the transfer from print to the digital, then we're going to lose the print. What I find interesting in that example is that they're thinking about what they want to preserve and what they're willing to lose.

**Do you think that this more advanced language translation technology will help preserve dying languages and encourage people to become fluent in other languages, if it's easy to translate from one language to another? Or do you see this advance in technology as solely being detrimental to a language's unique culture and history?**

Maybe it's not even a question for the digital, but for recording technologies more generally. Think about all the analog recording of various, let's say, tribal languages in Africa. Maybe one could even make the argument—I'm not sure to what extent I would stand by it—that the recording in a sense facilitates the devolution or the disappearance, because one doesn't feel the anxiety about preserving the living language, if it exists in the recording. In my particular environs, in Santa Barbara, one of the indigenous languages is the Chumash, the Chumash population. I don't even know how many living speakers we're down to, but it's in the single digits. But there's still a great amount of time and money devoted to recording and documenting what they can in the language. That's where all the money goes. It doesn't go towards teaching, or actually encouraging people to learn Chumash; it goes toward the recording, because the former isn't practical. Also, the idea would be that it's not our place to teach Chumash; if it's not coming from the community, it's off. What would it mean to come from us, sort of anthropologists?

**In this piece you claim that the distinction between “programming languages and natural languages—based on the notion that programming languages are only capable of instructions and incapable of figuration, generating affect, and embodying other historical properties of the lit-**

**erary—still predominates in machine translation research” (302). Could you expand upon this distinction? Do you think that this is a misleading distinction to make, and that translation research should focus on both aspects of language? Do you think it is acceptable to use the current methodology of translation in “weather reports, legal documents, and informative instructions,” or does the method need to change for these types of translations as well?**

I think the ideal would be a machine translation with an artificial intelligence engine, for all instances. I'm not inimical to all instances of machine translation; I understand it has its basic, functional uses. But as a translation practice, one would want to ask critical questions of it. Again, what are the ideas that inform it? And what kind of ideas is it promoting? I suppose my task in that article was to ask those very questions. What is the vision that shaped the actual development of machine translation technologies, and what notion of language are these translation technologies promoting?

**So it may not cause harm in a specific instance—say, in weather reports—but the mentality behind it may cause repercussions when they're trying to translate other types of writing?**

Sure. But I would step back a bit from the notion of damage or harm, and instead think of it this way: wouldn't it be more productive if we could have a machine translation system, a language technology system, that would accommodate translations between, let's say, Tagalog and Chinese? What would it do to our Pacific Rim relations if English weren't the pivot there? Certainly one could have a purely functional exchange of information, maritime information, let's say, between the Philippines and China. But wouldn't it be more interesting and productive if there could be a direct dialog between these two languages?

**You mention Warren Weaver's conception of a “‘real’ universal language at the base of all languages” (298). If people like Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker are correct in their claim that there is some sort of “Universal Grammar” or “Language of Thought,” how do you think the elucidation of this innate structure would affect translation research? Would people like Weaver then have more clout in their argument for a process of translation that focuses on similarities rather than differences between speakers of distinct natural languages?**

Partly it's a different definition of language, I think. Warren Weaver is thinking almost purely pragmatically. But it's an interesting question. Is it productive to think about sameness? I used to do quite a bit of research into language politics around 1800; this is part of the Global English book, actually. And there was exactly this split between thinking of language in terms of difference, everything is unrelated, etc., and language in terms of sameness, the Indo-European root. The big discovery around 1800 and the Romantic Period was that there was the common source, that it all goes back to the Indo-European root and everything is a variant. That itself has its own, let's say, optics—what does the notion we are all the same mean? What does it eclipse, rather? What's at stake in excluding the notion of difference at that point? Are you just absorbing, essentially, all sub-continental languages within English, or under the umbrella of English somehow? And not identifying with sameness...is it really still a hierarchy?



It was, actually, the common source, the Indo-European root; it's still a hierarchy. So I guess I'm wary of samenesses and the identification of samenesses and the identification of differences. One would want to be critical in all instances

**By means of closing, do you see any link between your topics, e.g. border control, Global English, and locative media?**

I guess, broadly, structures of power and then resistance to that power. So in the case of English, it would be English as a kind of centralizing force on the one hand and Englishes as a decentralizing force. And maybe that is the dynamic at play in the hacktivists' activities as well. On the one hand you have the disciplinary centralizing force, border policing mechanisms, and on the other hand you have these swarm tactics of the hacktivists that are clearly decentralizing, distributed, and dispersed. So maybe that tension between centralizing forces, technology as a centralization, and tactics and techniques as decentralization.

# Gibson Got It Wrong, *South Park* Got It Right: How one animated episode effectively critiques *The Passion of the Christ*

● ● ● Sarah Martindell

## Introduction: When Surface-Level Comedy Goes Deeper

The easiest way to ruin a joke is to explain why it is funny. With an explanation, the joke may lose its humor or its impact. Some jokes, however, contribute to a deep satire that has many layers to explore—and such satire is worth explaining. Comedy Central's animated series *South Park* contains satire that deserves to be examined once the laughter dies down. In particular, the episode “The Passion of the Jew,” which mocks Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*, demonstrates a new level of humor—a didactic level.

Trey Parker's “The Passion of the Jew” originally aired on March 31, 2004, about a month after Gibson's film debuted.<sup>1</sup> Aside from the simple goal of making viewers laugh, this episode achieves other goals, some of which include: calling attention to Gibson's unhealthy preoccupation with violence; criticizing Gibson's movie for its anti-Semitic elements; and mocking the surge of evangelism that the film sparked.<sup>2</sup> Each example of Parker's satire and subsequent critique opens viewers' minds in a different way. What could seem to be a shallow cartoon actually offers a deep reflection of one movie's negative impact on its audience.

## Goal 1: Illustrate What Parker Saw as Gibson's Obsession with Torture

Besides *The Passion*, Gibson has directed and produced other films with a proclivity for violence, such as *Braveheart* (1995) and *Apocalypto* (2006). The gruesome scenes in these movies lead viewers to wonder whether Gibson is addicted to torture, a concept Parker amplifies in “The Passion of the Jew.” Two of *South Park*'s main characters, eight-year-olds Stan and Kenny, decide to see *The Passion* after reading about all the hype. When the movie is over, they determine that the movie “sucked” and they want their money back. They travel to Gibson's Malibu mansion to request that their \$18 be returned to them. Gibson informs them that they will have to find the money, and says, “You can torture me all you want—I still won't tell you!”

Stan and Kenny are confused, as neither of them had said anything about torture. “Torture you?” Stan repeats. Gibson says, “So you *do* intend to torture me, huh? Well go ahead.” While in the process of delivering these lines, he strips off his clothes until he is wearing only a pair of white briefs. He skips over to a table. Gibson continues: “Do your worst. You still won't get your ticket money back. I can take whatever you can dish out.”

Stan insists, “We don't want to torture you.” Gibson straps himself onto the table using the table's built-in wrist and ankle clamps. He responds, “I get it—but you don't have a choice, is that it? Well go ahead. I just sure hope you don't use those whips over there on the wall.” With this outlandish scene, Parker illustrates how he views Gibson—as a maniacal

man obsessed with torture. Gibson practically begs for the boys to abuse him. One must wonder, then, if Parker's view is in some way accurate. Is the real Mel Gibson secretly a masochist? Perhaps the flogging of Jesus in *The Passion* was not Gibson's attempt to realistically depict Jesus' execution. Perhaps it gave Gibson a sick satisfaction to spend so many hours directing, co-producing, and co-writing those scenes of torture.

W. Barnes Tatum, author of *Jesus at the Movies*, focuses on the gratuitous nature of the torture scene(s) in *The Passion of the Christ*. He notes that Gibson strays from the biblical text in his portrayal of Jesus' whipping, which adds evidence to Gibson's torture fetish:

The torture of Jesus while manacled to a stone pillar, prolonged and graphic, with various instruments, takes its point of departure from words in the passion accounts variously translated as "scourged," "flogged," or "whipped" (Mark 15:15; Matt 27:26; John 19:1). Jesus, as though to say, "Bring it on," declares, "My heart is ready, Father." The camera moves from the gleeful faces of the sadistic Roman legionnaires to the flayed back of Jesus... When Jesus is unleashed from the whipping post, the camera work and music transform the scene into a macabre ballet as he is dragged away[,] leaving a trail through his own blood.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps it is Mel Gibson—not Jesus—who seems to say "bring it on."

One movie reviewer, after watching Gibson's *The Passion*, argues that the "level of violence" in the movie "would, in another genre, be branded as pornographic." He claims Gibson has an "obsession with physical suffering to the exclusion of social, political, and meta-physical context."<sup>4</sup> The team behind *South Park* would agree.

Parker expands on the masochist theme in a way that could alienate his audience, and end up backfiring—yet even this method of expansion proves to be an effective strategy. All of Parker's exaggerated depictions of Gibson find their parallels in Gibson's exaggerated depiction of the Passion. One could argue that his point—that Gibson loves torture—would have been made perfectly well and been remembered by his audience had he limited the parody to the table-strapping mentioned above. But as the episode continues, Parker takes hyperbole to an even higher level, showing Gibson behaving even more insanely. Gibson twists his own nipples and pretends that others are squeezing them. Then Gibson offers his anus to a crowd, saying, "You would all love to torture me, wouldn't you? Okay, fine. See what you can fit in there—I can take it!" The absurdity of his desire to experience pain is too much to handle, in the same way the absurd abuse of Christ is too much to handle. If the viewers of *South Park* are squirming by now, they should connect that emotion with how it feels to be subjected to the outlandish scenes in *The Passion of the Christ*.

## Goal 2: Expose *The Passion's* Anti-Semitic Elements

Within the first thirty seconds of "The Passion of the Jew," eight-year-old Cartman refers to his Jewish friend Kyle as both "Jew" and "Vulcan Jew."<sup>5</sup> Cartman's comments set the tone for his role in the rest of the episode. He encourages Kyle to see *The Passion*, because "Mel Gibson says, in the movie, that Jews are the devil." He informs Kyle that "[t]here's even one part where the Jews have a chance to save Jesus, and...[t]hey let Barabbas—a serial killer—go free instead and laugh about it." Cartman highlights the controversy surrounding *The Passion* and its alleged anti-Semitism...but is this controversy unfounded?

*The Passion of the Christ* absolutely contains anti-Semitic features. Alan F. Segal lists some of these features in his essay "The Jewish Leaders": "depicting Jews as under the sway

of Satan”; “[a]dditions which make the Jews seem cruel, or greedy, or which stereotype Jewish figures as ugly or misshapen”; and “includ[ing] Emmerich’s depictions of the Jews.”<sup>6</sup> These portrayals of Jewish characters cannot be pertinent to the story. For what purpose would a scene flash an image of a mutated Jewish face? Why would Jewish children be likened to demons? Moreover, one of the worst anti-Semitic features of *The Passion* is the responsibility the Jews have for the death of Jesus. The real responsible person, however, is Pontius Pilate. Gibson gives Pilate a sympathetic personality, when it is unlikely Pilate would have spent “a moment of indecision before he passed sentence,” according to Segal.<sup>7</sup> Gibson’s rendering of Pilate creates feelings of understanding toward the Romans and animosity toward the Jews. The *South Park* episode tackles the question of “Who was responsible for killing Jesus?” when Cartman insists Kyle see the movie. Kyle watches the movie and comes to the conclusion that, yes, his Jewish ancestors were responsible for killing Jesus.

Kyle, feeling guilty because Jesus “didn’t deserve what happened to him in Mel Gibson’s movie,” visits a priest with questions about Jesus’ death. Their exchange contains some of the most thought-provoking lines of the entire episode. Kyle raises the question: “[D]id God send Jesus to die, or did Jesus just get kind of screwed over?” He makes an excellent point. If the majority of Christians believe Jesus’ death was a sacrifice for their sins,<sup>8</sup> and that God sent Jesus to earth for this purpose,<sup>9</sup> then actually *God* is responsible for Jesus’ death. The Jews are not responsible, as Gibson and Emmerich would lead us to believe. The Romans are not responsible, as history would lead us to believe. God is responsible!

Of course, instead of giving Kyle a direct answer, the priest answers Kyle’s question with another question: “What is troubling you, my child?” He shies away from the deep theological implications that Kyle raises. His quick change of subject proves that Kyle is pondering important—and dangerous—questions.

Although the priest’s inadequate response is disappointing, he does redeem himself slightly by admitting two crucial facts. First, “there’s not a whole lot in the Bible about the crucifixion.”<sup>10</sup> Second, “The Passion was actually done as a performance piece back in the Middle Ages to incite people against the Jews.” Somehow, Kyle does not dwell on this new knowledge, choosing instead to dwell on the idea that he must apologize, on behalf of all Jews, for killing Jesus. He overlooks the priest’s mention of the original purpose of this “performance piece.” Ideally, viewers will not make Kyle’s mistake—they will not overlook the point that the Passion could have been designed, and even distorted, in an effort to stir up anger toward the Jews.

Parker returns to his gift of hyperbole in his exploration of Gibson’s anti-Semitism. Cartman, the president of the Mel Gibson Fan Club (and such a devoted follower that he prays to a poster of Gibson<sup>11</sup>), dresses up like Adolf Hitler and addresses a crowd of Gibson fans. He manipulates the crowd into repeating German phrases while marching through the streets. (The German phrases can be loosely translated as “It is time for revenge” and “We must exterminate the Jews.”<sup>12</sup>) The naïve crowds think they are repeating Aramaic phrases—“you know, like in the movie.” It is not preposterous enough to have Cartman imitate Adolf Hitler and lead a crowd in the shouting of anti-Jewish phrases. Parker, like Gibson, must always go beyond the audience’s comfort level. Indeed, he does so in elevating Cartman’s love of Mel Gibson to a vulgar level: “If I knew where Mel Gibson was,” Cartman says, “I’d be down on the floor licking his balls at this very moment.” It is as if Parker does not trust that his audience will get his point. He has to bludgeon the audience with vulgar words, offensive

images, and outlandish concepts...which is precisely the crime of which Mel Gibson is guilty. It is as if Gibson does not trust that his audience will get his point—that Jesus suffered a brutal, undeserved death. Instead Gibson has to bludgeon his audience with gruesome images and incredible amounts of torture.

### **Goal 3: Critique the Evangelistic Response to *The Passion* and Offer an Alternative**

After Stan and Kenny see *The Passion*, two couples emerge from the theater talking about the film. The first man says, “Wow, I didn’t realize how horrible Christ’s death was.” His wife responds, “Me neither. Oh honey, let’s be good Christians from now on!” They exit the scene. The second husband tells his wife, “I think if more people saw *The Passion* they’d have faith in Jesus.” She answers pleasantly, “Yeah, it really guilt-trips you into believing.” Their experience of the film is a common one. According to Tatum, “Advance screenings were held in mega-churches before selected audiences; and church leaders became convinced that the film afforded unparalleled Easter time opportunities for bringing people to Christ.”<sup>13</sup> The people who attend Cartman’s fan club meeting understand this unparalleled opportunity for bringing people to Christ. At the meeting, Cartman encourages each of them to take at least one person to the movie. They agree: “[W]hat a great idea! We each make it our responsibility to convert one more person!” The Christian community’s reverence for the film is far-reaching, as is their reverence for its creator.

But by the end of the episode, the Christian crowds encounter a new image of Gibson—that of an unstable, insane man. They are forced to reevaluate their impressions of the film and its director. No longer can they blindly accept the film and use it to inspire Christian outreach. Seeing Gibson’s deterioration makes them snap out of their stupor and listen as Stan offers this moral lesson:

No, dude, if you wanna be Christian, that’s cool, but you should follow what Jesus taught instead of how he got killed. Focusing on how he got killed is what people did in the Dark Ages and it ends up with really bad results.

The essayists in *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ* concur with Stan’s sentiment. John Dominic Crossan, in “Hymn to a Savage God,” claims the film “is at best non-Gospel and at worst anti-Gospel” because it “present[s] a Passion devoid of Ministry before and Resurrection afterwards.”<sup>14</sup> Later, in “The Trials of Jesus,” Glenna Jackson concludes her essay with the assertion that “[i]n today’s world of violence, we need hope, not brutality.”<sup>15</sup> This revelation coincides with the *South Park* episode. One character realizes, “We shouldn’t focus our faith on the torture and execution of Christ.” Another adds, “Yeah. Lots of people got crucified in those times. We shouldn’t rely on violence to inspire faith.” Such a concept could be completely new to many viewers, especially Christian viewers who have grown up with traditional interpretations of the crucifixion. Now, thanks to the episode, they are asking themselves if there could be a different, healthier way to evaluate biblical events. Bigger, deeper questions can start to stir within Christian viewers: *Would the God I worship need to inflict brutal pain on someone? Does the core of my faith have to be centered in this one violent act? Should the most important moment in my religion’s history be one dominated by blood and suffering?*

## Conclusion: Thank God for South Park

At times the *South Park* series may appear shallow, desperate for a laugh, outlandish, or vulgar; but it stumbles upon some deep revelations. The writers of the show offer thoughtful, strategic critiques of events they see as potentially damaging. In this case, they see the response that *The Passion of the Christ* generated as destructive—to spirituality, to race relations, even to a healthy treatment of the human body. Although the method of hyperbole may be used in a way that repulses viewers, that in itself makes a statement. “The Passion of the Jew” exaggeratedly mocks many features of *The Passion of the Christ*, including mocking the exaggeration Gibson uses in his own film. Despite the controversy and hype surrounding the opening of *The Passion of the Christ*, it is doubtful that the modern American audience would stop to ponder whether violence is a reliable inspiration for faith. Could Christians dare to question the necessity of the Passion, an element that seems so central to their religion? Fortunately, *South Park* raises the question. Amidst the crazy antics of the *South Park* characters lies a new way to look at Gibson’s movie, and a new way to look at religion. The jokes are not so shallow after all.

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## Endnotes

1 *The Passion of the Christ* opened on February 25, 2004, which was also Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, a season of holiness and introspection in the Christian calendar. See W. Barnes Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2004), 220.

2 Other goals this episode achieves include making fun of the (inaccurate) language choices in the film and illustrating the ridiculousness of a child being allowed to see the film. These topics, however, belong in a longer essay.

3 Tatum, 215.

4 Joe Morgenstern, *The Wall Street Journal* (27 February 2004). Cited in Tatum, 222.

5 The “Vulcan” reference is due to a spaceship game the boys are playing. About thirty-four seconds into the episode, Cartman finally compromises and refers to Kyle as “Vulcan Jew Kyle.”

6 Alan F. Segal, “The Jewish Leaders.” From Kathleen E. Corley and Robert L. Webb, eds., *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ: The Film, the Gospels and the Claims of History* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 92. “Emmerich’s depictions” refers to Anne Catherine



Emmerich's visions, entitled *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, upon which Gibson very closely based his film. See Corley, 17-20.

7 Corley and Webb, 101.

8 See 1 Corinthians 15:3, which includes the phrase "Christ died for our sins" (NIV).

9 See John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that [God] gave [God's] one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (NIV).

10 John Dominic Crossan, author of the essay "Hymn to a Savage God," examines the ratio of chapters for Ministry/Passion/Resurrection in the four canonical gospels. He writes, "Mark has 13/2/1, Matthew has 25/2/1, Luke has 21/2/1, and John has 17/2/2" (see Corley and Webb, 12). Crossan's point—which matches the point of the priest in *South Park*—is that the overwhelming majority of chapters in the gospels focus on Jesus' life, not on his passion/death.

11 Cartman's prayer is as follows: "I want to thank you for all the blessings you have brought me. You have shown me the way so many times in the past and now you are making all my dreams come true. You give me strength where there is doubt and I praise you for all you have done. Only you, Mel Gibson, have had the wisdom and the courage to show the world the truth. From this day forward I will dedicate my life to making sure your film is seen by everyone. I will organize the masses so that we may do thy bidding. Hail Mel Gibson. Amen."

12 Courtesy of the online translation source <http://babelfish.yahoo.com/>

13 Tatum, 220.

14 Corley and Webb, 12.

15 Corley and Webb, 127.

# Wuthering Heights: A Psychoanalytical and Masculine Study

● ● ● Meghan (Johnson) Boyd

As a woman writing about romance, turmoil, and passion in the Victorian era, Emily Bronte in *Wuthering Heights* offers us many perspectives on women, but perhaps more interestingly, the novel also suggests how Victorian society viewed males, and their different roles within, and variations on, masculinity. *Wuthering Heights*, published in 1847, offers a firsthand view of male isolation, education, romance, and friendship. While commenting on masculinity, Emily Bronte also offers readers some insight into her personal life, however short it was, with men. Even if a piece of literature is not meant to be autobiographical, it is important for readers to be familiar with the world and frame of mind in which the author resided while writing. To help illustrate some of these biographical reflections, bits of information regarding Emily Bronte's life will be provided throughout this essay. The main focus of this essay, however, is on masculinity, specifically the masculinity of *Wuthering Heights*' central male character, Heathcliff. Through close textual analysis, various texts of theory, and psychoanalytic criticism, I will explore how Emily Bronte's novel provides a social commentary on men and masculinity. To help frame this journey through Heathcliff's masculinity, several distinct types of masculinity relevant to the time period in which Emily Bronte wrote her novel will be used as a basis of exploration. I will discuss what masculine types Heathcliff does and does not fit into, as well as some of his characteristics that are androgynous or even feminine.

## Types of Masculinity

Emily Bronte resided in Haworth for the majority of her life, with the exception of some time spent away at school or periods spent as a teacher or governess. Bronte and her siblings relied on each other for social and intellectual interaction because their father, Patrick, "discouraged [them] from mixing with the Haworth children and hence led a comparatively isolated existence" (Sherry 11). For these reasons, Emily Bronte's life provided for little interaction with males outside of her family. So, what she knew about men and different types of masculinity she learned from her father, brother, and the male characters in the popular literature she read. Not only would Emily Bronte have been familiar with the various types, but she would also have been familiar with the social expectations of men. However, it is important to note that *Wuthering Heights* was written in 1847—shortly after the Romantic era.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Romantic as well as Victorian types of masculinity are relevant when analyzing *Wuthering Heights*, and Heathcliff in particular. In John Eli Adams' contemporary study of Victorian masculinity, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, some prevalent Victorian types of masculinity included the dandy, the gentleman, the prophet, and the priest. Romantic models for masculinity included the Byronic (Romantic) hero and the Carlylian hero.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle rejected both the Romantic and Victorian models in favor of more classical models of the hero, drawing on the Bible and ancient mythology. In order to determine what masculine "type" Heathcliff embodies, I will first provide a general description of

the types. These general descriptions will also help us to recognize if and how Emily Bronte borrowed from the behaviors of her male family members to construct the male characters in her novel.

Among the types of masculinity in Victorian society, the dandy and the gentleman are perhaps the most easily visualized and associated with the Victorian era, and are well represented in Victorian novels. In his critical study, Adams defines the gentleman as “a masculinity understood as a strenuous psychic regimen, which could be affirmed outside the economic arena, but nonetheless would be embodied as a charismatic self-master akin to that of the daring yet disciplined entrepreneur” (7). A gentleman is an educated, professional man who also dresses the part. Someone is most likely born to be of gentlemanly caliber, and exhibits gentlemanly characteristics in all aspects of his life (e.g., social interactions, business, physical appearance, etc.).<sup>3</sup> A gentleman could be described as earnest, honest, courteous, self-disciplined, and true to his word. Being a gentleman is not an act or façade, but an actual personality and way of living life grounded in moral integrity.

In contrast, a dandy dresses the part, but is unable to back it up with the social or moral credentials that a gentleman would have.<sup>4</sup> According to Altick in *Victorian People and Ideals*, “dandyism framed the Victorian period” (296). A dandy is a “fundamentally theatrical being, abjectly dependent on the recognition of the audience he professes to disdain” (Adams 22). In this way, a dandy is a mere shell of a gentleman, his purpose being to be seen and “wholly lacking a sense of secure self” (Adams 22). A dandy’s social efforts are solely for the enjoyment of or acceptance by others, and not to please the dandy himself.

Prophets and priests are more complex types of masculinity, and perhaps less easily understood. A prophet, as well as a priest, is not meant to be interpreted in a religious way alone. According to Adams, a prophet is:

a model of masculine identity under stress. Like the dandy and the gentleman, the prophet is a figure of masculine vocation defined in antagonism to the marketplace, or (more broadly) the influence of “circumstances”—whether those be physical constraints or the more subtle undermining of autonomy inherent in the pressures of respectability, that anxious middle-class decorum that Carlyle contemptuously called “gigmanity.”<sup>5</sup> (25)

In other words, a prophet is a man who defines himself in opposition to society’s expectations and dictations. A prophet could be an “outsider” or “iconoclast” and is, as Adams says, under stress due to forging his own path in life. Since a prophet lives his life according to his own beliefs and visions, “the prophet has been understood almost entirely as a voice of moral wisdom (or blindness) in a baffled and self-mistrusted age” (Adams 24). The prophet’s extraordinary “wisdom” is difficult for any person to maintain and, for this reason, many authors will allow their prophet characters to “relieve” themselves of this stress—either through death or alteration.<sup>6</sup> Also, if a prophet someday decides to live his life in accordance with the marketplace, he may seem hypocritical. A priest, just like a prophet, need not be viewed or interpreted solely in a religious light.<sup>7</sup> For example, “Carlyle exalted poets as constituting a modern priesthood, secular oracles who interpreted the purposes of the universe to ordinary men” (Altick 278). Priests need not be literal preachers, but individuals who “preach” or emote their feelings, beliefs, and opinions to those around them, perhaps at times in a poetic manner.

Similar to the passionate and self-forging natures of the prophet and priests, the Byronic (or Romantic) hero<sup>8</sup> has some passionate and mysterious qualities. In the psychological study of deviant behavior by Bogg and Ray, they claim that the Byronic hero is such an attractive character type that it has survived and taken many forms in recent literature and film genres: the cowboy, the private detective, and “action cops” (462). Some of the common characteristics of the Byronic hero that were identified in this study included a personality that is mysterious; cryptic; uncertain; still under development; self-absorbed; aloof; rebellious; ambivalent; mistrustful; and often emerges as a stranger (462). As with the Romantic era, Byronic heroes are often closely associated with nature, perhaps lending the mysterious quality so many Byronic heroes share. Modern incarnations of the Byronic hero share a common factor—their jobs require isolation and a sense of mystery or secrecy. They are also in powerful positions and generally generate respect and interest among their peers. The Byronic hero is a character who is quite self-involved, yet elicits much attention from outsiders, especially in romantic situations, as concluded in Bogg and Ray’s study. The Byronic hero also lives a life of emotional intensity and high ideals, like Lord Byron himself.

Another type of masculinity defined in Emily Brontë’s circle is Thomas Carlyle’s hero.<sup>9</sup> Similar to the Romantic hero, Carlyle believed that “the great man can look into nature and God and divine all truths for himself,” and he “must possess what he terms over and over again as sincerity” (Covert 2). So, as mentioned earlier, Carlyle thinks that a hero must possess respectability (“gigmanity”) and sincerity. However, the temperament of the Carlylian hero differs from the Byronic/Romantic hero in that “he conceives manhood as much more of a passive quality, as the ability to ponder the world and perceive the depths of it” (Covert 2). Thus, instead of taking action and being rebellious (a characteristic of the Byronic hero), the Carlylian hero would be more of a lover than a fighter. The Carlylian hero is also similar to the priest in that Carlyle “sees his masculine, great man as a spiritual guide for the world” (Covert 2). This hero has the potential to right the wrongs in the world and to show those around him how things should and could be. Carlyle “observes that the hero is there to make what was disorderly, chaotic, into a thing ruled, regular” (Dellamora 62). The Carlylian hero wishes to put things in their proper place, but in a “passive” and respectful manner.

### What Heathcliff Is Not

These types of masculinity, as well as some connections to Emily Brontë’s family life, will now allow for close analysis of *Wuthering Heights*’ famous (or infamous) male character, Heathcliff. The complex nature of Heathcliff’s masculinity will be determined by comparing Heathcliff to the definitions and characteristics of each type of masculinity and to other males in the book.

Determining whether or not Heathcliff could be classified as a “gentleman” or “dandy” is a tough task. Heathcliff is a diverse yet mysterious character. Among his mysteries are where he came from and what he did when he left *Wuthering Heights* for three years. What is known about this three-year absence is that he leaves *Wuthering Heights* “a stable boy and return[s] a gentleman” (Sutherland ix). Now, it is up to the reader to read between the lines and determine if Heathcliff has *really* returned to *Wuthering Heights* a reformed “gentleman,” or if he is merely playing the part of the “dandy” to the “audience” he disdains.

Although Sutherland claims that he appears to return a gentleman, he adds that he has also become a psychopath (53) and “in a later age his violence and lawlessness would

have earned him a prison sentence—or at the very least a string of restraining orders and court injunctions” (54-55). His actions upon returning to Wuthering Heights suggest that while he has obviously learned, to an extent, to act and look like a gentleman of the world, he has not truly reformed into a gentleman. When Heathcliff began courting Isabella, Catherine warned him of the frustrations that could arise from their relationship and Heathcliff responded that he would “wrench [Isabella’s fingernails] off her fingers, if they ever menaced [him]” (Bronte 106). Heathcliff’s predictions later came true when he beats Isabella. He also keeps young Catherine from her dying father’s bedside unless she promises to marry his son, Linton (Bronte 265-266). Although, upon his return, Nelly is amazed by his transformation:

He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man...His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton’s; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace. (Bronte 94)

The description Nelly gives the reader of his appearance upon his return intimates that he had grown as a person and as a man. However, the string of violent and careless acts that occur after his return most definitely repudiate the assumption that Heathcliff has returned a *true* gentleman. If anything, he appears changed in image only, more like a dandy. But, unlike the dandy, Heathcliff does not seek the acceptance, praise, or recognition of others. His actions seem to be based on self-interest. So, for three years no one knows where he went or what he did, and it is still unclear as to what, if any, change took place in Heathcliff’s character. It seems as if he has used society merely to put a veneer on his inner turmoil and rebelliousness.

In terms of Carlyle’s definition of a priest, Heathcliff may qualify due to the poetic quality of his emotional outbursts; but beyond that, there is not much evidence that Heathcliff could fit this role in any other capacity. Heathcliff’s poetic abilities appear most strongly when he is speaking of Cathy or speaking in anger. His poetic ability does not apply to the truths of the universe and do not offer any guidance to others on how to live. This poetic quality is mostly left to Joseph, one of the only characters who openly states opinions on how others at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange live their lives. Nelly may speak her mind from time to time, but it is often selective and to one person at a time. However, while these characters speak emotional “truths,” they lack the emotional artistic quality, and are not true poets either.

When one is thinking of the main components and characteristics of Carlyle’s hero, it is clear that Heathcliff does not fit that particular mold either. As will be mentioned later in the discussion of Heathcliff as a prophet, he defies a Carlylian characteristic in that he does *not* prefer order and regularity to chaos. In fact, Heathcliff may feel more comfortable with chaos and perhaps even enjoys being its cause. Carlyle also describes the hero as being a “spiritual guide” for the world and as possessing “sincerity” and “truths.” Although Heathcliff may be poetic in confessing his emotions, he is hardly a spiritual guide for those he encounters. Heathcliff beats his wife, bans young Catherine from spending time with her father before he dies, and allows Hindley to continue drinking and gambling until his death.

It is possible to find minor aspects of Heathcliff within the boundaries of the gentleman, dandy, priest, and the Carlylian hero; but overall, his character cannot fit neatly into

any category. Heathcliff was not born into any particular class (or, if he was, it is unknown due to the mysteriousness of his origin) and does not appear to be a gentleman, nor does he grow up to be one. If Heathcliff cared about his appearance, or what people thought of him, he might qualify as a dandy, but he cares about neither. Heathcliff also does not possess priest-like qualities or those of the Carlylian hero. Now that I have discussed what types of masculinity do not apply to him, I will move on to determine what types may apply.

### What Heathcliff Is

Perhaps the reason that Heathcliff stands out so much in readers' minds is the fact that he seems to go against almost everyone and everything in the novel. In this way, Heathcliff exemplifies the "antagonism in the marketplace" of the Victorian "prophet" that Adams describes (25). As Adams points out, a prophet can be viewed as either wise or blind, but in Heathcliff's case, the people around him are baffled, unsure, and scared of his behavior. For this reason, Heathcliff's prophet-like behavior seems to be more of a result of his blindness than of any true wisdom. He does not go against the social norms or expectations in order to gain a following or to convert those around him to practice a "better" way of life. His choices in behavior are self-serving and are meant to benefit no one but himself. This is why he is more of a prophet than a Carlylian hero; he does not wish to take chaotic or disorderly things and make them "regular; instead, he will *make* things chaotic if that is what suits his needs and desires. This concept is embodied in another famous passage from the novel. When Heathcliff refuses to admit to Catherine his true feelings after she returns home from her stay at Thrushcross Grange, Nelly tells him, "Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves" (Bronte 56). The pride Heathcliff feels in being a prophet and forging his own path in life prevents him from enjoying parts of life as well. This is more evidence for the prophet, in Heathcliff's case, being more blind than wise.

There is also evidence in the setting of the novel that supports the notion that Heathcliff is a sort of prophet. The descriptions of Wuthering Heights aligns itself with Heathcliff's character and helps to support his way of living apart from the rest of society:

"Wuthering" being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones. (Bronte 4)

The physical structure at Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff himself are exposed to "tumultuous" conditions. It is not a coincidence that the structure has physical attributes that can be applied to Heathcliff's character as well. The house is reinforced with "large jutting stones" on the corners to protect and stabilize it, and Heathcliff himself seems to be reinforced with mystery and rebelliousness. The windows in the house at Wuthering Heights are also similar to the secrecy and mysteriousness that Heathcliff possesses. The windows are set deeply into the wall and very narrow, allowing for little light or ways to see inside. Heathcliff is also very



guarded and closed off (with the exceptions of the emotional outbursts seen between him and Nelly and Catherine, to be discussed shortly). Heathcliff's character and the physical attributes of *Wuthering Heights* allow him to set himself apart from society and protect himself from the struggles and elements that come along with a prophetic lifestyle. As stated above, Heathcliff is satisfied with chaotic conditions if that is what suits his desires and motives. Perhaps this explains why he is so at home in the moors, where "natural chaos" seems to reign.

An interesting extension of Heathcliff's prophet-like role can be seen in its female counterpart in another genre. The "femme fatale" is a common character in film noir that began around 1940. The "femme fatale" is a female character who is hyper-sexualized and behaves in ways that go against society's expectations for females during the time. She attracts the attention of the men around her, but this attention also appears to have a sense of uncertainty attached to it. The male characters are sure that they will be able to domesticate the femme fatale and return her to her socially designated role as a female. This pattern is true in reverse when thinking of females trying to capture and tame the typical Byronic hero. For this reason, most writers or directors end up doing one of two things with the femme fatale: killing her off or having her undergo some type of reformation (Eisenstein). Like the femme fatale, the male prophet defies social norms and expectations, all the while attracting women who are sure they can reform him. Authors and film directors feel the need to rectify this rebellion before the conclusion of the story. Either the character dies due to the dangers associated with living in complete opposition, or they succumb to the expectations and desires of a significant other and become tame and domesticated. In this case, Heathcliff dies, and misses his chance for reformation with Catherine and Isabella. Up until the very end of his life, Heathcliff lives against the grain in emotional isolation.

Of all the masculinities represented within Heathcliff, there is the most textual evidence to support the interpretation that Heathcliff is a Byronic or Romantic hero of sorts. In the psychological article "Heterosexual Appeal of Socially Marginal Men," Bogg and Ray state that Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* is a classical example of a Byronic character in literature (460). Perhaps the strongest evidence is the immense mysterious quality that Heathcliff possesses from the beginning to the very end of the novel. This stand-out quality that Heathcliff possesses in the novel is carried over into a recent film adaptation, *Wuthering Heights*, made for MTV in 2003 (Krishnamma). Since it is a current adaptation, the film alters many aspects of the original novel's characters and setting to make it relevant to today's younger audience, but one thing that stays true in the film is Heathcliff's mysterious past and origin.<sup>10</sup> In this film, "Kate" is constantly asking "Heath" to tell her again where he came from. Each time he responds with a different elaborate response, until in the climax when he finally admits that he has no idea where he came from and breaks down in front of her. The recent film adaptation presents Emily Bronte's Heathcliff as ultra-artistic (due to him being a rock star singer/songwriter), which is more relatable to a modern audience, while still keeping intact the mysterious characteristics of the literary Heathcliff.

### Heathcliff's Non-masculine Qualities

In addition to questioning what category of masculinity Heathcliff represents, one could also ponder whether or not Emily Bronte's main male character has some feminine traits as well, which would be relevant to the question of whether Heathcliff is a Romantic or a Byronic character. According to Altick, the Victorian ideal of "manliness" held that "pain was

to be concealed and grief suppressed” (7). Heathcliff is at times just as emotional, passionate, and wild as Catherine—often screaming and crying out about his love and frustration. After Catherine’s death, Heathcliff speaks the following during an emotional outpouring: “Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” (Bronte 165). Those living with him at the Heights were well aware of his emotions and feelings toward Catherine and, in turn, his hatred for every person and thing that kept him from happiness. According to Victorian gender norms (for any masculine type), Heathcliff should have been more reserved about his emotions and feelings—speaking out the way he did was something that would have been more appropriate for a woman. Although this may be seen as feminine behavior in Victorian society, this penchant for strong emotions is further proof that Heathcliff possesses a Byronic or Romantic quality, as well.

The idea that their souls are the same is not Heathcliff’s alone. During their younger years, when Catherine was torn between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton, Catherine admitted the following to Nelly: “He’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same” (Bronte 80). She follows later with the now famous line, “Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff!” (Bronte 82). Both Heathcliff and Catherine feel that their bond goes beyond the physical and emotional. Their love is not one concerned with gender or social expectations, but are almost necessary and completely involuntary: “He’s always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being” (Bronte 82). Both Heathcliff and Catherine are haunted by each other both in life and after death. Neither Heathcliff nor Catherine seems to exhibit self-discipline, and “self-discipline [is] a distinctly masculine attribute” (Adams 2). Perhaps they are able to stay physically away from each other for periods of time, but mentally they are never far apart. In this way, Heathcliff further exhibits feminine qualities by *not* exhibiting this expressly masculine quality of self-discipline. This notion of soul mates is a truly classical idea. In Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophanes offers his commentary on love and how it came about:

Since their original nature had been cut in two, each one longed for its own other half and stayed with it. They threw their arms round each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to form a single living thing. So they died from hunger and from general inactivity, because they didn’t want to do anything apart from each other. Whenever one of the halves died and one was left, the one that was left looked for another and wove itself together with that. (Plato 24)

In terms of Aristophanes’ rationalization, Catherine and Heathcliff are essentially two halves of one entity.<sup>11</sup> On their own, Catherine and Heathcliff are incomplete and each longs for its own other half. However, just as Aristophanes describes, the two halves become so immersed in each other that the rest of their lives deteriorate and one of the halves dies. When Catherine dies, half of Heathcliff dies, and he is left to seek out a false half and continue his parasitic tendencies. For Heathcliff, this false half is Wuthering Heights, Hareton, Cathy, and Linton. In the end, Heathcliff dies from hunger and general inactivity, leaving young Cathy and Hareton to come full circle.

There has to be a reason that Emily Bronte wanted Catherine and Heathcliff to have a love that surpassed physical attraction. She created them to be two parts of one whole.

Perhaps this was Emily Bronte projecting herself into both a female and male character and, at the same time, injecting some qualities she observed in her brother, Branwell, and also her father. Thinking of Heathcliff and Catherine as androgynous is also a part of Aristophanes' theory on love and gender. Going back to the idea of humans being "split," Aristophanes believed that there were three different genders: one was made up of two female halves, another was made up of two male halves, and the third was androgynous—one half of the pair was female and the other half was male. Although this theory supports heterosexual and homosexual relationships, as well as soul mates, it also supports the concept that one person can embody both female and male characteristics. Catherine understands and accepts Heathcliff's feminine characteristics, as does Heathcliff with Catherine's masculine attributes. In this way, both characters recognize the ability of the other to be androgynous in nature and perhaps are true soul mates as Aristophanes describes.

### Heathcliff's Complexity

Even if we see aspects of Heathcliff in several prevailing models of masculinity, and even if we acknowledge the ways in which he is feminine, it is still difficult to place Heathcliff solely into one category because he possesses so many contradictions. Why would Emily Bronte construct a character with so much complexity and such little certainty? What does this say in terms of a female author writing about masculinity?

Just as it is possible to see parts of Emily Bronte's life and encounters with males in her novel, perhaps the same theory can be applied to Heathcliff himself. Heathcliff and Emily Bronte have a major factor in common—neither was exposed to many male influences growing up. Although Heathcliff's beginning years are unknown, the reader knows that once he arrives at Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff's examples of masculinity are provided by Earnshaw, Hindley, and Joseph. Heathcliff's masculinity is shaped by only three male influences while he is growing up at the Heights. It is possible that his adult self is shaped by what he sees and the examples provided by these three men in his younger years.

The idea that the opinions and actions of others can alter one's personality is a concept known as "the looking-glass self." The looking-glass concept is part of a symbolic interactionism theory founded by George Herbert Mead. Mead claimed that "we paint our self-portrait with brush strokes that come from *taking the role of the other*—imagining how we look to another person. Interactionists call this mental image the *looking-glass self* and insist that it's socially constructed" (Griffin 59). Heathcliff would have internalized comments or opinions his male influences may have voiced and applied them to his own personality and view of himself. An interesting aspect of the looking-glass self theory is that of a self-fulfilling prophecy: "the tendency for our expectations to evoke responses in others that confirm what we originally anticipated" (Griffin 63). Heathcliff is constantly degraded by Hindley after Earnshaw's death and is constantly lectured by Nelly and Joseph. These thoughts and opinions eventually became a reality for Heathcliff and his life through a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hindley exhibits extreme jealousy and vengefulness. Those same characteristics seem to define Heathcliff in the second half of the novel. His life and actions are ruled by his need to have revenge on Hindley through Hindley's death and the subjugation of Hindley's son, Hareton. Heathcliff also exhibits a case of jealousy toward Edgar Linton when he admits to Nelly that he "wishes [he] had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be" (Bronte 56). In this passage, Heathcliff is comparing him-

self to Edgar; and admitting that he envies aspects of Edgar's physical appearance and wealth. This jealousy is further fueled by Catherine's marriage to Edgar. Heathcliff is a very complex character and hard to define, and Mead thought that "the true test of any theory is whether it is useful in solving complex social problems" (Griffin 55). By applying the looking-glass self and the self-fulfilling prophecy theory to Heathcliff, perhaps he can become an understandable character.

Hindley seems to possess the selfishness and independent characteristics of the Byronic hero, but in a less attractive manner than Heathcliff. Perhaps these characteristics are not as attractive in Hindley because he does not possess the mystery that Heathcliff does. The reader knows the type of life Hindley had, and knows why he behaves the way he does—he is greatly jealous and resentful of Heathcliff from the moment he arrives at Wuthering Heights. From the beginning of their relationship, Hindley dislikes Heathcliff and, up until the end, he thinks him a "hellish villain" (Bronte 137). Hindley's hatred for Heathcliff only grows after Earnshaw's death and he is able to exert more control over him. As Lockwood reads in Catherine's journal during his first stay at Wuthering Heights, Hindley blames Earnshaw for treating Heathcliff "too liberally" and he "swears he will reduce him to his right place" (Bronte 22). For many of his younger years, Heathcliff is told by Hindley that he is of lower class and that he is not fit to sit or eat with, and he and Catherine are forbidden to play together. However, upon Heathcliff's return after a three-year absence, Hindley's hatred becomes more founded when Heathcliff takes control of the Wuthering Heights estate. At this point, Isabella (as a new bride and resident of Wuthering Heights) describes Hindley as a man "on the verge of madness" (Bronte 139). Hindley's negative disposition serves as a strong influence in Heathcliff's life, and Hindley's opinions of him may have been destined to be fulfilled. Also, Hindley's character may be similar to one of Emily Bronte's main male influences, her brother Branwell. Branwell had the ability and opportunity to be very successful—he was intelligent, artistic, and charismatic, and his family allowed him the leisure to seek success. However, his fondness of vices led to his downfall, much like Hindley.

Joseph seems to be a priest-like character, while also being a bit of a prophet himself. He is constantly on the grounds at Wuthering Heights, and seems to know just as much of the goings on as Nelly; but he is more detached. He offers constant commentary and judgment on his fellow inhabitants and masters, but it is safe to say that Heathcliff does not heed his advice. This moral voice may be representative of the vocation of Emily Bronte's father, Patrick Bronte, a clergyman. The Bronte sisters were among "a number of men and women with great intellectual gifts [that] came from Evangelical homes or were otherwise exposed to Evangelical influence in their formative years" (Altick 190). Emily Bronte's father's voice may very well be present in Joseph's character. Joseph is also absent in much of the novel, except when he appears to speak his mind to the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. The characteristics of preaching and general isolation are also similar to Patrick Bronte's lifestyle. Yet, it is interesting that Joseph is able to observe the chaos that takes place at Wuthering Heights and at the same time maintain his distance from it.

Earnshaw has a short life within the novel, but sets the stage for the events to follow. He seems to be not very involved in the family life at Wuthering Heights, giving Catherine, Heathcliff, and Hindley free range. This aspect of Earnshaw is especially highlighted in the MTV movie adaptation; Earnshaw is aloof and unaware of the growing hatred between Hindley and Heathcliff and almost plays a part in it by assigning Heathcliff as his "favorite" son

(*Wuthering Heights* Krishnamma). The fact that this interpretation of Heathcliff's and Earnshaw's relationship exists in a current movie adaptation shows that this theory has relevance. This behavior is similar to the Bronte patriarch's penchant for isolation. Patrick Bronte "valued his privacy and cherished it," isolating himself even while he was home: "Because of a digestive trouble, he took most of his meals alone in his study, his time being spent in that room when he was not out on parish business" (Sherry 11). So, it seems that the three main male influences that Heathcliff is exposed to share characteristics with the main male influences in Emily Bronte's life. Emily Bronte applies the "looking-glass self" concept to the male characters in her novels (with her real life male acquaintances as models) and further applies the concept through those characters onto Heathcliff.

Another explanation for Heathcliff's complexity relates back to Aristophanes' theory on the beginnings of love. Could it be possible that Emily Bronte shapes Heathcliff to be her male self? Emily Bronte had little exposure to men, as I have discussed, yet the representations of men in her novel are so real, emotional, and appealing. There is more support for this theory because, as Jane Miller states in *Women Writing About Men*, "There is sheer difficulty of giving any male character a setting and a context for his life, when women knew so little about men's lives outside the family" (151). Perhaps this is why Heathcliff is such a difficult character to describe in terms of masculinity. Emily Bronte was unable to realistically portray all aspects of a male character because she had such little first-hand knowledge of males and their lives away from home. In this case, Heathcliff really would be her own creation, combining what she *did* know: her self, her interactions with her father and brother, and the characters that she read about in popular literature at that time.

Heathcliff does not have to be a projection of Emily Bronte in male form, but he could be a mix of Emily Bronte and her brother, Branwell, in literary form. As Norman Sherry states in his biography of the Bronte family,

Emily did not see her world in relation to moral or social concerns of the day. She was not irked by the restrictions placed on women in society, and presumably viewed Branwell's self-destruction as the action of a free soul going its own way—as did Heathcliff and Hindley and Cathy. She was able to see such events, observed the reasons for certain actions, but she was so removed from the influence of everyday morality that she did not need to judge, or to point a warning lesson. (40)

The Bronte sisters remained at home (unless they were teaching or performing governess duties) while the family sent Branwell, the only male, out into the world to chase his dreams and find success. According to Sherry, Emily Bronte did not feel resentment towards Branwell or her family for this, but understood and supported him. Apparently, she did not think that he wasted his opportunities either; she saw Branwell as, in a way, living out his destiny. Perhaps through the creation of Heathcliff, Emily Bronte was giving herself the opportunities that Branwell had, but Heathcliff's end was not all that different from Branwell's. Perhaps she saw her fate, whether as a female or male, to be connected with the fate of her brother. Emily Bronte had talent, just as Branwell did, and perhaps the opportunity to experience success (had she lived long enough). Branwell gave in to his vices and ended up meeting his fate, and Emily Bronte was unable to fight off the illness that came after her brother's death. There are several parallels between Emily Bronte and her brother, as well as between the Earnshaw

children and Heathcliff.

Whether we analyze Heathcliff by psychoanalysis of the author, or through standard personality development theory, it becomes clear that Heathcliff is a dynamic character. He does not possess the proper characteristics of the gentleman or the showy characteristics of the dandy. He also does not exhibit the moral qualities of the priest or Carlylian hero. However, Heathcliff shows tendencies/characteristics of being a prophet (self-forging and independent) and a Byronic hero (mysterious, cryptic, and rebellious). If he were utterly degenerate, *Wuthering Heights* would not still be, and never would have been, a classic love story. For over 150 years readers have found something compelling and irresistible in Heathcliff and his interactions with Catherine and the others at Wuthering Heights. Although Heathcliff may not be entirely definable, Emily Bronte creates a fictional character that possesses some sort of truth that appeals to all readers, whether male or female.

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## Endnotes

1 European Romanticism took place between 1770 and 1830 (Leon Chai) and the Victorian era can be linked to the reign of Queen Victoria between 1837 and 1901 ([www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org)).

2 The “Byronic hero” comes from the poet Lord Byron from the Romantic period. Byron was a prolific writer and his poetry influenced many writers after him. Characters with specific traits throughout the Romantic era were labeled as Byronic heroes. The “Carlylian hero” comes from Thomas Carlyle, who began writing on the topic of the hero in 1841, placing him in the same decade when Emily Bronte wrote *Wuthering Heights*.

3 Other examples of gentlemen in Victorian literature: Victor (*Frankenstein*)—created by a female novelist and exhibits Victorian gentlemanly qualities even though the novel’s action does not take place in Victorian England, Sir Leicester (*Bleak House*), Casaubon (*Middlemarch*)

4 Other examples of dandies in Victorian literature: Turveydrop (*Bleak House*), Godfrey Ablewhite (*The Moonstone*)

5 Carlyle’s name for a man who prides himself on, and pays all respect to, respectability (“Gigmanity” *Oxford English Dictionary*).

6 Other examples of prophets in Victorian literature: Victor (*Frankenstein*)—after his failed experiment, Frankenstein (*Frankenstein*)—post-traumatic prophet, Woodcourt (*Bleak House*), Will Ladislav (*Middlemarch*)

7 Other examples of priests in Victorian literature: St. John (*Jane Eyre*), Mr. Hale (*North & South*)

8 Other examples of Byronic heroes in Victorian literature: Rochester (*Jane Eyre*), Woodcourt (*Bleak House*), Fredrick (*North & South*), Mr. Thornton (*North & South*), Will Ladislav (*Middlemarch*)

9 Other examples of Carlylian heroes in Victorian literature: It is hard to find those characters who embody these ideals because Carlyle himself felt that they were non-existent and felt the need to go back to classical literature to define what the hero *should* be like. Perhaps Joseph (*Wuthering Heights*) would be a decent example—he has a strong moral compass, but he is a common person of low status, which does not fit with the classical ideals of a Carlylian hero.

10 One part of the MTV film, *Wuthering Heights*, that differs from the novel is the interpretation of Heathcliff’s physical appearance. In the novel, Heathcliff describes himself as having dark hair and dark skin (Bronte 56), but in the film, Heathcliff is portrayed by an actor with mid-length golden blond hair and fair, but slightly bronzed, skin. Also, in the movie, “Heath” has a poetic mastery beyond that of the literary version. In the movie, “Heath” turns out to be a very successful songwriter and performer, and expresses his love for “Kate” through his songs and lyrics up until her death.

11 When the Greek gods created man, each was round with four legs and four arms. It is said that Zeus grew worried that man would become too powerful, so he split each into two. After man was separated, the two halves tried desperately to find their missing half and remain together forever. This explains the idea of soul mates, that perhaps each human really does have a missing half that will make him or her whole.

# Perseverance through Adversity: The Importance of Unification

● ● ● Jessica Sheffer

Throughout United States history, Americans have often fought for reform and revolution. One fight in particular, which was carried out for hundreds of years, could be considered the most difficult battle within our borders. The Civil Rights Movement was unique in its attempt to pervade the depths of inequalities deeply rooted within the American culture. Throughout the movement, the use of effective tactics by Black Americans<sup>1</sup> greatly encouraged the possibility of this reform. Much of the literature surrounding the Civil Rights Movement discusses the ways in which the struggles for equality, although layered with hatred and oppression, were met with intelligent action that enabled the progression of the cause. Articles written during this time as well as books inspired by the movement, including Time on Two Crosses by Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise, Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison, The Lakestown Rebellion by Kristin Lattany, and The Spook Who Sat by the Door by Sam Greenlee, show some of these strategies as recurring themes necessary to the advancement of civil rights. In all of these texts, it is made apparent that unity is one of the most important driving forces that enable Black Americans to overcome their oppressors. Without individuals working together for the common good of the group, there would be no firm foundation to create movements dealing with important issues such as civil rights. Therefore, during this movement, unification in regard to the group as a whole serves as the foundation of strength beneath the Black American community.

During the Civil Rights Movement many people recognized the importance of unification and used this to their advantage. Bayard Rustin, an influential civil rights leader who often remained behind the scenes of the movement, strongly advocated the importance of nonviolent protest. Although he focused his strategies on nonviolence rather than unity, it is clear that nonviolent protest has a powerful impact only when it is supported by the unified mentality and behaviors of a group. In the book Time on Two Crosses, editors Carbado and Weise discuss the famous “March on Washington.” Organized by Rustin in response to civil rights legislation and employment issues, this march was so powerful in commanding the attention of the public because of the unity of the Black Americans who were involved. According to Carbado and Weise, this demonstration, “was a turning point in American protest history” (XXX). They go on to say that, “the movement peacefully coalesced for the first time ever, articulating its demands for the economic empowerment and civil rights with one voice. Even Malcolm X... attended, telling reporters, ‘Well, whatever black folks do, maybe I don’t agree with it; but I’m going to be there, brother, because that’s where I belong’ ” (Carbado and Weise XXX). Although Malcolm X did not agree with the nonviolent tactic, he understood the power of support through unification. It is no surprise that this act of unity granted the protesters the power and attention they needed in order to be successful in projecting their message to the United States.

The importance of unity is also conveyed through Bayard Rustin's writings in which he points out the destructiveness of its absence. In his letter "No More Guns," Rustin reprimands a group of Black American college students who turned to firearms in an attempt to intimidate the white college students. Although the Black students acted alone, he addresses the Black American community as a whole, stating, "the use of guns...by a group of black students should come as a great shock - and a great sorrow - to all black Americans struggling for freedom and social justice" (Carbado and Weise 160). Rustin goes on to say that their actions, "will obstruct any progress for black Americans" (Carbado and Weise 161). The students described here were each united under their own method of revolt, which included tactics of fear and pressure. They were also aiming for the same goals as those of nonviolent protestors: equality and reform. However, Rustin believed that utilizing the methods of violent protest was futile in its attempts and also served as a hindrance towards the Black community as a whole. Instead of using both tactics, Rustin argued that all Black Americans must come together under one form of protest in order to obtain their ultimate goals. He believed that in order to be successful in their battle against oppression, Black Americans needed to work together to support the best interests and progression of the group.

In her novel, Song of Solomon, Toni Morrison also alludes to the negative impact that can result from the lack of unity on the individual level. In order to show this impact, Morrison depicts the protagonist, Milkman, a Black American who is mentally cut off from his surroundings. Since he chooses to be unified with no one, his life is full of confusion and indifference. He does not sympathize with or contribute to the movements aimed at correcting the social problems of the time, but instead remains focused on the problems within his own life. Even when Milkman is physically placed in the middle of a protest, he remains oblivious to the importance of the Civil Rights Movement. In this scene he notices that, "the street was even more crowded with people, all going in the direction he was coming from. All walking hurriedly and bumping against him...He turned around to see where everybody was going, but there was nothing to see except their backs and hats pressing forward into the night" (Morrison 78). From this description, Milkman is disoriented from the amount of attention that he chooses to put on himself. He can also be seen as a physical hindrance to the group. In a metaphorical sense, this scene depicts how difficult it is to advance a group in the direction of reform when individuals, who focus solely on themselves, create obstacles that stand in the way of this advancement.

The reader will later find out that Milkman is able to relieve his problems through forming a connection with his roots. This feeling of membership combined with the realization of his role within his cultural group could be described as the unification of Milkman and the history of his ancestors. As Morrison states, after learning about the song of his ancestors, "he was grinning. His eyes were shining. He was as eager and happy as he had ever been in his life" (Morrison 304). Thus, Milkman's initial feeling of angst is largely related to his experiences of disconnection. This feeling is quickly relinquished, however, when he finds a connection to his family heritage by learning the song of his ancestors. Throughout Milkman's various stages of involvement with his family's history, Morrison is able to show the reader just how important it is to unify one's past with one's present, and the different effects this can have on the individual.

The need for unification is also present in Lattany's The Lakestown Rebellion. Unity is especially important due to the struggle within this Black American community against the

ever-present threat of destruction. Lattany explains that the city planners of the exclusively white neighboring town decide to build a highway through Lakestown for their own convenience as well as for the benefits they would receive from the increase in tourism. However, they are only able to execute their plans at the expense of the citizens of Lakestown, most of whom are Black. Because these citizens were not able to defend themselves legally, they needed to unite as a group in order to fight off their oppressors.

It is apparent that even the young adults in Lakestown understand that they need to be united in order to save their town. Some of the young boys in the community even took the responsibility to create a secret group called the “warriors” in order to contribute to their town’s fight against oppression. After a verbal argument takes place between two warriors, they calm each other down by saying, “‘Peace, brothers... We can’t afford to be fighting among ourselves. That’s our first rule, remember? ‘Umoja.’ ‘Umoja,’ echoed the others, repeating the word for unity” (Lattany 83). The boys in this novel show a clear understanding and appreciation for the concept of unification. Through this group of boys, Lattany also demonstrates that it is important to remain mindful of the best interests of the group as a whole. She depicts this importance when the warriors are tempted by Ted Crump to swim in a pool that is for white people only. Ted, who is described as serpent-like and often compared to the Grim Reaper, is not a member of the warriors due to his bad reputation and eerie presence. He is a character that thrives on temptation and trickery. At first, many of the warriors object to this idea because they do not want to cause unnecessary trouble for their community. After Ted hears their objections, he claims, “call yourselves proud black warriors, and yet you walk past that place every day and pretend it isn’t there...you pretend you don’t even know there’s an Olympic-sized pool two feet from your noses. That’s cause Whitey’s got control of your minds” (Lattany 98). After Ted’s belittling statement, many of the warriors agree with him, allowing their emotions to cloud their judgment. Since their judgment has been impaired, the warriors are no longer focusing on what is best for their community as a whole. Rather, they unite within their group to recover their own pride. Unfortunately, at the end of the scene, one of the young warriors drowns in the pool. In this scene, Lattany depicts the problems that can occur within the Black American community when one group goes against the best interest of the entire community for personal reasons.

The importance of unification is also observed by the adults in Lakestown. While listening to the news of the new highway, Bella claims that, “‘black people... have to work together as a tribe. We’re surrounded and outnumbered. We can’t afford to let the men take all the risks alone. And this is something that could involve every man, woman, and child in town’ ” (Lattany 78). This idea demonstrates not only the importance of agreement and unified support towards one cause, but also the need for unification among the various groups within the Black community. Therefore, in order to overcome the circumstances implemented by their white neighbors, the Lakestown community understands and places importance on the need for unification.

In his novel The Spook Who Sat by the Door, Sam Greenlee often alludes to the importance of the presence of unification, but also allows the reader to see this importance through its absence. The protagonist of the novel, Dan Freeman, attempts to fight for the freedom of other Black Americans through a gang of teenagers called The Cobras. Freeman is able to train this group of young men to utilize their bravery, intelligence, and individual skills to infiltrate, intimidate, and weaken the police and government officials. Because Freeman un-

derstands the difficulty of this mission, he chooses The Cobras not only for their reputation, but also for their understanding of unity. As Greenlee explains, “the gang goes on. Street gangs and churches are about the only durable social institutions in the ghetto” (Greenlee 80). This durability through unification is what enables the Cobras to carry on through social and governmental layers of adversity. In this passage, however, it is obvious that Freeman is not interested in using the nonviolent approach in which church groups in the ghetto most likely participate. For his purposes, Freeman understands the necessity of utilizing a group that has already established unification at its core, which, in addition to the men’s backgrounds and beliefs, is necessary for his ultimate objective of freedom and equality.

Greenlee also displays the negative impacts that occur within the Black American community when unification is not present. Throughout the novel, he establishes a clear sense of distance between the Black middle class and the Black lower class. This detached state becomes most apparent when Greenlee describes the impact that the white ideal of normality has had on the Black middle class, or on those who view themselves through the eyes of the white culture. Because many of the middle class Black Americans in this novel have developed distorted expectations of themselves, their connection to white cultural ideals has led them to break away from their own culture. Greenlee describes this break within the Black American community when explaining Freeman’s involvement with the middle class, stating, “he fell into step with others like himself, safe, tame, ambitious Negroes...the smiles fixed on their faces, heads held high to pretend the treadmill did not exist and that their frantic motion was progress. More white than whites; devout believers in the American dream because fugitives from the American nightmare” (Greenlee 82). Here, the cultural control that has developed within the Black community from the acceptance of the white ideal has led to the deterioration of the Black image. This, in turn, has created distance between the middle and lower classes of Black Americans.

Due to this discontinuity, those from the middle class are out of touch with their true culture as well as other Black Americans who refuse to fall under the influence of white ideals. In order to suppress the cultural control that is forced upon Black people in this novel, the characters must unite under one mentality to reverse this damage. In other words, Greenlee makes it very clear that the Black Americans who are not fighting for the survival of their culture in its entirety, or those who accept the standards of white ideals, have aided in its division. For example, near the end of the book, Freeman has an argument with Sergeant Dawson about the identity of “Uncle Tom.” “Uncle Tom,” or Freeman’s alter ego, served as the head of the Cobras and also devised plans to disrupt the controlling and racist mentality displayed by the white establishment. During this argument it is apparent that Dawson has grown accustomed to the racist ideologies of his white co-workers when he says, “you know the Communist party in the States is like any other white scene: a few showpiece spades in the name of integration, but whitey calling the shots,” to which Freeman replies, “and there sure ain’t no spade experts, are there, Sergeant Dawson? Expertise is a white man’s monopoly – they got a patent on it. You sure are brainwashed” (Greenlee 242). In this scene, Dawson is trapped under the white mentality of those around him. This is a problem for Freeman, who needs to have Dawson on his side in order to continue his fight for Black equality. At the center of his problem lies the division between people with differing mentalities, which serves to stifle the progress toward freedom for the Black community.

Randall Kennedy also shares a similar opinion in his book Sellout: The Politics of

Racial Betrayal. Kennedy defines a 'sellout' as, "a person who betrays something to which she is said to owe allegiance" (Kennedy 4). In the terms of Black American ethnicity, a 'sellout' is also, "a disparaging term that refers to blacks who knowingly or with gross negligence act against the interests of blacks as a whole" (Kennedy 4). The book goes on to describe such people as particularly dangerous to the subordination of Black Americans. In this sense a 'sellout' who is the same ethnicity, and therefore supposedly on the same 'team,' is considered to be even more dangerous to the ethnic group than an enemy. This is due to the fact that enemies, or those from other ethnic groups, are socially distant and can be recognized easily; 'sellouts,' however, cannot. Kennedy believes that their behavior serves only as racial betrayal, which can undermine the unity of Black Americans at their core. This book was recently written and acknowledges the current marginalization of the Black American community. Although the United States has greatly progressed since the days of the Civil Rights Movement, Kennedy points out the fact that Black Americans continue to be a "vulnerable racial minority" (Kennedy 4). This statement suggests that unity, which aided Black Americans during the movement for civil rights, is still a necessary component for the sustainment and progression of their community.

Throughout all of these literary works, it is apparent that one of the most common themes of the Civil Rights Movement is the importance of unification. As writers such as Rustin, Lattany, and Greenlee explain, unity, which provides underlying support, can lead to power, which increases the chance of progression toward civil rights. Lattany also underscores the idea that unity is powerful when its intentions are focused on the advancement of the whole group. Furthermore, Morrison and Greenlee depict in The Song of Solomon and The Spook Who Sat by the Door that the lack of unification can produce negative consequences for the individual as well as the group. Kennedy also makes an important statement, reminding Black Americans that unity continues to be a vital part of the foundation of the community. In all of these books, unity can be seen as a vital force that, when directed towards the betterment of the entire group, enables perseverance through adversity.

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### Endnotes

I Although different terminology is used throughout the literature on this topic, I will consistently use the term "Black American" throughout this essay.

# Liquid Influences

● ● ● Whitney Prose

Ideas cannot flourish in a void, nor can a soul exist in one. Anne Patchett's ideas flow through the medium of the novel *The Patron Saint of Liars*, while the protagonists' souls are enveloped by water. Patchett shares her ideas of water by understanding and utilizing the heavy influence that one's surroundings have on each person. Her characters change, relate to, and also hate their environments. To understand the complex characters, the reader must rely on interpreting the atmosphere surrounding the characters, with water being the most constant and influential aspect of this atmosphere. Water is often considered synonymous with life, and this relation and duality is visible in *The Patron Saint of Liars*. In Patchett's novel, water represents life symbolically through religion, physically through giving birth, and symbolically through drowning. Readers of *The Patron Saint of Liars* will miss the subtle meanings of the novel if they do not understand the many layers of significance of water that are present in it.

Patchett's novel is steeped with religious references and she is aware of the Biblical meanings of water. Her novel is set in a Catholic home for unwed mothers where the nuns not only refer to things in spiritual manners, but Patchett does herself. For example, a man feels "the call to witness" and goes into the streets testifying to the people "slow in believing" (Patchett 3). This man, Mr. Clatterbuck, is not testifying about Jesus Christ, but instead, about a spring of water on his—later the nuns'—land. An artesian spring bubbled out of the ground on the Clatterbuck's land in the early 1900's. The water heals Mr. Clatterbuck's cattle, horses, and eventually saves his daughter Rose's life from a mysterious illness. The spring is said to be working for "the Devil or the Lord" (Patchett 2). The water brings life to those who are dying. Patchett uses the traditional Christian reference of Christ the Savior as Living Water and turns it on its head. Now, water *itself* is the Christ Savior. Patchett has read and understood scriptures such as Jeremiah 2:13: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (KJV). She has taken this verse and brought it into her story by writing of a living spring that was not created by man. This living spring is the only thing that healed, and nothing created by man could help save Clatterbuck's livestock or daughter. Additionally, the spring dries up when a hotel is built and the sick, ill, and lame feel too poor to pass through its richness to reach the spring. The evil sin committed is forsaking a person the living waters, so the waters go away. This theme of salvation, forsaking salvation, and then being left dry is repeated throughout the novel.

Patchett might have taken her novel's theme that sinfulness is a lack of water from Psalm 36:9, which directly makes water and life synonymous: "For with you is the fountain of life" (NIV). Water is seen as life even in the final book of the Holy Bible: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (NIV Revelations 22:1). Only water comes from fountains; but here, a fountain is springing forth life. In *The Patron Saint of Liars*, when the natural spring in the novel dies, the hotel falls into disarray and the people go away. Just as it is written in the Bible, life is water flowing from God. People without life, those who are dead in their souls, cannot have



water—such as the arrogant characters in the novel who build the hotel over the spring. Their lives are spent obsessed with money and therefore the water goes away. Water is life in this novel—where water comes and flows people gather and thrive.

Water has yet another role in Patchett's novel. The novel begins with an omniscient description of an underground river emerging in a pasture, but then shifts into a very personal limited narration by the character Rose. Patchett defies the conventional writing techniques by personifying the water: "not a living soul saw it [emerge]. Spring didn't care" (Patchett 1). This personification leads 'Spring,' the water, to be the novel's first protagonist; in a way this is the novel's only protagonist because the subsequent events occur around the location of the spring and because of the spring. Other characters share their perspectives on the events of the novel, but each event occurs as a result of Spring's first decision to become a temporary creek. In the beginning of the novel, Spring is a sulfurous miracle that saves the life of Mr. Clatterbuck's daughter June. This narration sets the tone for water being life, and both are something to celebrate and praise. However, this is juxtaposed by Rose's narration which craves but hates life and water. She desperately wants to arrive at the fountain of life, but at the same time she feels unworthy and resentful of life. She assumes narration of the story as she is driving through a desert after having abandoned her family. The reader is taken from a story of water and life at the spring to Rose's story of dryness and death. She recalls swimming in the Pacific Ocean as she drives:

It...was like every other night you had seen so far, but a night that when you remember it years later in a place without an ocean, is like a powerful dream. Everywhere you went you heard water, the same way you had always heard your breathing, and would later hear the highway, or trains, or women's voices. But the sound was so much a part of everything that you couldn't hear it at all then. This is what I took for granted: The sound of water. The light on the water, day or night... The smell of water (Patchett 18).

Through Rose's description of the ocean the reader can feel her longing for water. Since water represents life in this novel, the reader can also surmise that Rose pines for a life she once took for granted.

In a way it is water that first draws Rose away from her family. She is supposed to pick up her husband after work each day, but one afternoon she does not make it back in time. She had been driving along the coast and thinking about the Californian hills. She was thinking about them because a year ago they were black and charred, but after a year of floods the hills are rich with lush green life. The liberty she feels from the day-long trip quickly leads her to have the nerve to travel farther and farther until she does not return to her husband. She has left to seek her own new source of water and life. After Rose has crossed the desert and made it to Habit, Kentucky, she stops at a gas station for directions. She recalls that "three children...sat dully in a small inflatable swimming pool half full of water" (Patchett 43). The reader can interpret this scene to mean that Habit is only half full of life; however, when taking the children into consideration, one may offer a different interpretation. Patchett wants us to remember the children and to see them as a foreshadowing of Rose's experience in Habit. Rose continues: "One of them tried to splash me as I walked by, but the water fell short, making a little muddy spot in the dust" (Patchett 43). Even though there is so little life in Habit, what life/water there is still cannot reach Rose. She is walking soulless. This child has shown the reader that Rose is not reachable. In the small pool, one of

the children tries to hold another under the water, “but there really wasn’t enough water to do it right” (Patchett 45). Habit does not even have enough life in it to end life, which means that Rose will not be able to find death and salvation. Habit is stationary, unchanging, and is as stuck between life and death as Rose. Just as the last child mentioned above cannot be drowned by the water, Rose is destined to be improperly submersed in life, but never enough to make her live richly.

This condition of being neither one thing nor another is what makes Habit allude to the second main narrator of *The Patron Saint of Liars*: Son. Water is as painfully sad to Son as it is to Rose. For him, the thought of water forces him to recall his training base on Parris Island, North Carolina. There, he is injured and never makes it into WWII. Since he is not dispatched, his fiancée loses interest in marrying him when he returns home. Son, being in a leg brace from the accident at Parris Island, stays on the beach while his disinterested fiancée Cecilia leaves him in anger after a fight to go swim. Since water represents life, it can be understood that Son has stepped out of life while Cecilia remains. Patchett solidifies this point by explaining that by the time Son and Cecilia argue on the beach, Son has removed himself from life. Son no longer goes to school and does not go out into public. Cecilia continues to lead a very active and public life. Son recalls thinking that “she’ll stay out there for her whole life rather than come onto dry land with me” (Patchett 200). The image of Cecilia swimming and Son sitting provides the reader with a visual interpretation of their dilemmas. Son cannot physically swim out into life with Cecilia, but he also lacks the mental and spiritual will to do so. While swimming, she hits her head on a rock; Son tries to save her, but she dies just as he nearly predicts in the above passage. This dramatic scene at the beach convinces Son that enjoying and experiencing life brings about death.

When Son first drifts to the spring’s downtrodden hotel in Habit, it is now a Catholic home for unwed mothers. One of the Sisters, Evangeline, is partially psychic. She hints at Son’s past while Son is dully and dutifully doing the dishes. Evangeline suggests that Son is fleeing from something tragic, and Son suddenly realizes his hands are in water. Unwittingly, he has stumbled back into life. He reminisces, “My hands were in the water but they weren’t washing dishes. They were just in the water and all of a sudden the feeling was so familiar that I felt those same words come up in my mouth, Help me, somebody” (Patchett 211). On the beach with Cecilia, Son eventually runs into the water to save her but is too late. When he runs into the water, he accepts life and its dangers, but not before life kills the one he loves. Since the accident, he has retreated once more to dry land. Now, yet again, water—life—has him by the hands and he feels like he is drowning. Sister Evangeline looks at him squarely and states, “that something [the accident] wasn’t your fault” (Patchett 211). Evangeline snatches his hands under the water of life and grasps them firmly. By doing this, she verbally and physically tells Son that he can live out from the shadow of Cecilia’s death. Evangeline boldly crosses the line into his life and states she will hold his hand through the waves of life.

Rose’s and Son’s loathing of water is not passed on to their child, Sissy. Sissy frequently asks to go swimming in the novel, and asks a girl named Alice to teach her. Son does not tell Alice no, because she will be leaving the unwed mother’s home soon; yet, the fact that Sissy does not know how to swim as a teenager reflects her parents’ avoidance of water. Alice says, “I told her awhile ago about the lakes down where I’m from...[Sissy] tells me she doesn’t know how to swim and would I promise to teach her” (Patchett 181). Both parents have avoided water—life—but their child has not been exposed to any of the wrongs of life,

and thus longs to experience it herself. After watching a funeral, Sissy asks to go swimming. She has seen death, and in her childish mind feels the need to escape it and enjoy life for awhile. Rose replies, “You don’t go swimming after a funeral” (Patchett 217). If Sissy wants to go out into life, she will have to do it away from her parents. The funeral sets into motion Rose’s own feelings of mortality. She begins to think about leaving, and expresses to Son, “I don’t want [Sissy] to spend her life planning on staying here. She shouldn’t think there’s any reason for her to stay. There isn’t...she might not ever look any farther than the end of the driveway (Patchett 244). Eventually, Rose does teach Sissy to swim, but is very rough with her daughter and would “push [Sissy] away from her again and again until [she] found a way to stay afloat” (Patchett 250). Rose is willing to let Sissy live life, but “was so serious about [Sissy] doing it on [her] own that [Sissy] really thought she’d let [her] drown trying” (Patchett 250). Rose does not want to spend the time holding Sissy’s hand through life. Rose feels that if Sissy cannot teach herself to float through life, then she deserves to sink. Rose is worried Sissy will be as stationary and as tortured by life as her parents. If Sissy is going to live, she is going to have to learn how to tread the waters of life without her parents.

Water does not just represent life and death metaphorically in *The Patron Saint of Liars*, but also literally. The main setting is St. Elizabeth’s Catholic home for unwed mothers, formally the rich hotel over the healing spring water. Pregnancy is steeped in liquid matters. Throughout the story there are numerous accounts of the women’s waters breaking. When a woman’s water breaks before birth, two events are simultaneously announced: the arrival of a new life via the baby and the symbolic death of the mother, for she now has to leave her companions at St. Elizabeth’s. The mother does not actually perish, but it is as if she has died because she will return to her old life and leave the unwed mother’s home (and her friends) forever. The symbolic meaning of water taking the form of both life and death should be nothing new to the reader. Jorge Sheved and Michal Rosenthal write in “Water and the Psychotic World” that water is both death and life. Many religions say the world was formed from water. Water has “a double significance, of ‘nothingness,’ ‘emptiness’ to be transformed into ‘existence,’ ‘life’” (Sheved and Rosenthal 3). In Patchett’s novel all of the characters are acutely aware of how water and life bring both destruction and renewal.

Water is also portrayed spiritually in the novel. Sister Evangeline tells Sissy about Saint Isadore. He is the patron saint of rural communities and rain, among other things (Jones). He is remembered for running away from his home, but finding the courage to return when he sees how water can slowly erode rocks. This erosion takes time but is inevitable. Saint Isadore is said to be “still trying to wear away rock with water” by bringing knowledge and Christ to all (Saint). Isadore’s life is changed by water, and its effect is what brings him back home. Not only does this saint relate to Rose’s story, but by making all major decisions based on water, Saint Isadore follows the same pattern Patchett has set for her novel’s characters. For example, Rose recalls being a single mother in the year 1968. A local church brings the mothers from St. Elizabeth’s to mass one Sabbath a month. The church feels it is doing a great deed by allowing these sinful unwed women back into a church for Communion. Rose recalls the feeling: “Our immorality was past tense, and in this bath of forgiveness we were washed clean of our sins” (Patchett 85). Also, when Sissy asks Son if a ghost might be haunting their house, she is turning the shower on and off. It is as if she is toying with life, turning it on and off at a whim. Son replies that if they had a ghost, “she’d haunt the creek bed, not the house” (Patchett 225). The dry creek bed is from the days when the spring that saved June’s

life flowed. Perhaps June, who eventually died naturally, followed the water, life, as a ghost to wherever it mysteriously disappears.

Through the use of water as an important theme and setting, Ann Patchett successfully relays her characters' intricate emotions. She considers and applies the religious contemplations of water by having water symbolize life. She uses visual examples to elaborate on the various meanings of water, such as the children in the pool, Cecilia's death, and Sister Evangeline taking Son's hands. Patchett embraces the spiritual meanings of water through its cure of June Clatterbuck and the church opening its doors for the women to be "washed" clean of their sins. Patchett weaves the symbolic meanings of water throughout her entire novel. Without a clear understanding of water's significance, the underlying themes of *The Patron Saint of Liars* cannot be recognized and appreciated. These themes, like the spring itself, lie under the surface waiting to bubble forth to bring life and meaning where there was once a void.

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# Revisiting van Inwagen, Lewis, and the Consequence Argument

● ● ● *Larsa Ramsini*

The struggle between the compatibilists and the incompatibilists concerning determinism and free will has been a long one. But there has been some recent work done on one argument by Peter van Inwagen known as the Consequence Argument for incompatibilism. I will first introduce this argument and clarify David Lewis' objection to it, and then explain the disagreement between Michael Huemer and Helen Beebe, a dispute similar to the one between van Inwagen and Lewis, over the validity of the Consequence Argument. After presenting everyone's case, I will argue that Beebe and Huemer have strayed away from Lewis' original objection by focusing too much on *when* it is possible to do otherwise, rather than *how* this is possible. Once that is clear, I claim that the work for both the Lewis-style compatibilist and the van Inwagen-style incompatibilist lies in discerning the concept of free will that we must attribute to individuals that is either consistent or inconsistent with determinism.

Determinism is the theory that past events combined with the laws of nature determine exactly one future. Van Inwagen defines free will as "the *power* or *ability* of agents to act otherwise than they in fact do" (*Incompatibility* 20). To further clarify, he explains that in order for arbitrary person *S* to have free will with respect to the proposition *p*, it has to be the case that "*S* can render [could have rendered] [*p*]...false" (*Incompatibility* 21). His original Consequence Argument follows a story of a judge who is currently deciding whether to impose the death penalty on a criminal appearing before him. In this specific judge's country, in order for the criminal to be granted clemency, the judge simply has to raise his hand. After the judge does *not* raise his hand, the question is asked whether he *could* have raised his hand or not. Assuming that no unusual circumstances are present that could prevent the judge from raising his hand, van Inwagen proceeds with an argument to show that if determinism is true, the judge could *not* have raised his hand. In general, the argument goes as follows: if determinism is true, then the state of the world at some point in time before someone's birth in conjunction with the laws of physics necessarily entails a particular state of the world with respect this individual at some later point in time. In the above example, the state of the world before the judge was born in conjunction with the laws of physics necessarily entails that the judge *not* raise his hand. For the judge to have instead actually raised his hand, he would have had to have changed the laws of physics (since he is unable to change the state of the world before his birth); however, since this is not possible, the judge could not have raised his hand.<sup>1</sup> This argument, known as the Consequence Argument, is intended to argue for the view of incompatibilism, whose proponents claim that determinism is *incompatible* with free will, while compatibilists claim that determinism is *compatible* with free will. This argument has incompatibilism as one of its implications because it is due to determinism being assumed in the premises that the judge (or anyone) is unable to do otherwise than he actually did, and thus, according to van Inwagen, not have free will. The controversial line of the argument is the one which claims that the judge could not have rendered the laws of

physics to be other than they actually are (Incompatibility 23).

Lewis objects to this assumption of van Inwagen's argument, which claims that a person is unable to change the natural laws, by drawing upon his theory of possible worlds. Lewis believes that there exists a vast number of possible worlds, each of which is just as real and exists in the exact same sense as our actual world, such that everyone in his/her respective world views that world as the actual one. They are, however, separated spatiotemporally from each of the other possible worlds, such that there exist neither interactions nor causal relations between objects in different worlds. According to Lewis, "a possible world is a complete or total way things might have been, a complete or total way things might have gone" (Loux 193). This means that each person can only ever exist in one and the same world throughout his/her lifetime. There is such a thing, though, as an individual's "counterparts." Lewis explains the relationship between you and your counterparts as such:

You are in the actual world and no other, but you have counterparts in several other worlds. Your counterparts resemble you closely in content and context in important respects. They resemble you more closely than do the other things in their worlds. But they are not really you. For each of them is in his own world, and only you are here in the actual world" (qtd. in Loux 197).

The fact that we each have counterparts that exist in various possible worlds is one of the notions that leads Lewis to claim that we are able to do otherwise in each of our own actual worlds. He also claims that each person is determined partly by the laws that are specific to the actual world in which he/she lives.

Lewis views determinism in terms of each possible world, and not a set of past events and universal laws as a whole that describe the set of all possible worlds.<sup>2</sup> He argues that we are able to control natural laws, albeit in a very weak sense, and thereby uphold compatibilism. Lewis does not believe that we are able to "break a law," but he does think that we are able to do something such that, if we did it, "a law would be broken," referring to this law-breaking event as a "divergence miracle," and it is in this weak sense that Lewis claims we are able to "control" natural laws (Free 31). This is his reasoning: Suppose in the actual world in which I live, I did not raise my hand. But if I *had* raised my hand, then a law would have been broken before that act, A, of raising my hand. Since we live in a deterministic world, the events that led up to my not raising my hand along with the natural laws *determined* that I keep my hand on the table. But if I *had* raised my hand, then the conjunction of the previous events and the natural laws would have to have been false before A occurred. Since Lewis claims that "a minor violation of laws counts against closeness less than does a difference in facts throughout the whole of the past," (Beebe 237) then some law L, somewhere, would have been broken to enable me to raise my hand (Free 30-31). Lewis clarifies what he means by this type of miracle:

When I say that a miracle takes place at  $w_1$ , I mean that there is a violation of the laws of nature. But note that the violated laws are not laws of the same world where they are violated. That is impossible; whatever else a law may be, it is at least an exceptionless regularity. I am using 'miracle' to express a relation between different worlds. A miracle at  $w_1$ , relative to  $w_0$ , is a violation at  $w_1$  of the laws of  $w_0$ , which are at best the almost-laws of  $w_1$ . The laws of  $w_1$  itself, if such there be, do not enter into it (Counterfactual 468-9).

He asserts that this miracle is neither the act *A* itself, nor is it caused by *A*; a person's acts either previous, present, or subsequent neither constitute nor cause this miracle to occur (Free 33). What makes us free, what makes us able to do otherwise, is the fact that there exists a counterpart of us in at least one of the other possible worlds that is, in fact, doing otherwise at the moment we are not. Freedom for Lewis depends on the possibility of a person being able to do something, and possibility entails the existence of that act in one of the possible worlds. Saying that "I could have had chicken salad for lunch today instead of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich" simply means that one of your counterparts in at least one of the other possible worlds *did* have chicken salad for lunch today; this fact makes you free, despite the fact that you, yourself, were determined to eat a PB&J sandwich, and there would have been no possible way for you to have a chicken salad in *this* actual world.

Michael Huemer claims that van Inwagen's Consequence Argument is invalid and modifies it in order to make it a valid argument for incompatibilism.<sup>3</sup> The important change, for our purposes, is in line (6); the line "J could not have rendered *L* false," changes to "No matter what *J* does, *J* could not have rendered *L* false" (Consequence Argument 540). Huemer also holds that his version of the Consequence Argument withstands Lewis' objections. Based on Huemer's understanding of Lewis, he claims that "if, in order for me to do *A*, either  $B_1$  or  $B_2$  or...or  $B_n$  would have to have happened, whereas in fact none of  $\{B_1 \dots B_n\}$  happened, then I cannot do *A*" (Consequence Argument 543). Lewis, however, would not disagree with this statement, because if  $\{B_1 \dots B_n\}$  did not happen, that means that none of these events occurred in any of the possible worlds, and you really would *not* be free to do *A*. But, if *B* had happened in one of the possible worlds, then it is necessarily true, according to the deterministic state of each world, that *A* did happen in that world. It is clear from Huemer's first argument that he does not agree with Lewis' view of free will that requires the invocation of possible worlds. The rest of his defense explains that Lewis has no support for the claim that the past would have been different in order to do otherwise; but as Helen Beebe points out, Lewis only claims that it is the *laws* that would have been different and not past events.

Beebe responds to Huemer by arguing that David Lewis's compatibilism still holds a valid objection to even his revised Consequence Argument, which Huemer has failed to recognize because he does not distinguish between two ways of viewing the past—one can look at the past with respect to the *actual* time, or with respect to another *possible* time *t*. She claims that Huemer defends the Consequence Argument only from the strong thesis of soft determinism, which states that a person is able to change the laws. More formally, this means that at two times  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  where  $t_2 \geq t_1$ , if it were possible at  $t_1$  to perform an act *A* at  $t_2$ , then the past relative to  $t_1$  would be different. But Lewis only supports the weak thesis, which states that a person is able at  $t_1$  to perform an act *A* at  $t_2$ , such that were this person to perform *A*, a law would have been broken prior to  $t_2$  (Beebe 238). Beebe explains that "the ability to perform *A* at  $t_2$  is an ability that one might have at earlier times, but subsequently lose as time progresses" (239). She supports this notion by providing an example in which she was able at the age of twelve to become a doctor by the age of thirty, but by the time she was twenty-five, she had lost that ability because she was not able to complete all the necessary education and training. She claims that the Lewis-style compatibilist "only needs to hold that there was a time (when I was twelve, say) such that I was able, at that time, to bring things about *after* that time that would have resulted in my becoming a surgeon



by the age of thirty" (239). To believe in the weak thesis is to believe that a person is able to do something,

about what *will*, at some time in the future, already have happened. After all, some of what is past-relative-to-the-future is now in the future, and not in the past. So to believe that we can do something about *that* is not to deny the fixity of the past, but only the fixity of the future. The Lewis-style compatibilist holds that some agents in some deterministic worlds are able, at  $t$ , to do something about what happens after  $t$ . She is not thereby committed to holding that such agents are ever able to do something about what happens prior to  $t$  (Beebe 240).

To claim that twenty-five year old Beebe is still able to be a surgeon by the age of thirty is to support the strong thesis, because at that point, things in the past with respect to twenty-five year old Beebe would have to be different; but for twelve-year old Beebe to say this is justified because the past with respect to twenty-five year old Beebe is really in the future at that specific time.

Huemer responds to Beebe's objection by holding that the Lewis-style compatibilist's view of free will is far-fetched. This is his interpretation of Beebe's argument:

While we often have freedom with respect to an action some time *before* the action is to be performed, we always lose that freedom before the time of action actually arrives. We are never free with respect to a particular action *when we're actually doing it*; and we're never free with respect to our decisions *when we're actually deciding*" (Elusive Freedom 413).

Huemer argues that even if the law that would have to be different is in the future, there is still no way for us to change that law. The "miracle" that would have to happen in order for us to perform act  $A$  at  $t_2$  will necessarily *not* happen as a result of determinism, and there is no way for us to bring it about that  $A$  will happen; therefore, we are unable, even at  $t_1$ , to perform  $A$  at  $t_2$ . Huemer holds that the existence of the possible world in which you perform  $A$  at  $t_2$ , the world where a different law exists that changes the circumstances (over which you, in this world, have no control), is not sufficient to give you, in this actual world, the freedom to perform  $A$  at  $t_2$ . He says, "it is unclear how the existence of the possible world in which a divergence miracle occurs at  $t_2$ , leading to my later doing  $B$  at  $t_4$ , gives me freedom now to do  $B$  at  $t_4$ " (Elusive Freedom 415).

Both Huemer and Beebe respond very well to each other's arguments, but they devote too much of their efforts on the *time* aspect of Lewis' objection, which diverts both of their attentions away from his fundamental interpretation of free will and being able to do otherwise. Lewis claims that when we say that we are able to "do otherwise," this means that there exists a counterpart of ours in at least one other possible world that *is* doing otherwise than what we, in fact, are doing in *this* world. Beebe does not make explicit in her objection to Huemer the meaning that when a person is able to do something about what happens after a certain time, this individual in the actual world is free to do otherwise in his/her actions because his/her counterpart in at least one other possible world *is* performing the necessary steps to be able to do otherwise in the future than what the person in our actual world *actually* ends up doing, as a result of the deterministic laws present in both of their respective actual worlds. It is unclear, however, what Beebe means when she claims that we sometimes "lose" the ability to make certain choices after a certain time period, because on Lewis' view, we are *always* free to do otherwise in the future as long as there exists a

possible world in which our counterpart *will* act otherwise. To go even further, Lewis would also say that we were free to do otherwise in the actions already committed for the same reason that we are free *before* the act we're determined to perform. On this interpretation, Huemer is wrong when he states that we are never free with respect to the decision we make at the time we make the decision, because our counterpart in another possible world is doing otherwise at the exact moment that we are performing the act we were determined to perform in our world. The only reason Lewis evokes the idea of the “divergence miracle” occurring *before* act A is to emphasize the fact that it is not individual people who cause the miracle to occur by acting otherwise, but rather, the miracle simply describes how two possible worlds have conflicting deterministic laws of nature. The key to Lewis’ objection to van Inwagen lies not in the fact that we are free with respect to future and not past events, nor in the idea that we are free at some points to make decisions but not at others; Lewis is able to support the weak thesis of soft determinism against incompatibilism solely based on notions of determinism itself contrasted with impossibility.

According to Lewis, there is a distinction to be made between determined and impossible, and this distinction is what gives human beings freedom. For Lewis, determinism just applies to individual worlds, since each possible world contains its own, and sometimes unique, set of natural laws that cannot possibly be broken by individuals living in that actual world. However, the fact that something is possible just means that there exists an actual world in which this “something” occurs or exists. The reason why it is not possible for people in their own actual worlds to break the deterministic laws of that world is because there does not exist *any* possible world in which this occurs. However, since freedom for Lewis is simply the *possibility* of being able to do otherwise, freedom does exist for every individual because there exist possible worlds where his/her counterpart is being determined to do otherwise in his/her own actual world.

What the Lewis-style compatibilist and the van Inwagen-style incompatibilist need to focus on now is what “can render false” actually means; whatever meaning is given to this phrase that will be used to either validate or invalidate the Consequence Argument will depend on how we define free will. Van Inwagen makes clear that no argument for incompatibilism or compatibilism is going to be a “knock-down” argument. This is not to say that they are not strong arguments, but just that it is possible to disagree with them since they do not exhibit the “enviable property imagined by Robert Nozick: anyone who understands their premises and denies and does not accept their conclusions will die” (Freedom 17). The arguments for or against compatibilism, for van Inwagen, are simply not that clear-cut. Van Inwagen explains how the compatibilist thinks that the counterintuitive claim that “all free agents are able to perform miracles” is an “*acceptably* counterintuitive consequence” of soft determinism, whereas the incompatibilist will view this as unacceptable (Freedom 17). Even though Lewis would not say that it is the agents themselves who actually perform the miracles, the point is that the question of which camp a person falls into depends on the willingness of that individual to accept certain other claims that seem to go against our intuitions. If Lewis gives an argument for compatibilism that requires getting rid of a decent amount of our intuitions about what free will actually is, then there is no point in maintaining the label “free will” if these consequences turn out to be unacceptable to the greater population. Nevertheless, because determinism is accepted by so many, whatever the conclusion turns out to be, it is valuable to know that accepting this theory entails a particular notion of free will, a notion

that will probably go against some of our strongest intuitions about the actions we perform. Once the correct notion of free will is worked out, it could have serious implications for our interactions with and judgments of one another, and especially for the rationale behind our judicial system which could undergo tremendous restructuring as a result.

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### Endnotes

1 The entire Consequence Argument goes as follows:

$J$  = the judge

$T_0$  = some instant of time earlier than  $J$ 's birth

$P_0$  = the proposition that expresses the state of the world at  $T_0$

$L$  = the conjunction into a single proposition of all laws of physics

$P$  = the proposition that expresses the state of the world at  $T$

- (1) If determinism is true, then the conjunction of  $P_0$  and  $L$  entails  $P$ .
- (2) If  $J$  had raised his hand at  $T$ , then  $P$  would be false.
- (3) If (2) is true, then if  $J$  had raised his hand at  $T$ ,  $J$  could have rendered  $P$  false.
- (4) If  $J$  could have rendered  $P$  false, and if the conjunction of  $P_0$  and  $L$  entails  $P$ , then  $J$  could have rendered the conjunction of  $P_0$  and  $L$  false.
- (5) If  $J$  could have rendered the conjunction of  $P_0$  and  $L$  false, then  $J$  could have rendered  $L$  false.
- (6)  $J$  could not have rendered  $L$  false.
- (7) If determinism is true,  $J$  could not have raised his hand at  $T$  (Incompatibility 22-3).

2 He defines a deterministic system of laws as one such that, “whenever two possible worlds both obey the laws perfectly, then either they are exactly alike throughout all of time, or else they are not exactly alike through any stretch of time. They are alike always or never. They do not diverge, matching perfectly in their initial segments but not thereafter; neither do they converge” (Counterfactual 461).

3 Huemer does this by making a stronger claim than van Inwagen, with respect to the freedom a person has in rendering a proposition false. In van Inwagen’s version, he assumes that when a person is not free to do this, the individual has no choice “about the fact that  $p$ ,” where  $p$  is some proposition (Consequence Argument 526). Huemer explains the problems that result from having this interpretation, and changes the structure of the argument so that when a person does not have freedom with respect to a proposition  $p$ , this means that “no matter what  $S$  does,  $p$ ” (Consequence Argument 538). This version of the Consequence Argument stands up to the counterexamples Huemer raises in objection to the original argument.

# Two Worlds Combined: Modernism and Classicism in Stravinsky's *Apollo*

● ● ● Bonnie Shore

Igor Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète* (1928) is an important work in the fields of music and ballet, representing the modernist ideals of the 1920's while also using classical techniques. *Apollo*, as the piece has come to be called, is the first of three neoclassical ballets composed by Stravinsky. Written on commission for a music festival in Washington D.C., it consists of ten movements for string orchestra. Its neoclassical, white-on-white character<sup>1</sup> distinguishes the piece from the composer's previous works and those of its contemporaries, while reflecting society's desire for clean lines and modernism. *Apollo*'s choreography by Balanchine was a turning point in the classical ballet style. Through an examination of Stravinsky's background, the commissioning and production of the work, the music itself (with its story and choreography), *Apollo*'s historical context, and its similarities to artistic and cultural movements, one gains an understanding of how Stravinsky was able to combine the two very different artistic movements of classicism and modernism into a neoclassic piece.

Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum (near St. Petersburg) in 1882. His parents were of noble Polish lineage. His father was a famous vocalist at the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg, and encouraged his son's interest in music. However, it was also his father who insisted that Stravinsky study law. This did not go well, and in 1902 Stravinsky began studying with Rimsky-Korsakov. This famous composer advised Stravinsky – who at the time did not have a very developed compositional style – not to enter the conservatory, but simply to study with him. These lessons consisted of form and orchestration, which is apparent in Stravinsky's mature works. The careful choice of instrumentation for color in pieces such as *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring* makes the simpler instrumentation of *Apollo* all the more striking.<sup>2</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov was Stravinsky's last teacher, though he admitted the influence of Glazunov, Tchaikovsky and Wagner on his work.

The prosperity of the 1920's made the creation of *Apollo* possible. This decade brought a renewed interest in the arts and neoclassicism, as exemplified in the movement to make Washington D.C. a "Mecca of the arts." One of the leaders of this movement was the philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), whose foundation funded many chamber performances and commissions.<sup>3</sup> She also sponsored a small hall for the Library of Congress that was suitable for the performance of such music. In keeping with the neoclassical style, the hall's aesthetics are simple rather than ornate.<sup>4</sup>

One of Coolidge's more ambitious projects was her contemporary music festival, which began in 1928, the same year the hall was completed. Coolidge wanted a ballet premiere in Washington to open the festival. European composers, including de Falla and Respighi, with whom she had regular contact, showed no interest.<sup>5</sup> It is not known with certainty why Stravinsky was the next composer asked and very little survives of the initial contact. What is known is that in 1927 Coolidge commissioned a ballet, not to exceed thirty minutes, for a small ensemble.

Stravinsky was well known and appreciated in the U.S. by the time of the commission. His monochromatic ballet would have been a surprise for its American audience. It was neoclassical, which, unlike his riot-causing *Rite of Spring*, drew on classical ideas from both the classical era and the Greeks and Romans. He had visited the country in 1925 and had been exposed to a large quantity of American popular music, to which he responded quite favorably. He used jazz idioms in several of his compositions, such as his Concerto for Piano and Winds.<sup>6</sup> While he had written a number of neoclassical works prior to *Apollo*, they were not as well known as the *Rite of Spring*. During the time he was writing *Apollo*, Stravinsky was at a crossroads in his own life. He was in love with Vera de Bosset, but still wanted to be faithful to his wife, who was confined to a hospital with tuberculosis. Charles Joseph likens this stage of Stravinsky's life to that of Apollo. Stravinsky was attempting to rediscover himself through reflection and increased participation in the church while writing about Apollo, who discovered himself while becoming the leader of the muses.<sup>7</sup>

When Stravinsky agreed to the commission he took care to ensure that he would have the right to perform the work elsewhere immediately following the Washington premiere.<sup>8</sup> This stipulation proved significant. Stravinsky seems to have used this commission as a way of creating a work he already had in mind for a different setting. He maintained little contact while writing the score, creating many problems for the choreographer and others responsible for the premiere. It took several repetitions from his assistant Carl Engel of the limits of the size of the admittedly small hall before Stravinsky pared both the cast and orchestral ensemble down to reasonable size.<sup>9</sup> The stage could not hold more than six dancers, and did not have wings for entrances. The pit was small as well, and Stravinsky had to strike both piano and harp from his original orchestration in order to accommodate the rest of the string section which he desired. Stravinsky made no apparent attempt to see the premiere. A brief public statement, probably written by someone else, used his absence as an excuse not to comment on the premiere, though that had not stopped him from commenting on performances of his other compositions. He also saved very little in the way of clippings and other memorabilia from the premiere in comparison to his other works.<sup>10</sup>

The American premiere on April 27, 1928 was also hampered by conflicting visions for the choreography. The choreographer for the premier was Adolph Bolm,<sup>11</sup> who was also in charge of the other three ballets produced for the festival: *Alt-Wien*, *Arlecchinata*, and *Pevane pour une Infante Défunte*.<sup>12</sup> He and Stravinsky had a number of artistic disagreements, though they remained friends. Little description remains of Bolm's choreography, due at least in part to the greater interest reviewers placed in Stravinsky's music.<sup>13</sup>

Critics focused on *Apollo* because it was to be the only score premiered at the festival, Stravinsky's first U.S. premiere, and the first major ballet premiered in the U.S.<sup>14</sup> In keeping with the high expectations for the event, the performance was broadcast live over NAA. However, the work was not well received. Compared to *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring*, audiences felt there was little to hold their attention. Critics cited the score as the duller of the four produced that night— even Washington's Helen Fetter called the piece “flat, insufficient to the aloof possibilities of this theme.”<sup>15</sup>

The Paris premiere, which is better known, took place just six weeks later on June 12, 1928.<sup>16</sup> *Apollo* was the first ballet in which Stravinsky worked with Balanchine, and the result was a production in which the music and choreography reached the same artistic ideal. Both men favored a very controlled, constructed environment, and saw music and motion as

elements powerful enough on their own, not conveyers of emotion and story.<sup>17</sup> In the same way that Stravinsky rationalized his music with poetic meter and timbrel unity, Balanchine achieved clean lines and a modern simplicity in the dances.

By examining the technical aspects of the music itself, we can see how Stravinsky approached this neoclassical composition. *Apollo* is based on the typical common practice era formula of melody over accompaniment, and it is mostly tonal. It consists of ten short parts, which are divided into two tableaux. Most of the parts are through-composed, which means that they do not rely on repeated materials for form – every measure is new material. There is relatively little development of themes, instead placing an emphasis on one melodic idea after another. The pitch material is relatively limited – melodies are often based on tonic, mediant, and dominant, and the range is relatively conservative. Ornamentation and special effects are used sparingly. Rhythms are typically distinct, with clear emphasis on chosen beats to aid the dancers. There are also few directions for changes in tempo, with most of the perceived changes coming from changes in meter.

The ballet begins with a prologue, entitled the “Birth of Apollo.” Following the introduction, Stravinsky had originally intended for Apollo to be born onstage, but decided that this would be inappropriate to the American audience. Thus, instead of more literally depicting its title, the work implies Apollo’s birth with a dance of the two goddesses attending Leto – Apollo’s mother – followed by the appearance of Apollo. The piece is in rounded binary form, with the A theme based on the 16<sup>th</sup> - dotted eighth figure, which clearly harkens back to the French Overture, adding another element of neoclassicism.<sup>18</sup> Similar dotted rhythms are used throughout the work. Another element that makes this work neoclassic, and not just a work in the classical style, is the use of an octatonic chord that marks the actual birth of Apollo and begins the transition to the B section. This chord, consisting of alternating whole and half steps, would not have been used in the classical era. The next movement, “Variation D’Apollon,” begins the second tableau. This is followed by the Pas d’Action, in which Apollo dances with the three muses, giving each an object that represents her art.<sup>19</sup> Both of these movements use very exposed lines (solos in the Variation) that use a combination of modern and classic harmonies to create an edgy yet familiar sound unique to neoclassic works.

The following three sections consist of variations for each muse as she presents her art to Apollo. The “Variation De Calliope” draws its inspiration from a couplet by poet Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711), who adhered to and promoted strict, classical restraint and organization.<sup>20</sup> The text: “Que toujours dans vos vers, le sens, coupant les mots / Suspende l’hémistiche en marque le repos” (May the intent of your verse always syncopate the words, Suspend the pause, enhance its repose)<sup>21</sup> is at the top of the score. Stravinsky uses the meter – classical Alexandrian – to shape the melody’s rhythms.<sup>22</sup> This form uses twelve syllables, divided into six and six, with a breath in-between. Stravinsky uses sets of twelve pitches with a break in the middle for the primary melody throughout. These applications of classical form were not used in music’s classical era, yet they still lend symmetrical, classically inspired structure. To this Stravinsky adds his more modern harmonies, making for a convincing neoclassic work.

After the variations of Polymny and Terpsichore is another “Variation D’Apollon,” followed by the Pas De Deux. Terpsichore dances with Apollo because she is the best dancer.<sup>23</sup> The other two muses come in for the Coda. In the Apothéose the dancers return to



Parnassus, having been called to return by Zeus.<sup>24</sup> The theme heard in the prologue returns, this time resolving the octatonic chord to a b minor chord – the only minor section in the entire work.<sup>25</sup> Stravinsky, in keeping with strict dance rhythms, avoids a *ritardando* while still exemplifying the decaying image of Apollo and the muses in their ascent: the same melodic figure is repeated four times, lengthening by a beat each time, the final augmentation being the b minor chord, which ends the piece. This freedom in form and harmonic material is symptomatic of Stravinsky's era, but the story line to which it is trying to draw attention is purely classical.

Just as *Apollo* combined classical and modern musical elements to create something new, society itself was in a time of transformation. *Apollo* was finished in 1928. Stravinsky had just returned to France from the United States in the middle of the prosperous “Roaring 20's.” The economy was growing, and technological innovations were coming fast upon one another. Improvements in manufacturing combined with the growing economy brought a large increase in goods available to consumers. For the first time the radio and the car became available to middle-class households.<sup>26</sup> Old customs and paradigms were being challenged. After feminists gained the right to vote in 1920, they continued to push for equal treatment. Many colleges became co-ed, though women typically remained in domestic or care-related classes. While women's roles in the working environment remained largely the same as before World War I, the image of self-defined women, freed from full-length skirts, long hair, and corsets, began to permeate society.<sup>27</sup> The Harlem Renaissance brought a wave of African-American culture to society as a whole, and the various jazz forms began to blend with popular music. The larger role of manufacturing in everyday lives also meant an increased fascination with industry. Society knew it was changing fast, and it makes sense that art would reflect that.

Several artistic and cultural movements arose in this context of change, many of them similar to *Apollo*. Modernism is used to define the movement across the arts, which, above all, sought to be different from anything in the past. While this generally meant abandoning basic structures that had been in place for a long period of time, the term can also be applied to neoclassicism, which simultaneously embraced aspects of the past and incorporated ideas that were very new in order to make itself original.<sup>28</sup> Most of the arts from this period can be related back to industry, efficiency, and prosperity – clean lines, geometry, and fresh effects. These values and characteristics are prevalent in Stravinsky's work.

Art Deco and the International Style are two popular movements of the 1920's that can also be considered visual counterparts to *Apollo*. The term Art Deco is derived from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, which was held in Paris in 1925.<sup>29</sup> It sought to combine industry with art. The resulting style used elements of both geometry and nature and was typically brightly colored. Although it began as an architectural style, it quickly became popular – especially in the U.S. – in a large variety of everyday objects, including fashion.<sup>30</sup>

Like other modernist movements, Art Deco was a progression away from the more florid art styles of the past. These cleaner, bolder lines are also found in *Apollo*. The similarity in texture and lack of special effects allow the basic elements to cut through in the same way that the geometric shapes are the focus of the Art Deco pieces. While Stravinsky avoided the contrast of colors and direct representation, his disjunctive melodies and use of chromatics (half steps) create their own dramatic lines.<sup>31</sup> The “Variation of Terpsichore” shows how

Stravinsky creates a striking melody line with chromatics in the violin lines, while still using traditional harmonies and accompaniments, such as the chords being outlined in the second cello and bass lines.<sup>32</sup>

The International Style was strictly architectural, and most easily applied to skyscrapers. These tall buildings were a relatively new accomplishment, with steel construction and elevators allowing for a much greater vertical scope. The International Style was a very practical one, which emphasized clean lines and functionality. It typically used materials that were practical in building large structures, such as steel and concrete, and sought to be functional rather than purely decorative.<sup>33</sup> *Apollo* similarly avoids extra materials. It creates interest through unadorned lines and straightforward construction that allow the audience to admire its basic form. Stravinsky does not use a plethora of instruments and effects, but lets the basic materials speak for themselves.

Cleanliness and simplicity were also common traits in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, who created a movement with his own work that can be related to *Apollo*. He sought to create what he called “organic architecture.” Although he did not seek to design buildings that were indistinguishable from their environment, he did want structures that complemented the site.<sup>34</sup> Like the International Style, his work emphasized buildings that were practical. He wanted form and function to complement each other. Wright also tried to use materials in a natural way – soft materials were often bent; steel was not.<sup>35</sup> In the same way, *Apollo* is not contrived – Stravinsky uses basic harmonic and timbral techniques to create a unique, natural sound.

The closing section of *Pas d’Action* shows the simplicity which Stravinsky was able to achieve in his work. In the same way that Wright avoided creating structures that seemed contrived, Stravinsky avoided the complex polyrhythms and contrived tonalities found in other works of his time. The texture, rhythms, and harmonic content are straightforward. The subtle entrances and trading of voices and pizzicato at the end – which create a clever transition to the “Variation de Calliope” – can also be likened to Wright’s “Falling Water” and its natural and unpretentious union with its surroundings.

The neoclassicism of this era was largely an attempt to find order in what had become a seemingly chaotic and complex society. World War I had turned European lives upside down, and the artistic avant-garde wanted a source of order and understandable forms.<sup>36</sup> The movement was also a reaction against the romantic era, with its extremes in emotion and expression. Artists fell back on familiar sources of reason: classical themes with familiar mythological settings and classical structure.<sup>37</sup>

Stravinsky used many neoclassic elements in *Apollo*, which sought to create a “pure” work, untainted by programmatic material. His commission gave him free range on subject material, and he chose *Apollo* – the Greek god of music, associated with purity and restraint.<sup>38</sup> Stravinsky also follows the classical ideals through structure and symmetry, especially in his use of classical Alexandrine poetic meter to organize his rhythms.<sup>39</sup> Stravinsky favors the abstract in this work, and avoids the use of folk tunes and rhythms, in contrast to his previous ballets.

Clean lines are extremely important to Stravinsky’s expression of neoclassic restraint. The score calls only for string orchestra, avoiding contrast of timbre. Originally, the score also included piano and harp, before he realized the pit for which the work was commissioned was too small. He does, however, divide the cellos into two sections, like first and

second violin.<sup>40</sup> Despite the homogeneous texture one can still see Stravinsky's skill in instrumentation, both in his creation of the six-part texture and in his use of divisi to compensate for the missing harp and piano.<sup>41</sup>

The modernist, industrial-inspired ideal of the 1920's was also exemplified in *Apollo* through Taylorism. Originally intended for use in factory assembly lines, Taylorism is the scientific approach to separation of tasks and efficiency of movement, eliminating all unnecessary actions. This philosophy quickly found application in the visual arts, where the simplicity of action led to greater clarity. Balanchine was inspired by Vsevolod Meyerhold, who used efficiency of movement in theater.<sup>42</sup> Balanchine, like Stravinsky, made the dance itself the focal point, instead of the story behind it. The neoclassical element is found in the gestures that mimic the *ballet comique*; overall, however, his choreography emphasized speed and precision.<sup>43</sup> He also softened the traditional dance forms by allowing the torso to be less stiff and the body to move more as a whole, while still maintaining many elements of classical ballet.<sup>44</sup> He continued to develop these ideas of modern efficiency further in his later collaborations with Stravinsky, such as *Agon*.

Taylorism is also seen in the way that Stravinsky and Balanchine worked to produce the ballet. Balanchine took a very impersonal view of the dancers, keeping with a working hierarchy of composer followed by choreographer and followed by the dancer. He expected his dancers to take his orders without question. He also accepted that the composer had already set the pace of the dance. Balanchine saw it as his duty to explain every task in detail so that every movement the dancer made would be done perfectly and as efficiently as possible. Stravinsky also expected precision. He did not allow dancers or musicians to take any expressive liberties with his music; it was to be played as written. He went so far as to use a pianola instead of an accompanist during rehearsals so that the tempo would be more accurate. His demands on his players were also indicative of another growing phenomenon – that the conductor had complete control over what the musicians were doing.<sup>45</sup>

While *Apollo* did not cause any riots or capture the press and attention that were given to Stravinsky's three famous ballets, it certainly still deserves recognition as an important, influential work. In many ways it captures – and defines – the neoclassical ideal of the 1920s. It draws on material from mythology, 17<sup>th</sup>-century dance forms, and poetic structure, as well as incorporating new ideas in harmony and timbre. *Apollo* reflects the modernist views of the decade with clean lines in music, choreography, and production. Balanchine's choreography - inspired by Stravinsky's score – set new standards in what would become modern ballet. The views of both composer and choreographer challenge conventional concepts of what music and ballet express, and how they should be approached. Stravinsky's use of poetic structure to determine rhythms – without using the poetry in the music itself - reflects the growing trend of composers to look outside of musical material for structure and inspiration. *Apollo* proves that classical forms and simplicity in material can indeed be fertile ground for innovative works.

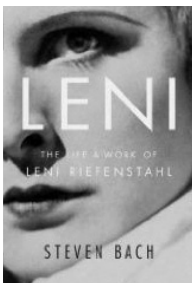
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## Endnotes

- 1 "White on white" – *Apollo* is a "white ballet," which focuses on pure dance forms, without story or elaborate sets and uses monochromatic costumes. Stravinsky's music also mimics this character; avoiding programmatic elements and timbral contrasts, and draws the listener with subtlety rather than the obvious.
- 2 The different timbres (sounds) of various orchestral instruments give the same musical line a very different character. Stravinsky is famous for his innovative and thorough use of this effect which makes the very conservative instrumentation of *Apollo* stand out.
- 3 Charles M. Joseph, *Stravinsky Inside Out* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 39.
- 4 Ibid., 42.
- 5 Ibid., 46.
- 6 Joseph, *Stravinsky Inside Out*, 37.
- 7 Ibid., 38.
- 8 Ibid., 47.
- 9 Ibid., 45.
- 10 Ibid., 40.
- 11 Bolm was also the first to play the part of Apollo.

- 12 Susan Hung Gin Au, "Apollon Musagète: A Classical Theme in the Twentieth Century" (Masters thesis, Ohio State University, 1975) 38.
- 13 Ibid., 39.
- 14 Joseph, *Stravinsky Inside Out*, 39.
- 15 Ibid., 60.
- 16 Ibid., 39.
- 17 Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, 4.
- 18 Charles Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine: A Journey of Invention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 99.
- 19 Au, "Apollon Musagète," 21.
- 20 Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, 100.
- 21 Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, 101.
- 22 Maureen A. Carr, *Multiple Masks* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 101.
- 23 Au, "Apollon Musagète," 21.
- 24 Van Jean Delinder, "Taylorism Managerial Control Strategies, and the Ballets of Balanchine and Stravinsky," *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no 11 (2005): 1444.
- 25 Carr, *Multiple Masks*, 126.
- 26 Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber, *The 1920's* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3.
- 27 Drowne, *The 1920's*, 19.
- 28 Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), 518.
- 29 Drowne, *The 1920's*, 73.
- 30 Ibid., 74.
- 31 This is not to say that he failed in avoiding contrasting colors. Interest has to be created somewhere in the work for it to be worthwhile, and he creates this through distinctive melodic shapes, as opposed to sound character (timbre).
- 32 Music of the classical era was built on major and minor scales. While additional pitches were used, they were carefully regulated. Stravinsky used pitches that broke those regulations to create unusual melodies.
- 33 Drowne, *The 1920's*, 75.
- 34 Kimberly Elman, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Principles of Organic Architecture" *Frank Lloyd Wright: Life and Legacy*, <http://www.pbs.org/flw/legacy/index.html>.
- 35 William Cronon, "Inconsistent Unity: The Passion of Frank Lloyd Wright" *Frank Lloyd Wright: Life and Legacy*, <http://www.pbs.org/flw/legacy/index.html>
- 36 David Irwin, *Neoclassicism* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 405.
- 37 Au, "Apollon Musagète," 159.
- 38 Maureen A. Carr, *Multiple Masks* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 96.
- 39 Ibid., 101.
- 40 Joseph, *Stravinsky Inside Out*, 49.
- 41 Ibid., 49-50.
- 42 Delinder, "Taylorism," 1443.
- 43 Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, 99.
- 44 Delinder, "Taylorism," 1445-1446.
- 45 Delinder, "Taylorism," 1442.



**Book Review ● ● ● Will Ferrall**

## ***Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl***

Bach, Steven. New York: Random House, 2007. 432 pp.

In *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*, Steven Bach creates a revealing biography of Riefenstahl, one of the most celebrated and—due to her close relationship with the Nazi leadership—notorious directors of the twentieth century. *Leni* begins with a description of the director's childhood. Born into the tenements of a Berlin sprawling headlong into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Leni had to deal with poverty and an obstinate, domineering father. Her adolescent battles with her father, Alfred, molded Leni into a stubborn, independent woman—a rarity in pre-war Germany. She had two other characteristics that would, along with her obstinate behavior, serve her well in the future: an impressive ability to weep and an extremely active sexuality (she had at least twenty-five sexual partners).

Bach spends much time describing Leni's aspirations to be a dancer; which, due to a slight lack of talent, were only partly realized. The publicity of dancing would, however, prove quite fortuitous for Leni, as it led to acting roles in various German films. This is one point of the biography that veers a bit, and enters into a long account of German dance at the time, of a then-contemporary German film, and a description of the popular Alpine genre, where Leni learned to act and eventually direct. Bach does not merely focus on Leni in his work, but also includes a wealth of historical information and background where necessary. While this additional information might at points detract from Leni's life-story, it does add depth and context to the world in which she lived. Acting for Leni eventually led to directing a career that she seemed suited for and quickly embraced. She was, notes Bach, quite successful early on, earning the praise and attention of the German and international public, as well as a certain man named Adolf Hitler.

Despite her contentions to the contrary later in life, Leni Riefenstahl had a very close relationship with the most powerful men of Nazi Germany, including Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler himself. As Bach describes, Leni caroused often with the Nazi leadership, and used the vast wealth and patronage of the Third Reich to make her most (in)famous films. These included *Triumph of the Will*, *Day of Freedom*, and the two films that chronicled the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Although Leni contended that these films were pure documentaries, Bach's commentary and analysis proves the opposite, that (except, perhaps, for the Olympic films) they were carefully-staged pieces of propaganda. Bach also describes Leni's life after the demise of the Thousand (Twelve) Year Reich. The Allied powers recognized that Riefenstahl had obviously collaborated with the Nazis and Hitler (her films were famous the world over, after all), and placed her under house arrest following a trial at Nuremburg.

Unlike her Nazi sponsors, most of whom committed suicide or were executed, Leni reinvented herself after her house arrest had ended. This reinvention, notes Bach, involved a complete recreation of her past, especially the part involving the Nazis. Leni contended that

she was just an *artist*, and was never aware of any wrongdoings committed by the Nazis. She was stubborn to the end on this point, and never admitted any regret for her involvement with and assistance to the Nazis. Despite the fact that most Germans and the international community had a difficult time believing her lies, Leni was able to continue her directing career. She was involved in many projects, particularly with the African Nuba tribe, until her death at the age of 101 in 2003.

Bach crafts Leni's biography brilliantly and accessibly. He expertly describes the life of Leni Riefenstahl and successfully (and often sardonically) removes the many layers of lies Leni created in order to hide her true self and past. While I knew of Leni Riefenstahl and had seen several of her (in)famous works before reading Bach's work, I was not aware of her Nazi-denial. She was, of course, an extremely persuasive woman, but I am not sure anyone but the most gullible would believe that she was unaware of what the Nazis were doing (she was a part of their inner circle, after all). I would recommend this work to anyone who enjoys immersing him/herself in military and film history, or just wants a good book to read about a fascinating person.





## Book Review ● ● ● Stephanie Freas

# Suite Française

Némirovsky, Irène. New York: Random House, 2007. 448 pp.

Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française* is about the unwritten aspects of war—the everyday moments, the romance, the struggle between survival and image, the dehumanization of even the most respected of classes, and the violence between civilians—rather than the expected military and political history that one may usually attribute to historical fiction. Although World War II's events have sprung an entire genre of war and Holocaust fiction, this novel, or rather, collection of two novellas, is far from the expected reading of a Holocaust traumatic experience. Instead, Némirovsky surprises readers with a diverse cast of characters who fight to survive and hold on to any shred of humanity left in the most difficult experiences.

By depicting how different humans may seem from one another, then throwing them in the torrents of war, Némirovsky illustrates the core qualities that tie humans together no matter how diverse their lives may seem. War causes a good man to murder, a married woman to fall in love with her captor, and a family to value one another more than any material luxury. Ironically enough, Némirovsky refrains from the subject of the Holocaust and refrains from including any Jewish characters when this very novel is interrupted and left unfinished by her capture and eventual death in the German concentration camp, Auschwitz. The manuscript ends in the midst of the German occupation and a romance between the second novella's protagonist, Lucile, and her German captor. Here, we must ask how Némirovsky would end the story had she lived. One can only speculate from the struggle between the grotesque and the beautiful that the story would have ended with a saddening finale that would mirror the ways in which war truly ends in an occupied nation.

*Suite Française* is set in the early 1940's in France during the beginning of German occupation. After the French learn that the Germans are coming to each of their towns, they grab their most valuable items and flee for safety. In the first novella, "Storm in July," each family searches for safe haven and its members must deal with their dramatically changing lives within only a few short weeks. After the initial invasion, many return home to find comfort, while others must create new identities for themselves. The second book, "Dolce," concentrates on two families, one of which is introduced in "Storm in July." In this complex novella, Némirovsky writes about the relations between the German and the French captives in one small village and hones in on the bond between Bruno, the German soldier, and Lucille, the French wife of an adulterous prisoner of war. "Dolce" ends with Bruno's departure to another station in the war.

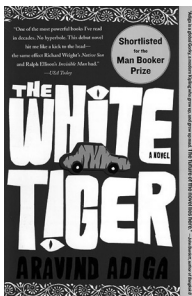
Throughout *Suite Française*, the constant changing of the characters' fates inflicts both horror and empathy. The text brings light to the small things in these characters' lives that are so integral to their everyday survival, though many of their loved ones are missing

or dead, money has no value, and the luxuries of certain foods, weapons, and even privacy no longer exist. One of the most striking moments focuses on the cat of one of the families that has escaped his basket: “The cat gnawed on a sprig of grass, then slipped back into Jacqueline’s room...He was purring like a kettle on the boil. A few seconds later the arsenal exploded” (98). In this instance, Némirovsky incorporates great detail about the cat’s actions and then suddenly ends it with the explosion of a bomb. Moments like these remind us how even the most trivial events, like watching one’s pet cat, still occur during war and are overlooked as the violence begins.

Némirovsky introduces predictable characters, such as those that value their wealth and high social class, and forces them to cope with the many violent and dehumanizing experiences in surprising ways. Sadly enough, the roles of good and evil are extremely altered in these situations. When Father Péricand leads a group of orphan children through the wilderness to shelter, they rebel and murder the priest in a muddy lake. Némirovsky creates a scene so violent that readers must rethink their original beliefs about the effects of war, even on children. When the civilians expect the German invaders to be inhumane, they find them to be mere humans that struggle in ways similar to the French. In fact, the Germans must deal with many issues that are left unseen: leaving their families with the fear of death, treating other humans as one’s superiors order, and leaving their youth behind to fight for a cause they may not understand. Némirovsky’s *Suite Française* grapples with the unseen violence between civilians and the inner thoughts of the seemingly cruel German soldiers.

Because of the raw approach to trauma that Némirovsky addresses, readers of a mature intellect should at one point in their lives read *Suite Française*. She speaks honestly about war and humanity, while not invoking the stereotypical horrors that we may expect. The ways in which we are forced to change our minds about war and humanity is unsettling and difficult. It is compelling but uncomfortable to see how war, or more specifically, violence, changes even the tiniest elements of our existence. Additionally, war inflicts distrust and fear within those of any role. For instance, the romance between Lucile and Bruno is enticing enough because of the differences that they overcome in order to appreciate one another. Even though they are passionate friends, that level of trust is never achieved because at heart, they are still enemies. When a soldier is murdered by a civilian farmer, other German soldiers fear “these peaceful country folk...they were nothing but a group of enemies...were they now and forever to be enemies?” (307). The reputedly evil, heartless soldiers are in truth torn between fighting for their country and their own survival.

Irene Némirovsky’s *Suite Française* is a worthwhile and compelling text, even as an unfinished manuscript. She is uncomfortably honest; she writes candidly and beautifully. *Suite Française* surprises us with the struggling balance between the beautiful and the grotesque of humanity amongst the toils of war and violence. Moreover, the author addresses the theme of survival in the most pathetic and triumphant ways while introducing the traumas of violence in the relationships between the characters and their inner turmoil. Although *Suite Française* is published as an interrupted manuscript forty years after its creation, the text is a must-read. It transcends historical fiction into a genre that complicates humanity and the battle of survival during the most horrendous events in world history.



## Book Review ● ● ● Zachary Hopper

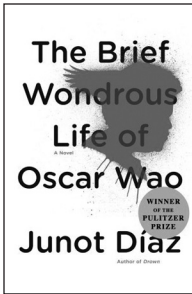
# *The White Tiger*

Adiga, Aravind. New York: Free Press, 2008. 304 pp.

*The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga's debut novel and winner of the Man Booker Prize, focuses on an Indian entrepreneur named Balram Halwai, and his journey from the poor village of Laxmangarh to the bustling streets of Bangalore. The story unfolds over the span of seven nights through a series of letters that Balram writes to the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, who is scheduled to visit India to learn about entrepreneurship and hear stories of success from Indians who started their own businesses. Balram, who grew up in a rural town as the son of a rickshaw puller, begins his tale with what he knows best: poverty. He explains to Mr. Jiabao that India "is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness" (12). Growing up in the "Darkness" with a terminally ill father, too many relatives to remember, and not enough food or money to go around, Balram experienced the India that is hidden from important visitors like the Premier. He earned the nickname of "White Tiger"—"the creature that comes along only once in a generation"—at school, where his intelligence and ambition separated him from the other children (30). After being promised a scholarship by a visiting education inspector, Balram's father dies of tuberculosis and he has to drop out of school to help pay off money that his family borrowed from their landlord, a fat man known as the Stork. He goes to the nearby city of Dhanbad with his brother to work in a tea shop, where he eavesdrops on the conversations in an attempt to continue his education. From one of these conversations, Balram gets the idea to become a driver for a wealthy businessman; so he saves up his money and pays for a driving class. This is the turning point of his life, the one that leads him down a path to success and happiness, corruption and murder. Balram becomes a driver for a wealthy man named Mr. Ashok, who is related to the landlords that bully the people of Laxmangarh. Shortly after his employment, Balram accompanies Mr. Ashok and his wife to New Delhi, where he is forced to sleep on a roach-infested mattress until he is needed. Much of his time is spent thinking, mainly about the two castes in India—"Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies"—and how he can move from the latter to the former (54). Eventually, he devises a plan to escape the darkness once and for all, a plan that will make Balram his own master for the first time in his life.

Adiga reinvents the familiar rags to riches tale in *The White Tiger*, while simultaneously casting his satirical eye on the social and economic problems of modern-day India. His dark humor and brilliant—at times poetic—prose make for a truly one of a kind reading experience. While the novel is playful and funny, it also manages to address serious issues faced not just by Indians, but by people the world over. Some of the major themes of the novel are globalization, the clash between traditions and modernity, the problems faced by developing third world countries, education as emancipation, corruption, and the position

of the post-colonial subject. In an interview in the Simon and Schuster edition of the text, Adiga says that *The White Tiger* is “built on a substratum of Indian reality” (285). Although it is a wholly fictitious account, much of what occurs in the novel is based on real life, as Adiga reveals when he says, “I simply wrote about the India that I know, and the one I live in” (287). So when we read about Balram’s father dying of tuberculosis or Bangalore’s rapid expansion, we are meant to think about the millions of poor Indians who die every year of tuberculosis and about the new way of life in India brought about by outsourcing. Balram, at once endearing and psychopathic, presents a problematic notion of entrepreneurship, one that we hope is not more mainstream. Perhaps one of the best features of the text is getting a chance to probe the psyche of this unique character, though this might raise more questions than it answers. Is Balram a victim of circumstance, an ambitious man eager to break out of the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty? Or is he every bit as corrupt and cruel as the landlords who bully the people of Laxmangarh? Regardless of how these questions are answered, it will be clear to readers that Adiga’s novel is a white tiger—something powerful and moving, graceful and frightening, and ultimately something not to be missed.



**Book Review ● ● ●** *Christine Horvath*

## ***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

Díaz, Junot. New York: Penguin Group, 2007. 352 pp.

In his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Junot Díaz creates a heartbreaking yet awe-inspiring tale of a young Dominican man. Oscar is a boy who grows up in New Jersey, but his mother hails from Santo Domingo, and throughout his life he visits there occasionally to get back to his roots. The story is segmented into different parts of the characters' lives. Many of Oscar's family members are included in this story: his mother, sister, and grandmother all play distinctive roles in its creation. When Oscar is young, he is somewhat of a Dominican player; as presented in the novel, Dominicans are some of the smoothest lovers there are. After a course of one week in elementary school, however, Oscar loses his magic touch. He attempts to date two girls simultaneously, and as one could predict, this did not end well for anyone. Oscar breaks up with one girl to stay with the other and a few days later, his chosen flame breaks his heart: "Oscar did not kiss another girl for a long long time. As though almost everything he had in the girl department had burned up in that one fucking week" (17).

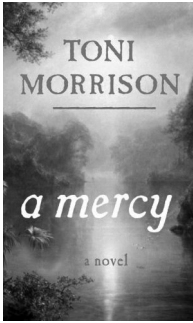
Thus begins Oscar's ascent into the life of dorkdom. He becomes enthralled with the science-fiction novels *Akira* and *Lord of the Rings*. His new interests affect his biggest passion and favorite hobby: writing. He aspires to become the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien. Whilst battling his adolescence, Oscar is faced with a number of obstacles, including encountering bullies every place he goes (for his entire life, in fact), the frustrations of love and being placed in the ever-disappointing "friend zone," and finally, the worst of them all, a Dominican curse. Fukú is a curse that was established over the Dominican Republic during the reign of Trujillo, an extremely tyrannical dictator who ruled between the years of 1930 and 1961. Meanwhile, the reader is learning about his family history and the reasons for his mother's mental instability, and his sister's impact on his life is greatly emphasized. Because of Oscar's lack of social graces and morbid obesity, he is said to have suffered from something called "The Darkness," which was really just a severe depression that kept him from doing anything (268). One summer, however, his mother goes back to the Dominican Republic, and he decides to join her on the trip. After a series of events, Oscar falls in love. This woman is older and actually works as a prostitute, but she and Oscar have a connection that he has never had with any other person. He goes out of his way to be with her, and as the title of the book insinuates, he gives up all he has for this woman- even his life.

One wonderful feature about this book is that it is not only a beautifully written story, but it is also an informative history of the Dominican Republic. As one reads, one notices various lengthy footnotes written by the author. Díaz is, in fact, a native of the Dominican Republic. He therefore has a lot of knowledge about the country and it is obvious

that he has done his research. At times the footnotes can be a bit long and divert one's attention from the story, especially toward the climax and ending; however, the information is useful and greatly appreciated. One will take away not only an appreciation for the story but also a new understanding of what it is like to live in such an impoverished place that most people merely consider a vacation destination.

Another excellent aspect of the text is that it is so daring. Diaz really pulls out all of the stops in his gutsy depiction of the everyday lives of his characters. He uses a very strong voice: right from the beginning the readers know that the work they are about to read is going to be one of a kind. The omniscient narrator's voice is so casual that it seems to be Díaz's own voice. This part actually becomes somewhat confusing and is something that Díaz could have improved to make the novel read more smoothly. Toward the end we meet a character named "Yunior" who narrates Oscar's entire adult experience, from the time he attends Rutgers to the time of his death. Employing Yunior as a narrator renders the reading slightly murky because Yunior's voice sounds exactly like the omniscient narrator that Diaz employs throughout the novel. Despite this shortcoming, however, the book is otherwise a very easy read. It is also electrifying because Diaz takes risks with language and form that propels the text onto a whole different level of excitable readability.

Finally, it is important to note the level of reality that this book takes on. Oscar's family goes through so much together (and separately) that it really feels like this family— full of love, struggles and misfortune, going from having everything to having nothing—affirms the hard times that define human experience. In this way, the text is very relatable and it is easy to empathize with the characters—especially Oscar. As each character separately and collectively saves him/herself, Diaz creates a beautiful story of hardship, loss and the redemptive power of love. The story of Oscar Wao is one that all people should open their minds to. It is truly a great work of modern fiction.



## Book Review ● ● ● *Jessica Ramey*

# *A Mercy*

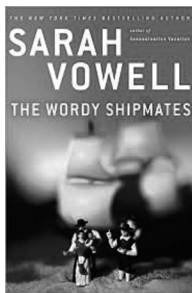
Morrison, Toni. New York: Random House, 2008. 176 pp.

In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison writes about how diverse characters are struggling to survive in a society full of slavery, disease, and misery. Each character brings a diverse element to the story. Rebekkah gives her account of coming to America to marry a man she has never met. This man is named Vaark and he is the master of the plantation on which the story takes place. Lina, a Native American woman, tells about the disease that killed many people in her tribe. Another woman who lives on the property with the other characters is named Florens, and she describes her account of finding medicines to help her community with the disease that has broken out.

Although Morrison's novel is one to definitely read and examine, the story can sometimes be difficult to follow, as it takes time to absorb the information before moving on to the next section of the book. The language used, however, is not an obstacle, and Morrison again astonishes the reader with her word choice and description. Although the book is not traditional in style—it does not have a building point to a climax followed by a resolution—the story does describe the journeys of Florens, Rebekkah, and Lina. By having such a diverse group of characters, Morrison is able to give a much more accurate and well-rounded account of slavery in the 1690s.

I would not consider this book a page-turner, but it is one that is worth reading because of Morrison's presence as a modern-day canonical writer. Although the story is written for a contemporary audience, Morrison still has a way of transporting our minds back to a place that was so long ago, and gives us a different perspective on the institution of slavery. The heart of each character's story can easily be related to people who may have gone through similar situations. For example, Rebekkah's story relates to many women who may have come to the United States for a husband, and it is through her account that we can see the innermost feelings and psyche of women much like herself. Lina also brings new insight as a Native American woman, and gives accounts of her tribe that are not commonly expressed in works on slavery. Through these stories, Morrison brings a much larger picture to the table: how all of these characters—no matter what their stories are—withstand a place that is consumed by slavery, disease, and isolation. Because her writing deals with complex issues, it is easy to examine this story piece by piece, and understand the important themes that Morrison wants us to recognize.





## Book Review ● ● ● *Larsa Ramsini*

# *The Wordy Shipmates*

Vowell, Sarah. New York: Penguin Group, 2008. 272 pp.

Anne Hutchinson is “the Puritan Oprah—a leader, a guru, a star” (208). This is one of the many comparisons comedian Sarah Vowell makes in her book *The Wordy Shipmates* between the seventeenth century Puritans and our modern United States. Despite the many points of humor found throughout the work, most of her exploration of the life of the Non-separatist Puritans who arrived in New England on the *Arbella* with Reverend John Winthrop in 1630, ten years after the Separatists Puritans arrived on the *Mayflower*, is used as a critique against our country’s present arrogance and self-adoration, or what Vowell refers to as “American exceptionalism” (6).

The title of the work refers to the complete obsession with reading and writing that the Puritans possessed. Vowell explains that “their single-minded obsession with one book, the Bible, made words the center of their lives—not land, not money, not power, not fun” (13). As an example of their devotion to literary study, she explains their founding of Harvard in response to an embarrassing loss of wits due to a theological disagreement between Anne Hutchinson and the representatives of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (225-6).

Throughout the book, Vowell defends her interest in this particular group of Puritans, as most Americans would probably hesitate to read an entire book on what has come to be known as such a boring group of people. She does succeed, however, in making them resonate with the values we hold today. In one especially moving part, as Vowell describes Winthrop’s goal of creating a unified community working together towards a common goal, she writes, “despite their unruly theology, their sometimes hair-trigger hate, the fact that the image of being members of the same body was so agreed upon to the point of cliché, makes them worth getting to know” (53).

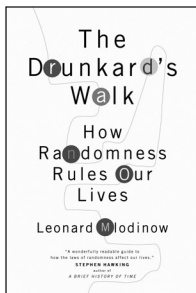
The most effective way Vowell helps the modern reader to connect with the *Arbella* Puritans is in drawing connections between the two seemingly divergent cultures. She describes Winthrop as “Peter Seeger, gathering a generation around the campfire to sing their shared folk songs,” and Roger Williams, the independent thinker adhering to the separation of church and state, as “Bob Dylan plugging in at Newport, making his own noise” (128-9). In explaining the Pequot War between the English and the Pequot Indian tribe, she claims that “severed body parts” are the “seventeenth-century equivalent of a gift basket of mini-muffins” (186-7). And returning to her theme of past and present American exceptionalism, she compares the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s seal of a Native American saying “Come Over and Help Us” to Dick Cheney remarking on *Meet the Press* in 2003, “My belief is that we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators” (26).

The strong theme of exceptionalism begins in Vowell's introduction of John Winthrop's sermon "A Model of Christian Charity," given, presumably, to the passengers of the *Arbella* in the middle of the Atlantic in 1630 (35). He tells them that their colony is to be "as a city upon a hill," an expression most Americans have probably heard before (35). What most seem to forget, however, and Vowell's reason for spending so much time on the subject, is that the Puritans who listened to this sermon were God-fearing people who possessed so much self-hatred that they labored their entire life so as to appear as if they were already saved, as they were Calvinists who believed in predestination. As Vowell explains,

The thing that appeals to me...is that at least the arrogant ballyhoo that New England is special and chosen by God is tempered by the self-loathing Puritans' sense of reckoning...this humility, this fear, was what kept their delusions of grandeur in check. That's what subsequent generations lost. From New England's Puritans we inherited the idea that America is blessed and ordained by God above all nations, but lost the fear of wrath and retribution (71-2).

*The Wordy Shipmates* is an incredibly interesting work of historical nonfiction that is well-researched and emotionally charged with drama pertaining to European imperialism, conflicts between the church and the state, and basic freedoms that we take for granted like freedom of religion, speech, and assembly. Despite some instances of over-sentimentality, poorly worded phrases, and over-description of the Pequot War, this book is an easy read for anyone interested in the history of the United States and some reasons for how we ended up where we are today, a country in which we are free to write the following sentence without fear of banishment, while at the same time having it speak the truth:

As I write this, the United States of America is still a city on a hill; and it's still shining—because we never turn off the lights in our torture prisons. That's how we carry out the sleep deprivation (72).



**Book Review ● ● ● Jennifer Scarbrough**

## ***The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives***

Mlodinow, Leonard. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. 272 pp.

In *The Drunkard's Walk*, Leonard Mlodinow shows the reader how random occurrences affect his/her daily life. What are the chances of becoming Tiger Woods or Bruce Willis? When are seemingly random events no longer random and instead reveal a pattern of corruption? How do the random incidents and one's choices lead to a deeper understanding and acceptance of one's future? What are the chances that the red Porsche is behind door number one? Did you know that you are more likely to be killed in a car accident on your way to or from getting a lottery ticket than winning the lottery itself? The reader is faced with all of these thought-provoking questions and Mlodinow explains how they can be answered.

*The Drunkard's Walk* begins with the story of how Mlodinow came to be interested in probability. His father, while imprisoned in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany during World War II, lost his wife and two children. After stealing a loaf of bread from the local bakery, a lineup of possible suspects was formed by the Gestapo who threatened to shoot them one-by-one less someone confessed. In order to spare lives, Mlodinow's father confessed to the theft and instead of being shot, was offered a job at the bakery for his honesty. After the war, his father immigrated to New York and married a fellow refugee, which resulted in the birth of Leonard Mlodinow. Had it not been for all of the random events—World War II, the concentration camp, the loss of his entire family, the chance job offering, and remarrying after surviving the war—the author of this thoughtful book would never have been born.

Mlodinow leads readers through the historical timeline and evolution of probability theory. Early theories on probability arose from men trying to understand the game of chance—gambling. The first book ever written on randomness was *The Book on Games of Chance* (1576), by Gerolamo Cardano—a gambler drawn to understanding the underlying mathematical relationships in card games, dice, backgammon and astragali. Cardano's ideas were not fully appreciated until Galileo Galilei became intrigued with probability during the Scientific Revolution. Galileo declared that the chances of an event depend on the number of ways in which it can occur. Everything else in the history of randomness built off of the initial research and innovation of mathematicians in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The reader is able to not only follow the evolution of the theories of randomness through history but to also gain the extensive knowledge that Mlodinow offers along with it. The author covers many areas from Pascal's triangle to the Bernoulli family legacy of mathematicians. The reader is given unique statistics ranging from Black Plague deaths to wine ratings, and the author uses these statistics to make once difficult theories easier to understand. The reader is also introduced to various ideas related to probability, including the prevalence

of errors in data and ways to compensate for them. For example, Mlodinow explains how human perception can lead to the realization of patterns where there in fact are no patterns.

The final chapter titled “The Drunkard’s Walk” discusses the real-life applications of the theories presented in the book. Mlodinow confirms what is well known: the future is difficult to predict, even by experts. After recognizing this fact he states that,

We can focus on the ability to react to events rather than relying on the ability to predict them, on qualities like flexibility, confidence, courage, and perseverance. And we can place more importance on our direct impressions of people than on their well-trumpeted past accomplishments. In these ways we can resist forming judgments in our automatic deterministic framework (203).

Just as a drunkard’s walk sways to the left and right in random fancy, no matter how many times one fails, there is still a good chance of success. In the final pages of the book, Mlodinow reminds readers of the great words of Thomas Edison: “many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up” (216). Readers are urged to take risks because it will increase their chances of success; in this way, success is partly under our control.

*The Drunkard’s Walk* is a captivating read with touches of unexpected humor. It provides an extensive history of the evolution of randomness, those that contributed to its development, and the lives they led. It can be easily read by those who lack a solid mathematical background as Mlodinow is able to explain the theories in his book using real-life data, experiments, and stories from his own life experiences. This book is a great read for anyone curious to know the answers from the questions posed above and also how, in the words of Mlodinow, “randomness rules our lives.”

# Contributors ● ● ●

- **Meghan Boyd** (formerly Meghan Johnson) graduated from Otterbein in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in literary studies. She is now an editor at Hondros Learning, a publishing company associated with Hondros College, in Westerville. She is now living in Westerville with her husband, Casey (whom she married in July 2008), and is enjoying regular work hours with relaxing evenings free of homework and studying, and remembering what it's like to read just for fun!
- **Will Ferrall** There are unprecedented times in Earth's history that warrant the authorship of several major works and the timeless admiration of intellectuals and laypeople across the globe. Such was the case with the birth and life of Will Ferrall. Will was conceived and raised in Hilliard, Ohio, and has been chained there ever since. He likes to drum, find music, avoid wheat products, and watch *The Office* Thursday evenings. The books and admiration are no doubt forthcoming.
- **Ashley Fox** is in her Senior year and is looking forward to graduating. She traveled to Rwanda for her SYE and is hoping that one day she will be able to return. As of now she is just looking for a job for after graduation and planning her wedding in July. She also wants to thank her family, friends and fiancé who have been very supportive through this exciting and sometimes stressful time in her life. She couldn't have done it without them.
- **Stephanie Freas** is a double English major with a philosophy minor at Otterbein College. Her passion is writing about her life, especially her family, researching Holocaust literature, community service, Campus Programming Board, working early mornings in the library, Quiz and Quill, and her beloved sorority Kappa Phi Omega. She will study abroad in Northern Ireland in the fall and graduate in 2010. Stephanie hopes to attend graduate school and become an English professor. Stephanie thanks her family for shaping her, her professors at Otterbein for influencing her passion for academics, and her friends and sisters for making these the best years of her life.

- **Zachary Hopper** is a literary studies, creative writing, and philosophy triple major. He will spend next fall studying in the Netherlands and traveling around Europe. After graduating from Otterbein in 2010, Zachary plans to continue his education in literature and philosophy by attending graduate school. Among his many pursuits, he particularly enjoys videogames, reading, playing ultimate Frisbee and practicing martial arts. Zachary hopes to become a professor, write a novel, learn to scuba dive, and own a Porsche (not necessarily in that order).
  
- **Christine Horvath** Hailing from Poland, OH, Christine is a sophomore English Lit major at Otterbein. This is her first experience with Aegis but hopes to continue her involvement over her next two years. Her interests include sketch comedy and the musical stylings of the great singer/songwriter of the 70's, James Taylor. She would like to give a shout out to her sisters of Tau Epsilon Mu for being incredible and inspirational sisters. Also, she would like to thank Karen Steigman for being a fantastic academic and Aegis adviser.
  
- **Sarah Martindell** is a 2008 graduate, having majored in creative writing and minored in religion. After graduation she moved to Salt Lake City as part of a leadership development program with the United Methodist Church. She currently serves as a social justice advocate at Crossroads Urban Center, where she works on poverty issues with low-income people. She would like to thank Dr. Glenna Jackson, a true rabbi who changed her life. *Oh how I miss your purple exclamation points in the margins of my papers.*
  
- **Jessica Ramey** is a Junior English Education major from Hilliard, OH. Outside of class she enjoys spending time with her friends at Vineyard Columbus and actively fighting against human trafficking. Over the summer you will find her working at the zoo as a camp counselor, and sipping on a lemonade on her new porch. She would like to thank her mom, boyfriend Daniel, and amazing friends for all of their love and support.
  
- **Larsa Ramsini** is a senior at Otterbein and will be graduating this year with a triple-major in Mathematics, Philosophy, and French. Next year she will either be attending law school or participating in Teach For America. She is thankful to Otterbein for all of the wonderful experiences and is excited about what comes next!

- **Jennifer Scarbrough** is in the MBA Business program at Otterbein College. She graduated from Otterbein College with a B.S. in June 2009 with a double major in Spanish and Business with a concentration in International Business. She would like to thank her family for all their support and guidance over the years.
- **Jessica Sheffer** is a senior with a major in Psychology and a minor in English. Although born and raised in Ohio, she will move to Germany soon after graduation and take a year off from her studies. One day, she plans to have a plan for her future. When not consumed by school work, Jessica enjoys traveling, listening to good music, drinking coffee, and reading. She would like to thank her family for giving her the opportunity to have such a fine education. She would also like to thank her boyfriend for his continued encouragement and support.
- **Bonnie Shore** is a senior majoring in Music Performance, spending her time at Otterbein living and breathing all things violin-related. In addition to honing her skills on Guitar Hero and repeatedly toppling off her Wii fit board, she enjoys reading, Ukrainian egg decorating, and daydreaming. Thanks to the support of her friends (human, animal, and those in denial between the two), she is now looking forward to graduation and grad school.
- **Whitney L. Prose** is a senior English Creative Writing major with minors in Environmental Studies and Japanese. She plans to attend The Pennsylvania State University as a research assistant for a MS and PhD in Rural Sociology beginning in the fall of 2009. Whitney's paper in /Aegis/ covers a book that influenced her honors novel. This proves to her that God has a very wry sense of humor; for Whitney despised the class that required reading /The Patron Saint of Liars/ but found the novel useful for years. She thanks all of her surrogate moms and dads at Otterbein College who have helped her throughout the years.







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