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Spring 2015

Aegis: The Otterbein Humanities Journal

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

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

Essays in the social sciences that are historical or philosophical in approach - or that involve questions of interpretation or criticism traditionally in the humanities - will also be eligible for publication in *Aegis*. We will also consider essays that use the disciplines of the humanities to interpret, analyze, or assess science and technology. Essays written in a language other than English will be accepted for review, provided such essays are accompanied by an English translation. Books for the book review section are selected and reviewed by Editorial Board members.

Submissions: Essay submissions should be 10-25 double-spaced pages. Use 12-point Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins, and please number all pages. Use either the MLA Style Manual or The Chicago Manual of Style for citations. Submissions will be due at the end of the first week of the spring semester. Submissions are also accepted on a rolling basis. Electronic submissions are required. Please send to aegis@otterbein.edu.

Submissions must be accompanied by an email or cover sheet noting author's name, address, and the title of the essay. Author name/s should not appear on submitted essays. Student volunteers are needed for the *Aegis* Editorial Board. To volunteer, to submit an essay for review, or to ask questions, please email *Aegis* at aegis@otterbein.edu. *Aegis* is committed to nonsexist language and to wording free of hostile overtones.

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Contents

5	Editors' Introduction
6	Interview with David Johnson, Associate Professor of History, University of South Florida
12	Interview with Sir Salman Rushdie
15	Interview with George Yancy, Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University
24	Essays
24	In Swift's Shadow: An Essay Examining the Influence of Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> on Voltaire's <i>Candide</i> by Lydia Crannell
31	Children as Perpetrators of the Colonial Project by Lauren Edmonds
37	Jokes That Express Racist Beliefs: David Benatar's Account of Harm in Racist Beliefs and the Expression of Those Beliefs Through Humor by Samuel Lawless
45	Among The Living Dead: The Zombie Narrative in a Post-9/11 Era by Zoë Princehorn
58	I'm a Princess Cut From Marble: Gender in the Renaissance by Emma van Hessalt
66	Book Reviews
66	<i>A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction</i> by Taylor Bailey
68	<i>I Wear the Black Hat</i> by Bethany Blinsky
70	<i>California</i> by Byron Brenneman
72	<i>Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights</i> by Carrie Coisman
74	<i>Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies</i> by Kevin Gebura
76	<i>Leaving the Sea</i> by Gretchen Heisler
78	<i>American Isis: The Life and Art of Sylvia Plath</i> by Katy Major
80	<i>Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West</i> by Carly Marburger
82	<i>Life After Life</i> by Meghan MacMillan
84	<i>The Shelf: Adventures in Extreme Reading</i> by Rachel Scherzer
86	<i>Authentic Being</i> by Nicole Starling
88	Contributors

Editors' Introduction

>>> Taylor Bailey, Carrie Coisman & Katy Major

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

The essays that have been selected for this year's edition of *Aegis* exemplify the talent and commitment to academics that are continuously exhibited by students at Otterbein University. The topics covered examine issues in philosophy, historiography, literary studies, and film studies. All of the essays in the journal meet the standards of rigorous research in the humanities, but more importantly, they are engaging pieces that work to address a variety of complex issues.

In "In Swift's Shadow: An Essay Examining the Influence of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* on Voltaire's *Candide*" by Lydia Crannell, she discusses the influences of British satirist Jonathan Swift on French satirist Voltaire through a literary juxtaposition of *Gulliver's Travels* and *Candide*. Lauren Edmonds, in her piece, "Children as Perpetrators of the Colonial Project," uses literature and critical literary theory to redefine post-colonialism, citing the socialization of children as the cycle that continues the colonial project. In "I'm a Princess Cut from Marble: Gender in the Renaissance," Emma van Hasselt discusses the construction of historical research and argument through a set of feminist secondary sources. These scholarly sources are new to the literature surrounding issues of gender and the Renaissance and offer previously unavailable insights in the past historiography. "Jokes That Express Racist Beliefs: David Benatar's Account of Harm in Racist Beliefs and the Expression of Those Beliefs Through Humor" by Samuel Lawless investigates the philosophy of humor and its relationship to racism and morality. He engages with philosophers including David Benatar and George Yancey. Zoë Princehorn, in "Among The Living Dead: The Zombie Narrative in a Post-9/11 Era," examines the millennial and the zombie's cultural convergent evolution within the context of the aftershocks of September 11th. The five essays published in this edition are representative of the fine work being done by students in the humanities at Otterbein.

Also included in the twelfth edition of *Aegis* is a selection of book reviews written by the editorial board that reflect their intellectual interests and speak to their respective disciplines. The books reviewed include fictive works such as Edan Lupucki's *California* and Ben Marcus's *Leaving the Sea*. Reviews of traditional non-fiction scholarship include texts that offer new critiques and insights to Sylvia Plath's life and work in Carol Rollison's *American Isis: The Life and Art of Sylvia Plath*, a post-modern historiographical discussion of war and sexual assault in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones* edited by historian Elizabeth D. Heineman, a look at art and environmental issues in the American West in *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* by Lucy Lippard, and philosophical insights into the development of super-intelligences in Nick Bostrom's *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*.

This past year, Otterbein was fortunate to have brought a wide variety of guest scholars in the humanities to campus, some of which *Aegis* had the opportunity to interview. This edition contains an interview with Sir Salman Rushdie, author of *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, conducted by last year's lead editors, Beth Gier and Megan Gray. *Aegis* also had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. George Yancy, Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University, regarding his work in the field of critical whiteness studies. Students in the history department discussed the future of gay and lesbian histories with Dr. David Johnson, author the award-winning text *The Lavender Scare*.

Aegis is proud to belong to a strong scholarly community of students and faculty within the humanities at Otterbein University. The reviews, essays and interviews included within *Aegis* speak to Otterbein's commitment to that community. We hope that our readers find engaging, stimulating, and thought-provoking work throughout our twelfth edition.

An Interview with

Dr. David Johnson

Associate Professor of History, University of South Florida

Aegis: First can you tell us some of your background information your experience in undergraduate university, graduate school and how you can to your topic of gay consumer culture.

My route to graduate school was circuitous. I was a history major at Georgetown, studying both European and American history, but mostly European history, because I wanted to live in France. I had an amazing year and a half learning French in Paris, then came back and went to graduate school at the University of Chicago for a year in European history looking at 19th century French medical and psychiatric views of homosexuality. But I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with it or where to go from there. So I left graduate school at that point and worked for a while at History Associates, a historical research firm in Washington D.C. While I was there I discovered the topic of what became my first book, how gay people were considered security risks in the 1950s and systematically fired from the government, what I call the Lavender Scare. Then I reapplied to Northwestern to do U.S. history with that as a dissertation project.

Aegis: Did you find any resistance, either from the academy or interpersonal relationships in doing a gay topic in the academic field of history?

I didn't experience any overt resistance to studying sexuality in history. My advisor had taught a gay and lesbian history course for years. My first year research paper on the gay subculture in Chicago actually won a departmental award.

What I did experience was some resistance on the job market because there were few jobs available. There weren't a lot of jobs advertised for someone with a specialty in the history of sexuality, and none for gay and lesbian history. What most departments wanted was someone who knew about the history of sexuality and could teach those kinds of class, but where it wasn't a main focus. Given my dissertation, it was pretty hard to mask that gay and lesbian history was my main focus.

Aegis: What's a little bit of background on how you became interested in the topic of your first book? What led you there and what made it continue to be interesting as you were gathering sources?

It was a combination of my experience in public history and gay and lesbian activism. I was a member of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance in Washington DC, a local group, but it was one of oldest gay and lesbian political organizations in the country. In 1991 GLAA was celebrating its twentieth anniversary, so I volunteered to do a history of the group, a sort of chronology of important events, which became a pamphlet that is still available on

GLAA's website. But in the process of doing that, I discovered Frank Kameny and his story—how he had fought the federal government's anti-gay policies. He was a member of GLAA, but years before he had founded an earlier gay rights organization in Washington—The Mattachine Society of Washington. I discovered his personal papers and the papers of his organization in his attic. They were all just sitting there, uncategorized and deteriorating. I said to myself, "there's a book here." It started out as a small, local public history project and grew. I got a grant from a local gay rights organization to do an oral history with Kameny and have it transcribed. Then I presented a paper at an academic conference, then it became the basis of my application for graduate school, and then it became my dissertation, and then became a book. Kameny's papers are now in the Library of Congress, and the book is being turned into a documentary film.

***Aegis:* When you first started research his documents, was there a difference in your starting point to your end result? Were there things that you found that surprised you or didn't surprise you?**

I would say what surprised me in the research was how vehement the lavender scare was and yet how little had been written about it. This fear that homosexuals posed a threat to national security was pervasive in 1950s political culture. All kinds of speeches were given about it. McCarthy kept talking about not only the threat of Communists in the federal government, but the threat of gays and lesbians. The federal government set up an incredible security apparatus to attack the problem. And yet, people hadn't really investigated it. Books chronicling the Red Scare would mention the fear of homosexuals, and then drop the topic, as if it needed no explanation.

***Aegis:* How do you find activism affecting your current work, both as a researcher and as a professor?**

Well, I think my teaching of courses in gender and sexuality, particularly the course I give in gay and lesbian history, is itself a form of activism. Just having these courses available, particularly at a public university, helps educate a whole new generation of activists and potential activists. It's kind of shocking how, even in a class that is a mix of gay and straight students, how little even the gay students know about the history of the movement or the community. I'm hoping it informs their activism when they learn about how this community and this movement developed.

***Aegis:* Do you see a change in how the students respond to this kind of history in the past couple of years? Has it changed at all with the changing cultural context of how gays and lesbians are perceived?**

Students today tend to equate activism with the fight for gay marriage. That so dominates the gay and lesbian rights movement that it's in some ways challenging to get them to see that this is a new development. Fifteen, twenty years ago, gay marriage wasn't even on the radar of most gay people. Most gay and lesbian activists were looking to form alternatives to heterosexual marriage. But today, students tend to view the marriage fight as

the natural and inevitable topic, because that is what we're dealing with now. So I guess it's a challenge to get them to see that marriage not the only issue. It was a choice made along the way, but there are other issues, such as employment discrimination and HIV prevention.

Aegis: In class today, you said you had applied for some information with the Freedom of Information Act and you hadn't gotten them until somewhat recently, even though you had sent the applications in fifteen years ago. With issues like that, did you think that it was based on the information you were seeking, or just the bureaucracy just taking a long time? Do you have any recommendations for students trying to find information?

The lesson is don't depend on a Freedom of Information Act request for your term paper that is due in a couple months. (Laughter)

No, I don't think explicit homophobia explains the reason it took so long. It was just the bureaucracy and how multiple agencies that were involved in the document's production or even use had to approve the declassification.

There is, however, a larger issue of getting access to these kinds of records about sexuality. You can't go into the National Archive and look in an index under "homosexuality" or "sexuality." You depend upon the expertise of the archivists there to guide you through and help you find records. So you are kind of at the mercy of the archivists, your access depends on how they view your topic.

When I started research for *The Lavender Scare* in the 90s, I first went to the National Archives and asked for State Department documents on policies about employing gays and lesbians. I described my topic to one of the archivists at the National Archives, an expert in State Department records, and he looked at me like I had lost my mind. He said, "You can't just walk in here and look at people's personnel records." I explained that I didn't want to look at individual personnel records, but that I knew there were policy statements about this because it was a big deal, it was written about in newspapers every day, politicians made speeches about it, the State Department was asked about this in Congressional hearings. The archivist was having none of this and sort of threw a finding aid at me and said, "look at this." Meanwhile, I had seen another archivist in the research room, who seemed more sympathetic to my topic, shall we say. He very kindly came by and said, "Have you found everything you need?" I said "No, I haven't" and I explained my topic to him and his eyes kind of lit up. He offered to help me and became instrumental in guiding me through finding aids, going into the stacks to search possible collections, even helping me with FOIA requests. He was a gay man, he was interested in the topic, and that made all the difference.

Aegis: The historiography surrounding the history of sexuality is somewhat narrow right now. Do you see that changing, do you see it becoming a more researched aspect of history in the coming years with this new generation of students that are more open about these kinds of topics generally? Do you see the history of sexuality becoming a pillar of the discipline in a way?

The history of sexuality is increasingly seen as a legitimate subfield within the discipline. There are books in gay and lesbian history that have won major awards in the discipline, particularly George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, for example, or Margot Canaday's

The Straight State. I think even that in lots of humanities disciplines it's seen as a cutting edge subfield where there's lots of interesting theoretical work going on.

Aegis: Can you talk a little bit about your new project on gay consumer culture and sort of what that's all about?

In my new project I am still looking at the gay subculture in the United States in the '50s and '60s, but I'm looking at it less through a political lens and more through the lens of consumer culture. I'm looking at things that gay men could buy in the post-war period—things like physique magazines, greeting cards, books, clothing—and how the availability of these items through mail order catalogs helped to create a sense of a national community. You could be anywhere, you could be in small town Ohio or Florida or South Dakota and you could buy these things through the mail or subscribe to these magazines. You could buy gay books being read on Fire Island or clothing that was being worn in Greenwich Village, and feel you were a part of this larger community. Consumer culture is itself sort of its own subfield within history, that's increasingly taken seriously. Lizabeth Cohen wrote a book where she called the United States in the post war years a "Consumer's Republic" where we define ourselves and our sense of identity not so much as citizens, but as consumers. And so I'm trying to take that work on the history of consumer culture and combine it with the work on the history of sexuality and see what we learn.

Aegis: You kind of touched on it in class about why when viewing McCarthyism, most people have overlooked the whole Lavender Scare aspect of it? Could you just expand a little bit more on why you think that might have happened, why you think that occurred and why most people just focus on the Communist part of the Red Scare and didn't really notice the fact that the gays and lesbians were also being persecuted.

When I was doing the kind of background reading of the historiography on the topic of McCarthyism and anti-communism I saw that almost all of the historians who wrote about it would have a reference or quotation that mentioned the persecution of gays and lesbians and then they would drop it. They would go on for hundreds and hundreds of pages about anti-communism, and leave the gay part of it completely unexamined, and I think that was for a couple of reasons. At that time, that generation of historians didn't consider sexuality a legitimate topic of historical research. Even if they did, they probably assumed that anti-gay persecution had always existed, that this was some sort of natural, long-standing fear that really needed no explanation. They didn't realize that the persecution that happened in the '50s was completely unprecedented.

Aegis: Following up with that question, you mentioned earlier about how you do not believe that Stonewall is the beginning point of the gay rights movement. Can you talk about that and if you think some of this repression in the 1950s of gay culture led to the explosion of civil rights movements that happened in the late 1950s, early 1960s?

You still see this in lots of newspaper articles and sometimes even in the gay press--you see Stonewall referred to as the beginning of the gay rights movement. Stonewall, of

course, was a raid on a gay bar in Greenwich Village, in late June of 1969 where the patrons fought back. And it did lead to a real kind of explosion of activism and the formation of all kinds of new and larger gay organizations. But historians have shown us now for years that there were gay political groups in the United States starting about 1951. There were pickets for gay rights in front of the White House in 1965. So historians have been saying a while that the movement started before Stonewall, but it's hard to get that to seep into the popular understanding.

The story of the Lavender Scare is a sad and depressing one—considering the number of people that were fired from the federal government and the level of persecution—but there is a happy ending. The persecution was so intense and so concentrated on Washington DC that it sparked resistance and the formation of new organizations with new tactics to overturn this policy, so it kind of revived gay and lesbian activism.

Aegis: We were really interested in some of your most interesting sources that you found in doing either research for either project. Things that during the course at the time that you found them to be really useful or really like motivating the project forward or just interesting in general.

Well, for the gay consumer culture project, I spent a lot of time just trying to find these materials, because no one was collecting them until recently. A lot of it was ephemera—fliers, newsletters, and brochures—saved by individuals and only preserved in their archival papers. Even the more formally published and circulated physique magazines were not regularly collected by libraries. Now there are academic libraries that specialize in the history of sexuality, like Cornell, which has a big Human Sexuality Collection, where I've spent a lot of time, and also some community-based gay and lesbian archives, like the ONE Archive in Los Angeles and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco. The other big boon to doing research on consumer culture is the Internet. These magazines from the 1950s and 1960s have again become consumer items. People collect them and buy and sell them. There are commercial websites, where people have scanned in thousands of pages of these magazines. So now I can do research on these magazines, search them by publisher or city, in ways that I couldn't do just ten years ago.

Aegis: Do you think since you've written this book and with the increase in interest in the study of the history of sexuality, have you seen more books or articles published with a similar theme?

I think there is a tremendous amount being published in the history of sexuality and in gay and lesbian history. The subfield is increasingly professionalized and we have a very active organization, the Committee on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender History, affiliated with the American Historical Association (AHA). It holds sessions at the AHA conference, gives awards, and provides networking opportunities for people in the subfield. There are now a couple of textbooks that are available, including Michael Bronski's *A Queer History of the United States* and Vicki Eaklor's *Queer America*. People are teaching this more and more, and there's a need for survey textbooks. The state of California recently passed

a law mandating that the contributions of LGBTQ people be included in high school history classes and curriculums, which is fostering even more such publications. I helped contribute to one such anthology, *Understanding and Teaching U.S. LGBT History*, by University of Wisconsin Press.

Aegis: Do you have any advice for students in the humanities that are going on to graduate school?

I think there is a myth out there, perpetrated by the mass media, that only people with degrees in STEM fields are employable. And the statistics do not bare that out. People with humanities degrees are in demand in business settings. Business people know that people who have humanities degrees can think, write, and research in a way that people in STEM fields can't. So, if they are looking for people who have those creative skills, they hire humanities majors. But, you're asking about graduate school. It is a big commitment, so taking time off beforehand is a good idea. I certainly did. I worked for awhile in the private sector after college. My job was unique because it was a historical research firm, but I learned a lot there about writing and researching history. And then I took a couple stabs at graduate school. Once you know what topic you want to study and why, you'll be more successful at it.

An Interview with
Sir Salman Rushdie
Booker Prize-Winning Author

Aegis: First we just want to thank you for agreeing to meet with us.

Of course.

Aegis: It's really an honor for both of us.

Yes, of course, of course.

Aegis: At your lecture last night you were talking about narratives and how different countries' narratives can interact with each other. Where do you think your stories fall on the narratives scale? Are they national? Are they international? Does it depend on the story?

I always envied writers who have very deep roots. Writers like Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Alice Munro—people who just sit in one little patch of the earth and can inexhaustibly mine it for material. I've always thought that would be a good way to be a writer. But, it's not been my life experience. I've bounced around the planet much more. And then you have to accept that there are disadvantages in that, but there are also advantages. It allows me to have some serious lived experience of many different kinds of place. So, if I want to set a story in Pakistan I know how to do that. It's not just knowing the topography of a place, it's knowing how people live there and what that experience is like. As I was saying last night, one of the things that a novel can do is show you the lived experience of places in the world, and I think I've been fortunate in that I know that about a lot of places.

There's this current conversation now about what is called the global novel and I've been accused of being guilty of it. There's a criticism made of it that has a lot of legitimacy, which is that if a book is set everywhere, it can belong nowhere. It cannot have any roots at all and so floats six inches above the ground, like an airport novel. I think there's a lot to be said for that criticism. Certainly for me, place has always been very important in my writing. I have to be very confident of the place that the story is happening in before I can make the story happen in it. So my feeling is that if you're going to try and take account of this globalized world, and try and show how human life is affected by that, it doesn't excuse you from the ordinary needs of the novel, which is to make something grounded, make the story seem to grow out of real places and real experiences. It just makes it more difficult to do. I remember when I was writing *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, which takes place in India, and then in England, and then America, I thought I really have to make sure that all these places are alive and that the book feels rooted in each of these places.

I think it's been my good fortune to have some knowledge of the places I want to write about and so I *can* do that. I get worried when I read books that just seem to try to be about everything and everywhere, and I think it is a problem—or, what I'm saying is that I'm aware of the problem and trying not to fall into those elephant traps.

***Aegis:* In your autobiography *Joseph Anton* you say that not being able to go to Egypt because of the *Satanic Verses* was one of the greatest futures that you missed out on. Was there ever a greater future that you feel you missed out on?**

I think the big continuing problem for me has been the relationship with India. I think anyone can read my work and see how significant that's been over a very long period of time. Now, there's two problems for me in India. One is the problem of fame, which actually makes it very hard to walk down the street. I don't want to boast, but there are places in India, like Bombay which is my hometown—it's a city obsessed with celebrity anyway because it's where the movie industry is. America hasn't even discovered celebrity compared to what Bombay does with it. It's everyone's daily obsession. So if you happen to have a very recognizable face, it makes it difficult because if you're a writer what you want to do is to walk the street. You want to walk the streets and hang out and stick your nose into interesting places. You want to be the observer, not the observed. And it becomes difficult when that flips and suddenly people are watching you. It's a small problem, because there are ways of getting around that.

The bigger problem is political. For starters, the *Satanic Verses* is still banned in India even though you really can't ban books anymore, because even in India you can download it onto your Kindle. It's very electronically available. It seems just idiotic that the physical book can't be present when the electronic book is present everywhere. You could go on the internet and read a pirated edition of it any day. So we live in an age in which information can't be suppressed, but I'm still old fashioned enough to want the physical object to be there and that's frustrating.

And then I find that Indian political or religious leaders pursuing their own agenda will sometimes find me to be a convenient football to kick and I'm just sick of it, and it has altered my relationship with the place. It's altered even my desire to go and spend a lot of time there because I don't want to be caught up in that mess. I still have a cultural and historical interest in India and that won't ever go away. Actually *The Enchantress of Florence* was a solution to this problem, which is to say I can write about the sixteenth century, and I can wander those streets quite easily, given that I've always had that historical interest anyway.

But it's difficult to foretell the future because things can change. Contemporary India is changing very, very fast.

The cities are transforming. Bombay is not the city I grew up in anymore. First of all, it's ten times the size. And there are great shifts in the culture as well and I'm not sure right now that those are for me to write about. I think, obviously, there are lots of writers in India, very good ones, and they are doing the work. But, once upon a time I would have jumped in there and rolled my sleeves up and tried to find out about it and written something about it

and it's a loss. It feels like a loss. But fortunately there's a lot to write about. I actually feel that the part of my life that has nothing to do with South Asia is something that I perhaps haven't written enough about and I'm interested to look there. I've lived in New York fifteen years and other than *Fury* and the last part of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, I haven't set much work there. I'm interested to do that. So I don't know, I'm just going on the journey. It's true that the relationship with India has shifted and it's a sadness to me.

An Interview with
George Yancy,
Professor of Philosophy, Duquesne University

Aegis: How did you come to philosophy, and how did you come to study it?

Actually, I edited a book called *The Philosophical I: Personal Reflections on Life in Philosophy* in 2002. In that book I wrote a chapter entitled “Between Facticity and Possibility” where I discuss how I fell in love with philosophy. What’s interesting in my case is that I initially wanted to be a pilot, so I’d always look in the ‘P’ encyclopedia. One day I was looking through the ‘P’ encyclopedia and I came across this word *philosophy*. And I thought, *Oh my goodness, you mean there’s a field that I can actually study—and be paid for—and explore all the issues that apparently I had been already thinking about?* It was an incredible revelation. Philosophy meant the love of wisdom (*Philo-sophia*) and I had, from my young perspective, already been in love with wisdom. As a young boy, I was very peculiar in this regard. I recall around the age of seven—my mom was fundamentalist Baptist—and she would always have me and my sister say that famous Child’s Bedtime Prayer: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.” So, we would do that every night. At one point, I would say, “God bless my Mother, my sister,” and I would name my friends, and then one day I asked my mom if it was okay to pray for the Devil. Now, that completely threw her off. I think that any mother would have been a bit concerned. My reasoning, at this very young age, was that if I’m praying, and if in fact, according to Christianity, there’s this kind of possible intervention in real history—that God can actually reach out and touch people and make a difference—why not the Devil, since, within the context of the Baptist Church, the Devil is deemed that entity that is a separate, independent thing, a malevolent being whose essence it is to be evil. So I thought, if anyone needed saving or blessing, it was the Devil. So my mom thought about it for a while, and in about a month or so, she finally came back with an answer: yes. So there I was as a little kid, saying, “God bless my mother, God bless my friends,” and at the very end I’d say, “And God bless the Devil.” Of course in retrospect, that was a deeply philosophical and theological issue. What does theology have to say about that? Can the Devil be redeemed? Does the Devil have freedom and why doesn’t he choose the right thing to do? Apparently, for the Devil, there’s no redemption at all. You know, perhaps it was my way of showing concern for those who are most in need of it. Also, what led me to philosophy was this ‘obsession with death.’ And I still have that obsession. As a very young boy, at nine or ten years old, I was always wondering—and I didn’t use this language—*Why are we finite? Why don’t we continue?* I remember once saying to my mom—I was very angry with her—and I said, “Why is it that we were brought here only to leave? It would have been better if I had not been born.” Of course, my mom got upset with my saying this, because she had given birth to me, and I’m saying, “I wish I hadn’t come into the world.” Of course,

I've come to terms with this, realizing that *I am here*. And while it remains a great mystery, there is tremendous beauty that I am here. In many ways, you might argue that my early philosophical development—although I didn't have the discourse to explain it—was kind of existentialist, especially in terms of thinking about finitude, existential direction, the meaning of human existence, whether there's a God or not.

So there I was loving wisdom, and I usually couch this in terms of having my mother's passion, and having my father's intellectual wherewithal. *Passion*, if you look at that word, etymologically, means, "to suffer." So, I see a fundamental relationship between the exploration of philosophical ideas—particularly when it comes to issues around death, human existence, race, whiteness, privilege, power, hegemony—that these issues bring about a certain kind of suffering because they're so weighty. From the sheer gravitas of these philosophical problems, there's a certain kind of personal investment that one has in them, and as a result, there's this kind of suffering.

So, I'd say I probably came to philosophy non-traditionally, especially in terms of not having read anything, when I was ten. In terms of knowing that there was an actual field—around sixteen years old is when I read it in an encyclopedia. From there, I was hooked: *This is what I want to do!* So, I've known that I wanted to major in Philosophy from at least sixteen or seventeen years old. And then what I'd do was I'd go out, I would take out books from the library—one important text was Bertrand Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*, and I was trying to read it all the way through. I would go to my high school and ask teachers, "Can you help me explain this?" One thing was really important at this point, though. A high school math teacher of mine who had gone to LaSalle University asked his professor from when he was at LaSalle if I could come and sit in on an introductory course in philosophy. At that point I was about eighteen. He allowed me to audit, and I got an 'A' for the course. In the course there were a lot of older students, and they would ask, "What year are you?" I would say, "I'm still in high school." And they would say, "No, there's no way!" So, again, my entry into philosophy, then, was through this kind of early curiosity, this early passion, this kind of suffering, around these profound issues for which I didn't have a name. But then I discovered that there was and is this field called philosophy and everything began from there.

I knew I what I wanted to do. I was encouraged to apply to the University of Pittsburgh and got in. The University of Pittsburgh was one of the best philosophy departments in the country during the late eighties, and probably still is—they do analytic philosophy, which is a certain conceptual and discursive approach to philosophical questions. I worked with some phenomenal people like Wilfrid Sellars, who was a very nationally and internationally influential epistemologist. In fact, Sellars directed my philosophy honors thesis. I took courses with people like Adolf Grunbaum, Nicholas Rescher, Annette Baier. I also had various fascinating conversations with Carl Gustav Hempel. These were just incredibly historical philosophical figures. It was a fascinating place to be. From Pitt, I applied to grad school, and got into Yale University. I got into their Ph.D. program, but decided to just get the MA, and left afterward. Long story short, I did some other work and then went on to Duquesne University. While at Duquesne, I got a second Master's degree in Africana Studies from NYU before I actually defended my dissertation. After completing that second MA, I came back to Duquesne, completed my Ph.D. and then was hired at Duquesne right away.

Aegis: More specifically, how did you become interested in the problem of whiteness?

At Yale, I became interested in questions of Philosophy of Science. Thomas Kuhn wrote this important book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He was concerned with questions like, “What is it about the claims that we make, for example, when we say, ‘Electrons exist,’ or something of the sort. What justifies that kind of claim? He argues that we have to think about the larger paradigm within which that statement is made; he is interested in how we make certain kinds of ontological and epistemological commitments—about what we know and what things are real in the world and how certain claims are dictated by (or mediated by) a paradigmatic way of thinking about the world. So, I became interested in what the relationship is between the larger ontological and epistemological stories that we tell ourselves and the claims that we make within those larger stories, which made me think about how the ways that we make ontological claims about reality are historically contingent claims. In the context of religion, for example, is it the case that any particular religion (Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism) “gets” at the essence of God?

My sense was that the relationship between those questions of religion and questions of science was similar in terms of the fact that they’re giving us different *stories* about reality, which made me think about questions of contingency and questions of social construction. How do we get beyond those stories? This led me to ask larger questions within hermeneutics, questions like: “What, then, is real, if everything is a question of interpretation?”

I had a mentor at that time, James G. Spady, and when I left Yale and returned to Philadelphia, we would have sessions where we would talk about everything from race to rap and hip-hop to the philosophy of religion, history, culture, you name it. It was within that matrix that questions of race began to emerge. I began to ask, “What is race, then? How is race reflective of a particular kind of framework? Is it real? If it is, what does that mean? If it isn’t, what does that mean?”

So, I started off being deeply interested in this question of race and whether it is real, which led to the field of Critical Whiteness Studies. So, one day I said, “I’ll read everything out there in the area of Critical Whiteness Studies.” This was me being the autodidact. I had no idea that I would come to influence not only the field of Critical Whiteness Studies but also what is now called Critical Philosophy of Race. I started with Peggy McIntosh’s work, and then I read all of the material. Again, at that time, I didn’t know that I would go on to publish important work that would influence the area. For me, then, whiteness becomes a very important topic to think about particularly in a country that, at the moment, deems itself “post-racial.” When it comes to whiteness, I’m interested in questions such as: What is whiteness? How has whiteness evolved? What does whiteness do? How is whiteness lived? How does whiteness impact people who have no idea that it is there, influencing their every move through the world? I call whiteness the “transcendental norm.” Whiteness is the transcendental norm such that it defines all others—or, rather, non-whites—as different, deviant, raced, named, marked, but itself is unmarked. I’m interested in the way that whiteness is not only a site of privilege, but a site of power, a site of oppression, a site of deception and arrogance, one that pretends that it is innocent. I’m interested in the

way that whiteness is an expression of bodily ways of being. What does it mean to be in the world as white? What does it mean to walk through a space as white? My claim is that white people carry this weight independently of their desires, and of course, the problem is that it's easy to say, "I have privilege," without thinking about the relational dynamics of privilege. Even if you accept the fact that you have this privilege, the question is what this privilege is doing to bodies that don't look like you. That's where it gets nasty. That's where you have to really begin to bring ethics and responsibility into the very heart of the notion that one is white. Because as white, one must deal with the question of one's complicity.

Aegis: And how do you define the problem of whiteness?

There are a lot of problems with whiteness! [Laughs.] Peggy McIntosh gives us forty-six examples of white privilege, and one of them is that she doesn't have to talk to her children about what to do in situations, say, involving the police. Recently, after the killing of Trayvon Martin, there's been this talk of what's called "the talk"—the talk that Black parents or parents of color give to their children, so, there's a way in which to be white in America—and this is going back to this notion of space—such that one can walk through space and one's children can walk through space where parents don't need to worry about the spaces through which they or their children walk. So, what does that mean? Barbara Applebaum talks about this; she says that whiteness signifies white ways of being. Notice, she didn't say whiteness signifies lynching, or whiteness signifies owning Black bodies. In fact she doesn't even say it indicates a certain kind of hatred. It's a mode of being that has deep existential implications. If you're white and you're not telling your children to be careful around police officers, or not to run down the street, in some sense, you're getting to live out your existence at the expense of those identities that are non-white because you get to be free in that space, to engage in that space with a certain kind of mobility that those Black bodies don't. That is a privilege that white people take from granted. I call it a privilege, because they are being judged based upon their skin color, not by something that they did or didn't do. And even if one says that it is not a privilege, but a right, I would argue that this right is white. It is a *white* right.

Franz Fanon is a post-colonial thinker; he says that what he wanted to do is to "come lithe into the world"—it's a beautiful expression—which meant to engage the world effortlessly. Black bodies, when they engage the world, engage the world with effort. There's something that's very traumatic, existentially and emotionally, about that experience of having to always micromanage your behavior within a predominately white space. Whereas white people, then, *can* come lithe into the world; they don't need to see their bodies as problem bodies. They can move through spaces without effort. Take an example of a white person who is stopped while driving. White people have the privilege of thinking: *Did I not turn on my turn signal? or Did I run the red light? or Did I not stop at the stop sign?* These are the things that come to them. Well, that speaks to a way of being in the world where you have the freedom to think about certain kinds of options rather than others. If you're Black and you're stopped, the response is: *Here we go again*. There's this way in which Black people don't have the privilege to think about various explanatory options for why they were stopped, because they're stopped so much, and stopped because they are Black. In fact,

according to the stats, Blacks are three times more likely to be profiled and stopped by police officers—even as it's the case that whites are four times more likely to actually have illegal stuff when they're stopped. Stop more white people, get more illegal stuff. It seems to me, that the problem with whiteness is the historical accrual of power, privilege, and normality, because to be white is to be human. That is the assumption.

To be white is to be a person as such. To be Black, however, is to be marked as a sub-person. To be Latino is to be marked. To be Asian is to be marked. But the problem of whiteness is not just privilege; it's also a site of obfuscation. It's a site of confusion. It's a site of denial. It's a site of *living in bad faith*. So what whites want to do is say that basically, to be white is really not a problem at all; it's just a designation. There are whites who say things like: "Don't call me white, call me Jane or Smith. My name is Jane, it is Smith." But that speaks to white privilege—the fact that white people can say, "Call me Jane." Whereas a Black person or a person of color can't claim: "Only call me or know me by my name." It is almost a death sentence, because then you begin to live in the world as if you were white, without realizing that your Blackness precedes your name. But, of course, your whiteness precedes your name, too; that's just denied. So, I think that what we need to do in terms of critically engaging whiteness is to pose a different question: *What does it mean to be a white problem?* To do that requires not just insight, but the gift of the Black gaze. Just as men can't possibly get together and talk about resolving the problem of sexism without the presence of women, so too white people can't possibly solve the problem of whiteness without the presence of voices of color or Black people, which, by the way, does not mean that people of color or Black people are the servants of white people.

So, for me, then, the immediate question in 2014 is: How do we make whiteness visible? What I've done—at least my work has been characterized this way—is created a discourse for people to think about ways of critically engaging whiteness, of naming it. Terms like "ambush," and being "sutured" and "un-sutured," for example, are terms that I've introduced into the discourse. I'm interested in the ways in which white people don't know the extent to which they're racist. It's this idea of what I call the opaque white racist self—it's not just the problem of making whiteness visible; the problem is that part of what it means to be white is to have been given over—from the very beginning of one's life— where whiteness is so normative that it is etched into one's soul. As such, then, there is this primary relational dynamic that has taken place such that one may not even have access to the levels of one's own racism, and that becomes a problem. This means that the concept of arrival—the idea that one can arrive at a state called being an "anti-racist," or being "non-racist"—I see as being a chimera. It's just a fiction. There's no place called "arrival." There is a place called resistance, but not arrival.

I think we need to think about whiteness and the importance of vigilance. Vigilance comes from "*vigilare*," which means "to keep watch." So I'm suggesting that what we need to do is to think about whiteness as a long-term project that needs to be undone at every moment of one's existence. So you can't wake up tomorrow and say, "On Tuesday, I will no longer be a white racist." It's not about changing one's clothes, which is easy to do. Becoming an anti-racist is more like a verb than a noun. It's a continuous process of introspection—which has its limits—a continuous process of undoing sites where whiteness resides. It is a

continuous site of becoming un-sutured, of being opened to be wounded, of being touched by those who don't look like you. One has to be prepared to undergo a kind of cut, and opening. For example: Here at Otterbein, I notice that this is a predominately white campus. But what does this mean in terms of race and whiteness? What does it mean in terms of power relationships? What does it mean in terms of how Black bodies or people of color feel within this space? Do white students and teachers engage them in conversations about what it means to inhabit such white space? How do we call whiteness into question? How do we encourage whites to examine whiteness on this campus, when there are so many white people? It's normative. Pretty much—I'm assuming—white students/teachers don't think it's a problem at all. But precisely in not thinking that it's a problem is indicative of white privilege. White privilege blinds white people from problematizing whiteness itself.

Aegis: You have—rightly—observed that [Otterbein] is a space of primarily white students. As a professor and as someone who works to dismantle whiteness, what would you tell students of color who move through a space like this daily, as people of color, in a predominantly white space? What would you tell the white students, who are the majority, about dismantling racism as what you call an “anti-racist racist”?

Let's start with the “anti-racist racist.” The idea points to the idea of the opaque white racist self and the embedded white racist self. The point is that one can engage in anti-racist acts, but they're not sufficient for undoing racism. What I argue, on a more complex level, is that not only does the white self have to contend with its own unconscious opaque forms of white racism, but also white people have to engage with the way they're embedded in a social structure—the way that privilege is imposed upon them. You can try to get out of racism, but you can't—our bodies are perceived differently. Thus: the “anti-racist racist.”

My advice for Black students within this context is to assure them of one thing: that they are sane. They are sane within a context that will have the effect of making them believe that there are not any racial problems on campus or making them believe that it's all in their heads. I'm here to say: you know your world and don't let anyone deceive you about what you know. Of course, this does not mean that Black people are infallible. My aim is to communicate to them about what they're up against: a lot of microaggression, a lot of stereotypification, and a lot of nastiness from which the whites who are doing this to them are not even necessarily aware that they're doing. This doesn't let white people off the hook. They are still responsible. Yet, [Black students] have to bear the brunt of that conscious and unconscious racism. It's hard to tell them. You tell them that they're sane, you tell them that they're not irrational, you confirm for them that their pain is real. Imagine the psychic weight you have to carry around when you know that this is happening and yet white people are denying this.

White people need to take responsibility and they need to realize that Black people on campus need their help. What does that look like? Well, it takes a lot of critical engagement. The stats have it that less than ten percent of white people have Black friends. They start out having Black friends...but then you start asking questions like, “What are their last names?” “What do you do together?” “Do your parents know each other?” After you ask these questions, it turns out that they're not really friends at all. White people, then,

need to develop the capacity of empathy, which is difficult. Whites need to become what I'm calling "un-sutured." To be sutured literally means "to be sewn up." Generally, when something's un-sutured, we want to sew it up, to cover the wound. But, what I'm saying is counterintuitive. In terms of the concept we're talking about here—white students vis-à-vis students of color—whites have to remain un-sutured, which means not only do they have to remain open, to be wounded by Black people telling them, "What you did was racist," they have to feel the pain of being un-sutured. You're allowing the opening—the scar, as it were—to remain visible, to be touched again and again and again—and that's powerful.

So, we're talking about practical stuff here: we need more bodies that don't look like you—if you're white—on campus, so that we can have a more robust discussion. I think the percentage here is eighty percent white and maybe, four percent Black—so, then, how do you have a robust discussion, given those stats? You can't, given the racial demographics of the place. Your university is a site of racism. They've really done nothing to bring people of color to campus, in terms of students *or* in terms of faculty. The idea of whiteness as a site of privilege, as a site of power, gets re-inscribed precisely through the practices of being a white university itself, which perhaps hides in terms of their call for "diversity." How can you be encouraged into a state of questioning your own epistemic reality if you don't have people who hold a different kind of epistemic reality, who understand their worlds differently? You can't. What you're going to get is a reinforcement of whiteness as normative, which will then attempt to *bring* in Black folk into a normative space, a space which is anti-Black. What we need is to increase numbers and we need to hear the voices of Black people. Don't ask white people about the meaning of racism—go to Black people.

On the other hand, we have to get white people to admit that there is such a thing as white privilege and that it's historically cumulative. It's not as if because, say, there are no longer any Jim Crow Laws, *de facto*, we're not living in a Jim Crow-like world. As a predominantly white community, it's a corrupt community—I know it's a hard charge, but it has failed to look at itself critically, ethically, honestly. It has failed to render itself visible. As I said, there is no place, even as a community, which you're going to reach that is "anti-racist," as a noun, as static—it's a continuous process.

Aegis: It's almost as if we see the concept of "diversity" being commodified; promotional materials and marketing would lead people to believe that Otterbein is a very diverse campus.

Yes. It's an act of bad faith, as I see it. It's a form of lying to oneself. Commodification of the Black body speaks to one's own ethical efforts that are, really, just strategic. It says something like: "Let's get some bodies of color in here and our job is done." It is a way of freeing one from white guilt, of using Black bodies as instruments for purposes of "demonstrating" racial inclusion. If that's what the Black body means, then that's re-inscribing the Black body as marked again. Think about the history of slavery in America—what is that but commodification of the Black body? And, in this case, it's being held up as a site of "goodwill," as "good white people." We have to challenge the very distinction between "good whites" and "bad whites."

Part of the problem is that white people see themselves as individuals—again: “Call me by my name.” The idea of the white self as autonomous is part of the deception. It is based upon a form of liberalism that is misleading and unethical. In fact, I’m more interested in heteronomy—the law of the other. White people don’t have to be concerned with these issues, but I must, because I am a person of color—this could cost me my life. To pretend to be an individual (without race) is dangerous. Say to Trayvon Martin, say to Michael Brown, say to Renisah McBride, Jordan Davis, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice, that race doesn’t matter. You can’t escape history—it claims you, even as you don’t *want* it to claim you. It claims white people in ways that it doesn’t claim me. History doesn’t just drop off—it doesn’t nicely split off and then begin. There’s historical sedimentation, and white bodies are embedded with this racial sedimentation.

John Warren raises the question: “Why do you have white skin?” Well, there’s a benign way in which we can talk about that: “Both of my parents were white.” Fair enough. And what about their parents? They were white, too. We can talk about lack of melanin—that’s one level, biological lineage. However, at some point we’re going to come up against anti-miscegenation laws—laws that prevented Black people and white people from marrying or having sex. In some sense, then, your body’s physical expression cannot be separated from normative constructs and legal constructs that were put into place. Your physical body can’t be separated from various actions engaged in by other white people over an historical period. You wear that history. You are the manifestation of that history.

The classroom needs to be dangerous. We need dangerous spaces—I’m not talking about fighting, but I am talking about being fundamentally uncomfortable, having one’s white identity rocked and shaken. It must be a continual interrogation, a continual vigilance. We have to think of ourselves as a continuous project, constantly in transition, constantly in a state of metamorphosis. How do we create that kind of society? Do we need a savior figure to do it? Do we need another white savior—do we need Superman to come and intervene on our behalf? Or can we do it? That is the question that we are faced with. And it cuts at the very heart and soul of whether or not we have the vision, the desire, and the strength to create a better world.

Essays >>>

- 24 In Swift's Shadow: An Essay Examining the Influence of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* on Voltaire's *Candide*
by Lydia Crannell
- 31 Children as Perpetrators of the Colonial Project
by Lauren Edmonds
- 37 Jokes That Express Racist Beliefs: David Benatar's Account of Harm in Racist Beliefs and the Expression of Those Beliefs Through Humor
by Sam Lawless
- 45 Among The Living Dead: The Zombie Narrative in a Post-9/11 Era
by Zoë Princehorn
- 58 I'm a Princess Cut From Marble: Gender in the Renaissance
by Emma van Hessalt

In Swift's Shadow: An Essay Examining the Influence of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* on Voltaire's *Candide*

>>> Lydia Crannell

When reading the two narratives *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and *Candide* (1759), one cannot help but notice their similarities. Both Jonathan Swift and Voltaire choose young, naive male protagonists who get into trouble while traveling the world. Both authors express distaste for human ignorance, optimism, and superficiality. Swift and Voltaire share a mutual dislike for their respective countries and for the view of human nature presented by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who believed that all was in good order and everything happened for the best. Because of these comparisons, one could claim that Voltaire mimics Swift's writing and published a work so heavily influenced by *Gulliver's Travels* that even with a difference of 33 years, the two satires bear a striking resemblance. While it is clear that Voltaire used principles and plot found in *Gulliver's Travels* as a foundation for his *Candide*, the satirist still remained true to his beliefs; Voltaire had an entirely different approach to violence and wrote on serious topics in Horatian style unlike Swift's Juvenalian (yet childish) ramblings.

The comparison of the authors' narratives and lead characters develops the idea that Voltaire attempted to create *Candide* around principles in *Gulliver's Travels*. Although *Candide* is told in third person and *Gulliver's Travels* in first, both satires focus on a young male adventurer. The reader can clearly see the correlation of naïveté and ignorance between heroes, despite the characters' self-confidence. Both Candide and Gulliver easily fall into traps:

"For as I happened to lie on my Back, I found my Arms and Legs were strongly fastened Ligatures across my Body...In a little time I felt something alive moving on my left Leg, which advancing gently forward over my Breast, came almost up to my Chin...I perceived it to be a human Creature not six Inches high, with a Bow and Arrow in his Hands, and a Quiver at his Back".¹

Like Gulliver with the Lilliputians, Candide also finds himself in trouble within the first few pages. After being shunned from Cunégonde's castle, Candide wanders right into the hands of the Bulgars who keep him prisoner.²

The short episodic chapters in both Voltaire and Swift's narratives follow the same structure: the main character sets out on an adventure, gets caught in some sort of trouble and tries to adapt, succeeds and manages to 'escape' the problem, and finally continues on his merry way towards another situation. Through this pattern, the two authors manipulate their respective explorers as satirical figures themselves or as tools to dish out moral jibes

and ridicule. Voltaire and Swift use *Candide* and *Gulliver* to mock ignorance and blind devotion. This is seen through *Candide*'s naive belief in Pangloss, "the greatest philosopher in the province and consequently in the entire world," and *Gulliver*'s deep yet unexplainable love for the Houyhnhnms.³ *Gulliver* even admits that he "took a second Leave of [his] Master: But as [Gulliver] was going to prostrate [himself] to kiss his Hoof, he did [Gulliver] the Honour to raise it gently to [Gulliver's] Mouth".⁴ The two satires are almost identical in this aspect and leave no room for doubt that Voltaire found inspiration in Swift's work.

Swift's *Gulliver* is an incredibly superficial and petty character, even from the opening paragraph. *Gulliver* describes his father, Mr. Bates, and Uncle John with no emotion. *Gulliver* refers to his inheritance as "small estates" and "small Sums of money" implying that if *Gulliver* were the first-born son supplied with riches, he would have no need (or desire) to go on voyages.⁵ Throughout the satire, *Gulliver* draws conclusions based on appearances. He assumes that because of their small size, the Lilliputians will be kind and timid creatures. Instead, the people of Lilliput are nasty and vile things, full of spite and willing to kill over seemingly simple disagreements. *Gulliver* does the same thing when meeting the Brobdingnagians. He finds their size grotesque, although they are kinder and gentler than the Lilliputians. The Brobdingnagian King turns away from violence and is appalled when *Gulliver* even mentions the invention of gunpowder:

The King was struck with Horror at the Description I had given of those terrible Engines, and the Proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and groveling an Insect as I... could entertain such inhuman Ideas, and in so familiar a Manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the Scenes of Blood and Desolation, which I had painted as the common Effects of those destruction.⁶

While *Gulliver* views all of England's violent conquests as social victories, the pacifist King rejects everything *Gulliver* is 'proud' of.

Like Swift, Voltaire criticizes greed and valuing beauty over personality. The entire purpose of *Candide*'s adventures is to get back to his betrothed Cunégonde, who he only loves because of her beauty. The ironic twist is that when *Candide* finally reaches Cunégonde, she is ugly and unpleasant; "she was a scullion and is very ugly, yet I am so condescending as to marry her."⁷ Beauty is an important vice brought up by Swift as well. He uses *Gulliver*'s interaction with the Brobdingnagian maids to describe his superficial personality towards physical appearance:

I was placed on their toilet, directly before their naked bodies, which I am sure to me was very far from being a tempting sight, or from giving me any other emotions that those of horror and disgust: their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously colored, when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, and hairs hanging from it thicker than neckthreads, to say nothing farther concerning the rest of their persons.⁸

Voltaire also emphasizes that even when *Candide* gains riches (owning, losing, and finding the jewel-covered sheep), it does not necessarily help his situation—and occasionally makes it worse.⁹ The two satirists repeatedly ridicule those who are petty and full of greed; they both emphasize that beauty and riches cannot satisfy one's life or give them a feeling of everlasting fulfillment.

Both satirists spend time in *Candide* and *Gulliver's Travels* openly mocking their respective countries of France and England. Because Swift was willing to write about racy English topics and people, Voltaire was inspired to do the same.¹⁰ In a letter to a friend, Voltaire commented on Swift's "How I love the English boldness! How I love those who say what they think!"¹¹ Voltaire was impressed by the way Englishmen were able to express their opinions and held Swift in the highest esteem because of it. He called Swift, "The greatest of Englishmen; the most extraordinary man that Britain has produced; the wittiest...genius...a priest who mocks at everything and a writer of prose that will die only with the language."¹²

Swift spends half of Chapter 3 in Part 1 of *Gulliver's Travels*'s meeting with the Brobdingnagian King to further expose England and its problems.¹³ Gulliver voluntarily describes the destruction, war, poverty, and machinery all across Europe, much to the King's disgust. Voltaire used the scene when Candide and Martin are entering France to tell of the country's sinful ways. Voltaire uses his most pessimistic character (Martin) to describe the place he wants to condemn:

Yes, I've been in Paris; it contains specimens of all the types; it is chaos, a mob, in which everyone is seeking pleasure and where hardly anyone finds it, at least from what I have seen. I did not live there for long; as I arrived, I was robbed of everything I possessed by thieves at the fair of St. Germain; I myself was taken for a thief, and spent eight days in jail, after which I took a proofreader's job to earn enough money to return on foot to Holland...

They say there are some civilized people in that town; I'd like to think so.¹⁴

This passage is a metaphor for Voltaire's life while in France; while Martin was "robbed of everything [he] possessed by thieves at the fair of St. Germain," Voltaire was robbed of his voice by the French government. After being accused of writing two anonymous libels, the *Puero Regnantea* and *J'ai vu*, Voltaire was imprisoned in the Bastille. The eleven-month sentence deepened his anger with the French government and was a stepping-stone for future works.¹⁵

The last major similarity between Swift and Voltaire is their joint criticism of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Anthony Ashley Cooper, known as the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, was a philosopher and writer that exerted enormous influence over the ideas of morality, aesthetics, and religion during the 18th and 19th centuries. His philosophy revolved around teleological principles and the idea that the world is a perfectly harmonious place filled with innately good humans.¹⁶ Both Swift and Voltaire's writing denounce the Third Earl's philosophy and a teleological approach to life.

Swift spends his entire fourth part of *Gulliver's Travels* using Gulliver to shed light on the horrors of humans and society. Gulliver even says to his reader,

When I thought of my Family, my Friend, my Countrymen, or human Race in general, I considered them as they really were. Yahoos in Shape and Disposition, perhaps a little more civilized, and qualified with the Gift of Speech; but making no other Use of Reason, than to improve and multiply those Vices, whereof their Brethren in this Country had only the Share that Nature allotted them.¹⁷

Swift uses this passage in his narrative to further mock human 'advances' in weaponry and technology- all of which lead to devastation. While some could consider the Houyhnhnms in the fourth part of *Gulliver's Travels* to be Swift's very own Third Earl of Shaftesbury, they

do not completely express the explicit ideals of Panglossian optimism; however, they do represent the ‘perfect’ world and ‘perfect’ being. The Houyhnhnms are the innately good creatures the Third Earl of Shaftesbury believed in.

Voltaire takes his criticism a step further by forming the character Pangloss around the ideals of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Pangloss is one of Voltaire’s most ridiculous characters in that he, like the Third Earl, believes that “everything is for the best”.¹⁸ Voltaire metaphorically condemns the complacent optimism of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury through almost every action Pangloss takes. Even when faced with great danger or trouble, Pangloss stays jolly and full of hope—a characteristic that Voltaire hates. Voltaire directly mocks the Third Earl of Shaftesbury when Candide and Pangloss arrive in Lisbon just after a horrific earthquake—an event that actually happened. Despite the death and decay surrounding Pangloss and Candide after the natural disaster, Pangloss cheerfully tries to console the townspeople by saying: “All that is, is for the best. If there is a volcano at Lisbon it cannot be elsewhere. It is impossible that things should be other than they are; for everything is right.”¹⁹ Both texts use the Third Early of Shaftesbury as a satirical muse, showing that the two authors held the same disdain for the Earl’s brand of blind optimism.

While it is likely that Voltaire sculpted sections of his work around Swift’s satire, there are a few important differences. The first would have to be their approaches to writing about violence. Swift seldom mentions violence, or at least it rarely happens in the actual narratives. Gulliver mentions the aggressive tendencies of his countrymen and the rest of Europe, but the only bloody and graphic scenes occur while Gulliver is in Brobdingnag. Gulliver must duel a pair of rats; however, Swift’s description is very tame. Gulliver calmly explains his situation and how he “rose in a fright, and drew out [his] hanger to defend [himself]... [he] had the good fortune to rip up his belly before [the rat] could do [him] any mischief.”²⁰ Gulliver also witnesses a beheading in Brobdingnag (a very short paragraph squeezed between Gulliver’s rant on the Brobdingnagian maids and his explanation of his royal boat), but all other “dangerous” events are written so quickly that Swift delivers no threat of actual death.²¹ His short, relaxed portrayal of his adventures seems almost comical, because Gulliver is so nonchalant about everything. This further fuels the satirical aspect of Swift’s writing, because it minimizes situations that would ordinarily be grim.

On the other hand, Voltaire includes violence, cannibalism, and death in *Candide* so frequently, that they lose their seriousness. The Old Woman who befriends Candide and Cunégonde nonchalantly tells about her horrific past and simply slides over the fact that she is missing a buttock due to cannibalistic soldiers:

‘Just cut off a single rumsteak from each of these ladies,’ he said, ‘and you’... We underwent this horrible operation. The imam treated us all with the ointment that they use on newly circumcised children. We were at the point of death.²²

Although Voltaire modeled portions of *Candide* after *Gulliver’s Travels*, he definitely chose a different strategy when expressing his opinion of cruelty. Voltaire mocks war, violence, and death by belittling the acts themselves, making his readers aghast by his unnatural coolness. Swift does the same not by having his characters actually experience the brutality, but by having Gulliver dispassionately and all too briefly describe England’s savage behavior.

The largest difference between Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and Voltaire’s *Candide* is not in their respective plot or characters, but in each author’s writing style and the form

of satire used: Horatian vs. Juvenalian. Horatian satire was born from the Roman author Horace who wrote in a more tolerant, amused, and humorous fashion describing follies and inconsistencies of humans.²³ Juvenalian satire stemmed from the Roman poet Juvenal whose writing style completely differed from that of Horace's; Juvenalian satire is usually harsh, bitter, and attacks human vice.²⁴

Swift chooses to write *Gulliver's Travels* in a very dry, long-winded fashion. He endlessly describes the most minute aspects of the story—even Gulliver's excrement. Although the subject matter is laughable, Swift uses a Juvenalian tone to express the deep shame Gulliver's feels when he must relieve himself:

I had been for some Hours extremely pressed by the Necessities of Nature... I was under great Difficulties between Urgency and Shame. The best Expedient I could think on, was to creep into my House, which I accordingly did; and shutting the Gate after me, I went as far as the Length of my Chain would suffer; and discharged my Body of the uneasy Load. But this was the only time I was ever guilty of so uncleanly an Action for which I cannot but hope the candid Reader will give some allowance, after he hath maturely and impartially considered my Case, and the Distress I was in.²⁵

The majority of Swift's satire is presented in silly situations and events like urinating on houses, being dropped in dishes of cream, shoveling fecal matter out of a back door; however, Swift's Juvenalian voice leads the reader to believe that he has written a serious narrative. Voltaire's tone is the completely opposite of Swift's, and mimics that of Horatian satire. He satirizes serious and dark topics, but with a light and frivolous air. Despite Voltaire's *Candide* being attacked, beaten, and almost killed—multiple times—Voltaire has his characters pass the dangers off as trivial annoyances. Even when discussing deeper problems in the world such as the prospect of death, the story is written in a very straightforward manner.

While it is clear Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Voltaire's *Candide* are separate narratives, they correlate in multiple topics. The use of two naïve, male explorers as satirical tools is only the beginning of comparisons. Both authors openly mock human ignorance, optimism, and superficiality, along with the expressed dislike for their respective home countries. The final blatant similarity in the two narratives is Swift and Voltaire's ridicule the naïve optimism of the Earl of Shaftesbury's perfect world wherein real events play out unrealistically. Despite the different approaches towards violence and the two satirists' styles, the plots, characters, and moral implications are too akin to ignore.

All of these parallels support the thesis that *Candide* is a reflection of *Gulliver's Travels*, and Voltaire had an intentional dependence upon the themes first offered by Swift. Christopher Thacker even wrote in *Hermathena: The Dublin University Review* about Voltaire's relationship with Swift:

Swift, in fact, had an influence on Voltaire which was deep and lasting; it began in 1726, when Voltaire... read [*Gulliver's*] *Travels* almost as soon as the word was published, and continued until the close of his career, appearing at its strongest in the 1760s as a powerful inspiration for polemical writings... A close examination of Voltaire's attitude to Swift reveals that it is a vital, even a central, part of his admiration for people and things British.²⁶

With Swift as his backbone, Voltaire created a piece of literature that still stands to today's critics. Although it pulls from Swift's ideas and motives, Voltaire was able to fashion a work (mostly) of his own and leaves his readers with a truly satirical text.

Notes

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Children as Perpetrators of the Colonial Project

>>> Lauren Edmonds

Children are products of their upbringing. They absorb the societal norms in which they are raised, they project promise or fear for the future, and they reveal truths more openly than blustering or blinded adults are able to. In the postcolonial world, this becomes a reiteration and advancement of prejudiced relationships between oppressors and oppressed. The binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized, of master and servant, are taught through generations even as society believes it has moved past the dark past of colonization. Even when each generation incrementally moves toward a more just world, the stigma of the colonial project remains. Fortunately, postcolonial discourse offers a forum for critically examining the cascading effects of these teachings. Texts such as Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* and Claire Dennis's *Chocolat* work from the lens of the colonial child to reveal the internalization of power dynamics learned from elders, and subsequently reveal the truth of "post"-colonialism

Repercussions of the colonial project have long haunted the Western world. Since Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, colonial and postcolonial literatures have attempted to muddle through the destructive past they themselves created. According to Edward Said, notable scholar on postcolonialism, "Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient [...] The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other" (73-74). The literature that has grown out of this relationship reveals to the world the social, political, and psychological effects that colonization has had on individuals and nations. While the oppressed are the clearest victims in this dichotomy, the oppressors have also suffered significant hidden damages. From superiority complexes, to cycles of abuse, to false relationships with native "subalterns," colonizers have irreparably damaged themselves in their quest for dominance. Even worse, they pass those values and scars down through the generations.

"But why focus on children?" asks Satya Mohanty (315). Colonizer adults certainly hold a fair share of curiosities in their own right. Mohanty cites a biographer of Rudyard Kipling, author of *The Jungle Book*, for his answer: children are able to enact "the transformation of a small space into a whole world which comes from the intense absorption of a child" (Mohanty 316). An adult may know that there is a world beyond the colonial project. He may realize that life in England or America is different than what he is living as a European or American in Africa, and he also understands that there are parts of the world that the colonial project does not reach. For all his nationalism, for all his commitment to the colonial project, he understands that his daily interactions in a colonized nation are not repeated everywhere in the world. A child, on the other hand, lacks such perceptions. The direct and indirect influences of her colonizing elders must be considered as they teach her

"the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans against all 'those' non-Europeans" (Said 76). To a child, this dichotomy is her entire life and marks many of her daily interactions when she lives among the colonized. Her world becomes dominated by harmful binaries.

This history causes colonial children to internalize a culture of master-servant relationships even when the official dichotomy has been abolished. In *July's People*, the titular black character is employed by a European family living in Africa. When dangerous political strife arises, July spirits the family away to his village for refuge. Despite this apparent hospitality, however, the Smales adults continues to treat him as an inferior. They take over the home of one of the villagers, send July to the store for creature comforts despite the dangers, and expect him to more or less serve them as he did in the city. Their children mimic this behavior and especially acquire their parents' sense of material possessiveness. In a particular instance, the oldest child Victor becomes agitated when the villagers use a water tank his father Bam set up. "Everybody's taking water!" he cries. "I told them they're going to hell, but they don't understand." When his father chastises him, Victor insists that both water in the tank and the rain itself is "ours" (Gordimer 62-63). What he displays here is darker than simple childish possessiveness. To believe that the very rain belongs to the Smales when they are guests in the villagers' home is akin to saying the world belongs to them. According to Hashemy et. al., Victor would have learned this from his parents' example. "Children are always marked (contaminated by) the attitudes of the older generation," says Hashemy. "This older generation might encourage children to speak, but it does so expecting them to speak its words, pass on its wisdom, to perpetuate its vision of the world" (67). The lesson of ownership has doubtless been taught to Victor in the past. Their situation has changed now, however. His father corrects Victor that the water is for "everybody." Yet the lesson is undercut when Bam adds, "that's what I put the tank up for" (Gordimer 62). Although he claims the water is for the whole village, he has still taken ownership and responsibility for it. Without his thoughtfulness, he probably imagines, the poor natives would have to continue drinking dirty water. What's worse, the Smales would have to drink it as well. The lesson in humility has little reason to stick, and indeed Victor and his siblings again claim unwarranted ownership of the villager's communal property later in the novel. They have learned that they have privileges over July and his people, and they will not give up that power easily.

Chocolat's France, who has a closer relationship to her family servant than the Smales children do, mirrors their behavior. France is another European child transplanted to Africa, again looked after by a native black man. She has something like a friendship with Protee, but she has also watched her mother interact with him in demeaning and demanding ways. Aimee dehumanizes Protee, not even reacting to his naked form in the outdoor servant's shower, and emasculates him by assigning domestic work. There should be little surprise, then, when France orders the much older man about in public. In one instance when they happen to be near an African school, young boys stream out and laugh at Protee for following orders of a girl-child. Despite their teasing, both Protee and France understand the power she holds as the white daughter of his employer, and Protee meekly leads her home. The humiliation is similar to the inflammatory Euro-American practice of calling black men "boy," and made all the worse because her power resides entirely in status, not stature. However, France cannot truly be blamed for her actions. Even though she is old enough

to possess an internalized sense of superiority, she is too young to fully understand the humanitarian repercussions of her actions.

In addition to outright demeaning the colonized, children of the colonial project express their learned superiority in other ways as well. In an analysis of *The Jungle Book*, Satya Mohanty observes that Mowgli is raised into the role of leader among the jungle animals who took him in. Already privileged by his human-ness and ability to code switch between the jungle and civilized worlds, Mowgli now abuses his added leadership by dominating the animals “for fun” (Mohanty 321). Where a just leader would support all his people, Mowgli continues to play cruel games. The implications of this are significant to postcolonialism, especially if the animals of *The Jungle Book* are considered allegorical for oppressed humans. Mowgli’s “repayment” to the animals for sheltering him and privileging him as their leader is to take advantage of an already oppressed population. Victor Smales of *July’s People* takes on a similar role. He acquires a “gang of boys” who follow him around the South African countryside, lands that used to be their domain. As their leader, Victor has taken on a role similar to Mowgli’s. Although his abuse of power is not as blatant as Mowgli’s dominance games, Victor can be assumed to take advantage of his leadership. Between absorbing the way his parents treat July and the other villagers, and the instances of ownership Victor has already displayed, he does not promise to make a fair leader. If nothing else, the positions prime both boys for becoming “masters” later in life. If they can practice dominating subalterns now, the skills will only be sharper upon returning to civilization and their full privileges.

In the context of the colonial project, all forms of subjugation must be put into perspective whether it be supported leadership or a seemingly benign childhood friendship. Despite France’s “master” behavior towards Protee in *Chocolat*, the two certainly share an affectionate bond. Protee may well have a closer relationship with France than her own mother. France regularly seeks Protee’s company, and he in turn gives her piggyback rides, secret snacks, and lessons in his native language. However, their friendship has already proven to be tainted. Despite his affection for France, he is constantly reminded of her authority in incidents ranging from the encounter with African schoolchildren to a more private demeaning in obeying France’s whims at dinner time. Nor will France allow him to forget her power over him; she appears to delight in ordering a grown man around. The question becomes, then, whether this is simple childish precociousness or a deeper symptom of colonial trauma. Certainly, children removed of the colonial experience love to order adults around given the opportunity. Nearly any child playing “horsie” on an adult’s back will promptly become a tight-reined jockey, ordering his ride around the room and squealing in delight. The distinction then becomes one of choice. The adult playing “horsie” can choose to put the child down at any time and immediately becomes the authority figure once again. In France and Protee’s case, however, Protee must always follow the girl’s orders or face punishment from her white elders. Such an unequal relationship can never truly be friendship. Instead, it fosters a dark ember of resentment in Protee that will grow into a destructive flame.

In the climax of *Chocolat*, Protee shows France a sliver of the pain he has withstood. He holds a scalding metal pipe and indicates that she should copy. Because she trusts him, because she has no reason to question his commitment to her well-being, she grabs the pipe with her full hand. The same agony that Protee bears in silence stuns France. She had

not even realized the pipe was hot due to Protee's stoicism at his own pain, but both are scarred physically and emotionally by Protee's betrayal. Here is hard evidence that true friendship cannot exist in a colonial binary relationship. Even young France has too much of the oppressive culture internalized to break away from it. So too does it exemplify classic desire for the oppressed to escape his cage, no matter how gilded it may be. Protee is never seen again after this incident, and France must be reminded of a lesson learned every time she looks the disfigurement on her palm, which is a twin to Protee's. The two may be bound together, but their relationship will never heal. The sentiment reflects most attempts at relationships crossing the colonial binary line.

As part of its exploration, *July's People* delves into the past to examine a similarly problematic relationship between mother Maureen Smales and her childhood "friend" Lydia. Every day after school Lydia, who is an adult household servant, meets young Maureen at the bus stop in town. They follow a comfortable routine, Maureen wandering about while Lydia finishes up her business, and Lydia acts as confidant to Maureen's schoolyard adventures or scolds Maureen for misbehavior. However, an inescapable undercurrent runs through these interactions that suggest Lydia is not a mere babysitter. Many aspects of their relationship suggest Lydia keeps Maureen's trust as much for her own benefit as for Maureen's. For example, when Maureen rides home on a boy's bike, Lydia promises not to tell because "You are my true friend, aren't you?" (Gordimer 31). However, it is undeniable that picking Maureen up after school is part of Lydia's job description, and there is a very real possibility that she may be punished for Maureen's rebellion despite being unable to prevent it. Maureen seems entirely ignorant of this danger, however, casually brushing aside Lydia's warnings that "your mother she's going shout at me when she sees" what Maureen has done ruin to the washing (Gordimer 32). While Lydia is "chastising" and "brooding," Maureen remains "wheedling" to get her way (Gordimer 31-32). Only years later hidden away from Euro-colonizer civilization does Maureen finally wonder about those routines. Even then her questioning has a limit. To adult Maureen, "affection and ignorance" shared between the two prevented them from seeing the deeper implications their interactions. She does not see the colonial project or cultural imbalance as an issue, which indicates that she still does not fully understand the role of subaltern even now that she has been rescued by July (Gordimer 33). Lydia is clearly "the help" in the situation, paid by Maureen's parents to watch after their child. Whether or not Maureen is aware of the dynamic, Lydia's position prevents her from ever forgetting the truth of their "friendship" just as Protee can never forget France's disproportionate authority.

In a supposedly postcolonial world, these examples offer little hope. Although the colonizer/colonized interactions are not genocide-level horror, they still indicate continued oppressive binaries between previously colonized people and their colonizers. In this sense, there can never be "post"-colonial. These societies which have blended native and Western ideals can never fully move away from the problematic histories that introduced the blending in the first place. The Mowglis, Victors, Frances, and Maureens will always have some sense of superiority over the colonized because everything in their upbringing has told them the world is so. Even in later generations, supposed "equality" will be tainted by Western superiority. Just consider America's "post"-segregation society. Incremental, true change will only begin to occur through the rare reeducation of a child who discovers equality for herself.

The only colonizer child who appears to acclimate into a near-equal relationship with the colonized is Gina Smales of *July's People*. She and the village girl Nyiko make fast friends with “the lover-like seclusion of childhood intimacy” (Gordimer 87). They hold hands, co-care for village babes, and speak together in whispers. Gina appears to be the first Smales to learn the village language through Nyiko, and is called upon to translate for her parents. She also picks up on the pottery techniques of her host culture and puts genuine effort into fostering the skill (Gordimer 42, 65). Although recognition of Gina’s role is sparse, sometimes little more than a throwaway line among the greater drama of her parents and brothers, the frequent returns to her progressive acclimation is vital to the overall narrative. She may participate in some of her brothers’ insensitive possessiveness, but far more often she fades into the background of village life. She resists the “colonizing enterprise [...] that sets out to draw its [children] into the world as adults see it and construct it” (Hashemy). Instead, she lets herself be drawn into village life, a quiet and accepted presence, and creates a “deep and secret” friendship with Nyiko (Gordimer 157). This by far puts her as the most “postcolonial” character of privilege in the canon considered here, able to move beyond her upbringing into a more equitable world.

Additionally, France’s own traumatic incident with the burning pipe may have shocked her into a world of truth beyond where most colonist figures ever reach. *Chocolat* is framed with a continuous scene of adult France, which suggests the rest of the film as a flashback to childhood triggered when she travels the familiar African countryside. She is seen interacting with a black man and son who give her a ride into town and although their interactions are minimal, with the bulk of focus on France’s flashback, they are indicative of a new social order. The man picks her up assuming she is a tourist, acting in a simple hospitality that steps beyond the colonial dichotomy once he reveals that he is not a native himself. The framing sequence suggests, then, that the dichotomy between black and white, colonized and colonizer, native and intruder, has shifted. It is no longer a binary, but a web of varying experiences that shape the current landscape of the culture. Most importantly, the disruption of the colonial binary opens up options for alternate future interactions between traditional oppositions.

There is hope, then, in the postcolonial child’s future. Although the child’s experience of the postcolonial project is bound to become her “whole world,” Mohanty also notes the value of her ability to turn the “smallest journey into a wondrous exploration” (316). Thus, an experience that disrupts the oppressor/oppressed binary may expand to fill all of her perceptions, and holds the potential to push out the teachings she has held up to that point. This progress may be limited. Of the children surveyed, only Gina is able to move past her colonial teachings to meet Nyiko as an equal confidant, and even she is flawed. Young Maureen never has a chance, as she is forever surrounded by the traditional colonial cycle. Victor and Mowgli, too, are unable to shed their colonial educations even when separated from the dominating culture.

On the other hand, if the Smales continue their lives in July’s village, Gina will become increasingly secure in her new role. She will come to know more of the villagers as full-fledged people, worthy of respect, and she will pass those teachings on to her own children. Even if the Smales return to civilization, she should retain at least some of her enlightenment, and this will affect her interactions both as a colonizer and as an advocate for

the colonized. France may also have learned the lesson, but not as organically; she required new trauma to open her eyes to an older pain, and there is not definitive indication that her specific experience helped make the change that is seen in her present-day Camaroon. Both girls' "wondrous explorations" are bound to have ripple effects wherever they go; the next question in a postcolonial world is what situations those ripples will enact.

The colonial project creates scars. They may be hidden or in the open, on the oppressed or the oppressors, but they carry through the generations as evidence of colonial trauma. Each generation remembers the horrors or triumphs of the past, depending on their role in the project, and each teaches the next generation how to behave toward the other side of the binary. July might teach his children to give white masters anything they request for the expected reward of money to bring home to the village. Victor Smales, on the other hand, would teach his own children through example how to dominate and possess their subaltern servants. Lydia would teach her young ones how false friendship makes for an easier, if still unequal relationship, while Maureen proves to pass on an increased sense of colonial importance. The jungle animals will either remain in devotion to their human "savior" or become cautious of any future manchildren. An adult Mowgli probably recalls his time in the jungle fondly, and would tell stories of his leadership to his children as if he were in fact the animals' salvation. As for Protee, he knows better than to believe "friendship" with a mistress of any age as possible. The challenge in a postcolonial world is to move beyond these scars, to create a world where the Ginas and Frances have more influence than the Victors and Mowglis in order to create a more equitable society still aware of the past.

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Jokes That Express Racist Beliefs: David Benatar's Account of Harm in Racist Beliefs and the Expression of Those Beliefs Through Humor

>>> Sam Lawless

In his article *Prejudice in Jest: When Racial and Gender Humor Harms*, David Benatar argues that a joke is immoral when it harms and when that harm is wrongfully inflicted. One way a joke harms, for Benatar, is when the joke expresses a racist belief. The racist belief is harmful, and so the expression of that belief is harmful. However, not all racist beliefs are wrong; that is, not all harms of racist beliefs are wrongfully inflicted. Benatar states briefly that a harmful belief may be “beyond one’s control” and hence not wrong. He does not explain this point, even though it yields a troubling consequence; if a racist belief is beyond one’s control then it is not wrong, and the expression of that belief through a joke is not wrong. In this essay, I offer an explanation that allows one to reasonably say that a harmful belief, such as a racist belief, is not wrong when it is beyond one’s control. Briefly, a belief may be beyond one’s control because of how it was formed, perhaps through socialization or moral education in childhood, and this yields a type of innocence in the belief that causes it to not be wrong. Although, I argue that the relevant historical and cultural facts of a racist belief yield the harm to be profound. Furthermore, I argue that the profound harm caused by racist beliefs outweighs an innocence in the belief, concluding that racist beliefs are wrong. Consequently, a joke that expresses a racist belief that causes profound harm is wrong.

Benatar’s Argument for How Humor is Immoral

Here, a brief explanation for how a joke is immoral for Benatar will be explained. A joke is immoral “where it is intended to harm people or where there are good grounds for expecting it to harm people, and where the harm in question is wrongfully inflicted”¹. To harm, for Benatar, is to negatively affect one’s interest. Some interests we have include not being insulted or demeaned. So if a joke insults us, then the joke has negatively affected our interest hence it is harmful. If the joke insulted us wrongfully, then the joke is immoral, or wrong. One may be troubled to think that an insult may not be wrong, but we can imagine interactions with a close friend in which friendly insulting jokes are thrown in a way that is humorous to both people. The joke may harm, but it is not wrong. It is important, for Benatar and this essay, that the notions of harm and being wrong remain separate, but in some ways connected. That is, the notion of a joke harming involves negatively affecting one’s interest while the notion of a joke being wrong involves harm caused by the joke and that harm being wrongfully inflicted.

Now, in regards to harmful beliefs, the interest to be consider is our interest in being held in high regard, or as a being worthy of respect. What he means is that we enjoy being seen by others in good light. Benatar finds this to be an interest first by saying that believing a negative rumor about someone damages their reputation. I assume by negative that Benatar means believing things like someone is lazy, a bad worker, irresponsible, stupid and things alike.² So, we can imagine that: if Bob believes a negative rumor about John that he is lazy, then Bob has negatively affected John's interest in being well-regarded, which is harming John. One could also believe negative rumors, or stereotypes, of a group. Say a racist believes the stereotype that black people are animals, that they are somehow less human than other races. That racist would be harming black people by believing that because it goes against black people's interest in being well-regarded. It is important for Benatar to recognize that the belief by itself is sufficient to cause harm. That is, regardless of any act, such as expressing a racist belief, believing a negative rumor about someone or some group is harmful. So, even if a person, or group, is treated with well-regard or as a being(s) worthy of respect, anyone who believes them not to be worthy of respect or holds them in low-regard, is harming that person or group.

Expression of Racist Beliefs Through Humor

It is reasonable to question how beliefs may be connected to jokes. This is because often we may joke without holding a belief that may be within the joke. Jokes that rely on a play on words, or puns, often do not have any ideas presented in the joke. Whereas a racial or gender based joke turns on ideas presented by the joke. For example, Ted Cohen highlights the ideas of a racial joke. The joke is as follows: How did a passerby stop a group of black men from committing a gang rape? He threw them a basketball³. Cohen points out that this joke relies on how black men are thought of, namely, that black men are thought to enjoy basketball so much that they give up just about anything⁴. In the context of this joke, black men are also thought to enjoy gang rape, but their love of basketball takes them away from this activity. As Cohen says, this joke presents "truths about how black men are thought of". These thoughts or stereotypes are not true, but it is true that this is often how black men are perceived.

For Benatar, a joke may be harmful when the joke expresses racist beliefs⁵. To use the above joke and ideas, the beliefs being expressed would be any combination of the following: that black men enjoy gang rape; that black men enjoy basketball; and that black men's passion for basketball leads them to give up anything, in this case committing a gang rape. Now, if the harm inflicted through this joke's expression of racist beliefs is caused wrongfully, then the joke is also immoral. It appears, to me, that the relevant belief of this joke is harmful and wrong, making the expression of that belief, through this joke, also harmful and wrong.

Benatar's Response to Objections

Now, there are two worries Benatar responds to. The first worry is seen when we imagine a workplace environment in which you are treated with respect, that is, you are treated as a person who is well-regarded. However, people do not believe that you are worthy of respect, people actually hold you in low-regard. The worry is that we may not have an interest in being well-regarded. Rather, we have an interest not to be deluded, or deceived.

So if a belief does not negatively affect the interest to not be deceived, then the belief does not harm. Benatar responds by offering two scenarios. First, imagine that you have created a new soft drink and offer it to a friend to try. Would you prefer them to (a) actually like it or (b) act as if it was liked? Second, imagine two worlds: (a) one in which you are held in high regard, and treated with high regard; and (b), a world in which you are treated with high regard, but held in low regard. In both of these cases, Benatar thinks, we prefer (a) not to be deluded. However, he seems to think that the preference in the second scenario is much stronger. I think he is right, that the preference in the second scenario is much stronger than the preference in the first. "The difference in intensity," Benatar states, "shows that the preference not to be misled cannot *fully* account for why we prefer the world in which we are well regarded to one in which people merely act as if we are" ⁶. In other words, since in both cases we "stand to be deluded," then what describes the difference in intensity is our interest in being well-regarded⁷.

The second worry that Benatar responds to is a worry that believing anything negative of another is wrong. If this is the case, than many of us would be guilty. Benatar reiterates that the harm in question has to be wrongfully inflicted. He states, "Not all harms, understood as negative effects on interests, are wrongs"⁸. He explains that believing a negative but true rumor about another may be harmful, but that harm is justified because the belief is true. For example, say John is a lazy person and Bob believes that John is lazy. Bob may be harming John by going against his interest to be well-regarded, but given that John is actually a lazy person, Bob's belief is justified, and hence Bob is not wrong for believing that. Benatar further explains that there may be other situations in which the belief is harmful but it is not wrong. "For instance, harmful beliefs are often, to a greater or lesser extent, beyond our control. To the degree that they are, they cannot be wrong, even if they are undesirable because they cause unjustified harms"⁹. In other words, that a belief is harmful and unjustified does not explain why the belief is wrong in all cases. If the unjustified harmful belief is beyond one's control, then it is not a wrong.

So, as Benatar's argument now stands, we have a clear picture of what makes a belief harmful. Briefly, we see that beliefs are harmful when they negatively affect one's interest in being held in high regard. However, what makes the harmful belief wrong is that the belief is not true, and that it is within one's control. That is, for a belief to be wrong, it need be an unjustified harmful belief that is within one's control. Conversely, justified harmful beliefs, and unjustified harmful beliefs that are beyond one's control, are not wrong. As stated before, this has a troubling consequence, namely that a racist is not wrong for having his beliefs if they are beyond his control, which seems to go against Benatar's aim, and one in which most of us would be skeptical of. It most certainly requires an explanation, one that Benatar does not provide.

Requiring an Explanation of Unjustified Harmful Beliefs Not Being Wrong

Benatar's original line of argument was that an unjustified harmful belief, such as a racist belief, may not be wrong if it is beyond one's control. To some, I suspect, this may not be disturbing. One may think that this does not require any justificatory work. Though in his article, Benatar does not expand on this point at all, he simply moves on after he states this. I find it troubling first because it seems to go against Benatar's aim and tone of his essay. That is, Benatar seems to be wanting to capture racist jokes in a way that when a joke is racist, it

is immoral because it harms, and that harm is wrongfully inflicted. But when the belief is not wrong, the racist joke may only be harmful, and not wrong. What follows is that a large number of racist jokes are not wrongs. This is because, I suspect, most racists' beliefs are beyond their control because of their upbringing involving their parents and their culture raising them to be racist¹⁰. I think this consequence is one that Benatar would want to avoid.

Also, a second reason that we must seek an explanation is that it seems common conception that being a racist, or holding racist beliefs, is wrong, simply because it is racist. In other words, the everyday use of the term racist is somewhat synonymous to being immoral. When we say someone is racist, what is implied is that their behavior, attitudes, or beliefs, pertain to a certain group in a way that is both harmful and immoral. So, saying that a racist belief is not wrong, for whatever reason, counters this common conception. Due to these reasons, an explanation is required.

How a Belief May Be Beyond One's Control

So the question is what makes it so that when a belief is beyond one's control, it is not wrong even if it causes unjustified harms? To answer this, it seems that we must consider how a belief is in our control or not, which involves considering how the belief was formed. What follows below are explanations of how a belief may be formed which in turn allows us to see that belief as beyond one's control. I then discuss whether or not those formations draw the conclusion that racist beliefs are not wrong when they are beyond one's control, in a way that eases the unpleasantness of our original worry.

One case in which a belief is formed that makes it so that the belief is also beyond one's control is through a person. That is, we can imagine scenarios in which beliefs are formed through conversations with other people. Suppose that Jill heard from a friend that Bob is lazy. If the friend is trustworthy, it is reasonable to say that Jill's belief is beyond her control and hence believing that Bob is lazy is not wrong. However, if Jill heard this from a stranger, who would be untrustworthy, it seems that then she has some responsibility in finding out herself. In other words, an unjustified harmful belief that is beyond one's control may not be wrong given that it was formed through a *trustworthy* person, ideally a friend or colleague.

A second case in which a belief may be formed and beyond one's control is through one's parents. Contrary to a trustworthy person, one's parents plays a much more important role in one's life than a trusted person. There is a strong sense of dependency, attachment, love, and other such emotions that connect a child with its parents. With all of these things considered, when a parent teaches a child about something, such as Santa Claus, typically the child forms a belief about that something, such that Santa Claus is real.

A third case in which a belief may be formed is through socialization. While the other two cases involved some sort of relationship, this involves much more. One's culture shapes one's beliefs. Media, music, the way people talk and joke, everything about a culture influences how people think and what they believe. For example, many Central Ohioans believe that Michigan is a no good state. This is because the culture in Central Ohio is surrounded by influence of the Ohio State University Buckeyes and their rivalry with the Michigan University Wolverines. The Buckeye culture paints Michigan in a negative light. Jokes are made in Central Ohio about "the state up north," implying that even saying Michigan University is bad. Everything the Buckeyes do is compared to Michigan. When the Buckeyes accomplish

something that the Michigan Wolverines did not, it is seen as a great honor and victory for Central Ohio and the Buckeye nation. From this, we can imagine people growing up in this culture developing certain attitudes of the Buckeyes and Wolverines, namely that the Buckeyes are great and the Wolverines are evil or bad in some way. Of course, the example may not prove to hold strong in everyone who lives in Central Ohio. Many people may choose to not follow the rivalry, and may not value competition between the two schools. But nevertheless, we can see that one's culture plays a significant role in determining one's beliefs.

Before moving on, it is necessary to discuss if these cases are truly plausible.

Regarding the first case, that a belief may be beyond one's control if it is formed through a trusted person, one may think that the person should not form the belief at all. The worry may be that when someone says something of another, especially when it is negative, then we should not truly listen, or not form a belief. Imagine that we should not listen to what a trusted friend has to say about another person, regardless of what is being said being positive or negative. If this is the case, then recommendation letters from trusted colleagues and friends should be disregarded. We could not trust those letters until we find out ourselves about that person. This implication is too unattractive. It is absurd to disregard our trusted acquaintances when it comes to references and recommendations. And so, it cannot be that we should not listen to our trusted friends, that is, we ought to listen to our trusted friends¹¹.

The second and third case should be easily accepted. We can see that a child's beliefs is sometimes formed through his or her parents. I think it absurd to deny this. However, I suspect some may be tempted to say that we should not form beliefs through socialization. Though this may be true, it is near impossible to avoid cultural influence. We may have an obligation to be skeptical, or critical, of the things that a culture tells us, but this requires skill and practice. It can be difficult, first, to recognize the messages that a culture is sending. Secondly, it is much more difficult to avoid internalizing those messages even when one is aware. Because of this difficulty, beliefs formed through socialization are beyond our control.

Factors of Innocence That Justifies Racist Beliefs

Perhaps that when an unjustified harmful belief, or racist belief, is beyond one's control, what makes it not wrong is that there is some sort of innocence in the belief. If a child were to believe that black people are criminal, I think, we would not accuse the child of being wrong, but rather the parents. The child's belief is beyond his or her control, no responsibility should be given to the child for that belief. Similarly, when we see an old person who makes racist remarks, often we attribute their beliefs to the time that person lived in. The racist culture that person lived in influenced that person's beliefs. Usually we say "that is just how this person was raised," implying that the person is not wrong for their racist beliefs.

From the above examples, what justifies their beliefs to not be wrongs is a type of innocence. If the child was not fully developed cognitively, and the old person's cognitive abilities were diminishing, it is reasonable to say that there is an innocence in their belief. From this, we see that cognitive ability determines the innocence of beliefs. What other factors are there? To answer this, imagine a fully developed white racist male who was raised racist. For me, innocence may be present if we consider his moral education. That is, he was probably taught that it is ok to believe racist beliefs, or at least it was implied. It could be that he was taught not to fight for black people's rights, and that people who did were just as bad as black people. We can think of this as a type of brainwashing. Imagine a friend of yours was

abducted by aliens and brainwashed into believing that eating babies is ok. There is a certain type of innocence here that leads us to conclude that your friend is not wrong for believing that, because he simply cannot believe otherwise.

Someone may object to say that the innocence I have described in this case does not make the belief not wrong. My point here, however, is that when someone is taught morals in their early life, it sticks with them. Moral education occurs early in life. Though it may continue on, I suspect, the majority of the beliefs we form happen fairly early in life. And so even though someone may be fully developed cognitively, their beliefs may have been formed when they were not so. In this sense, there is innocence in the belief. In other words, since moral education happens at a time that yields any beliefs formed to be beyond one's control, those beliefs are innocent in some way.

Application to Humor: The Basketball Joke

So, when one's racist beliefs are beyond control, if there is innocence involved, then it is not wrong. And recall, when a belief is not wrong, then the expression of that belief through a joke, for Benatar, is not wrong, even though if it is harmful. To see this, consider again the basketball joke told earlier.

What did the passerby do to stop a group of black men from committing a gang rape? He threw them a basketball.

To reiterate, the beliefs that may be expressed are that black men enjoy gang rape, that black men enjoy basketball, and that black men's passion for basketball leads them to give up anything, in this case committing a gang rape. We can imagine a white racist male who was raised to believe these things of black men, and hence his beliefs are beyond his control and there is innocence in his belief. So he would not be wrong if he were to express these beliefs through this joke. To me, this is deeply troubling.

Harm Involved in Racist Jokes

So, what is troubling about the above example? It may be the harm caused by the joke, and the beliefs as well. First, the joke and the beliefs harm not just any individual, but black men, and most likely black people in general. And that harm is not limited to the black people of our time, but black people throughout history, and the future. It harms across time, in a way, that is particularly troubling. Secondly, the discrimination that black people have faced and are facing today is such that the harm brought upon by this joke is compounded by that history. In other words, the history of oppression that black people have faced, when considered with the basketball joke, determines that harm to be much more biting than if it were otherwise¹².

When it comes to the joke furthermore, we have to recognize the historical context of how or when this joke was told. Joseph Boskins, in his article "The Complicity of Humor: The Life and Death of Sambo," discusses how a hostile racist humor, jokes like the basketball joke, has been employed by white people to demean black people, and to separate black people socially from whites¹³. This joke was most likely employed by white people to dehumanize black men in such a way that lead them to be thought of as vicious sexual criminals with an odd passion for basketball. White people most likely told it to other white people to spread or share their beliefs. Or it could have been said to a black man, or any black person in general, as to demean them. In short, this joke and jokes like it have most likely been said

and laughed at, and this played a part in taking away blacks' basic rights. Imagine what it must be like to hear this joke as a black man, even as a black women. It would seem to be heart wrenching.¹⁴

Profound Harm Outweighs Innocence

Seeing the profound harm above caused by the basketball joke, it is difficult for me to accept that the innocence of one's belief makes it so inflicting that harm is not wrong. My point may be better illustrated when we consider harm caused by anti-white racist beliefs. Anti-white beliefs do not hold the relevant historical factors that make the harm as profound as an anti-black belief. White people have not suffered oppression on any comparable scale to black people, even today. It is white people, specifically white men, who are the oppressors. In other words, the historical cultural relevance of an anti-white belief does not make the harm caused by that belief profound. Whereas the historical cultural relevance of an anti-black belief does indeed make the harm profound. I argue, when the harm caused by a belief is profound, then the belief is wrong. This is because that harm, being profound, weighs much more than the innocence of a belief that is beyond one's control.¹⁵

Conclusion

For Benatar, a joke is immoral when it harms and when that harm is wrongfully inflicted. A joke can harm through the expression of racist beliefs. Though when the racist belief is beyond one's control, due to it having a type of innocence in the belief, it is not wrong. However, I argued that the harm caused by some racist beliefs may be profound because of, what I call, a historical cultural relevance that makes the harm profound. This harm weighs much more than one's innocence of a racist belief that is beyond control in such a way that makes that belief immoral. And so, the expression of a racist belief that causes profound harm is not just harmful, it is also immoral.

Notes

1 Benatar, David. "Prejudice in jest: When racial and gender humor harms." *Public Affairs Quarterly* (1999): 191

2 Benatar makes it explicit that he is discussing negative beliefs, or stereotypes. Determining if it is possible for a positive belief to harm is not the aim of this essay.

3 Cohen, Ted. Taste, Morality, and the Propriety of Joking. In *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 77-86). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1999): 80-81

4 I take these points to be uncontroversial and would be skeptical of the character of the person who disagrees with these statements.

5 Benatar, David. "Prejudice in jest." 195

6 Benatar, David. "Prejudice in jest." 194

7 It is not the aim of this essay to object to Benatar's response here. Rather, it is the aim to give the reader a full grasp of Benatar's argument.

8 Ibid., 194

9 Ibid., 194

10 Now I do not mean to say that parents and culture raise people to be racist as when a

parent or culture raises someone to be a great tennis player. The difference is that raising a great tennis player involves training their body and mind to be an athlete, teaching them the strategy of the game and offering them opportunity to test their ability in tournaments. One is raised racist by more unintentional measure, typically. That is, one is raised racist by internalizing the implicit or subliminal messages of race that are sent usually through parents and a culture. A tennis player is not made through internalizing messages, and a racist is not made through training and playing in tournaments.

11 This issue gets more complicated when the belief contains elements of an existing stereotype. For example, say Bob is black. Jill tells John that Bob is a vicious sexual being. Given that this is a common stereotype of black people, it becomes more difficult to conclude that if John formed that belief, it would be beyond his control due to its formation. It may be that when a person is trying to tell us something of another, if it is a stereotype then we ought to be more skeptical and critical of what is being said to us.

12 This view of mine was inspired by Stephanie Patridge's article "The Incurable Social Meaning of Video Game Imagery." She discusses how certain images have a social meaning based on the relevant culture, and that meaning yields moral obligations such as being sensitive towards that meaning and sympathetic towards the relevant group. Patridge, S. (2013). *Exclusivism and Evaluation: Art, Erotica, and Pornography*. In H. Maes (Ed.), *Pornographic Art and the Aesthetics of Pornography* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 50-55). New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, St Martin's Press LLC.

13 Boskins, Joseph, "The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor." SUNY series of philosophy. State University of New York Press, Albany. 1987

14 I am in great debt to George Yancy. Yancy came to Otterbein University where he talked about cases of white cops shooting black men, white privilege, and other things. One of the things he discussed was a concept he called "un-suturing." It is similar to letting a wound not heal, that is, to open up rather than to close. Yancy was perhaps the biggest impact of my awareness of racism due to him "un-suturing" my post racial society attitudes. Because of this, I was more inspired to write this paper as an attempt to show how racist jokes can be so troubling to people, especially this joke with black men.

15 It is important to note that I am not arguing that anti-white beliefs are not wrongs, rather I am arguing that the harm caused by anti-white beliefs is not profound. Determining whether or not that harm caused by anti-white beliefs weighs more or less than the innocence of that belief is not the aim of this essay.

Among The Living Dead: The Zombie Narrative in a Post-9/11 Era

>>> Zoë Princehorn

Preface

At the age of nine years old I saw my first zombie movie¹, and it is one of the most vivid memories I have from my childhood. I remember sitting on the floor right up front, so close I could not even take in the whole television at once. My brother put the disk in the player and the next ninety minutes were some of the most exciting, yet horrifying minutes of my life. When the movie ended, my brother got up to retrieve the movie, but before he could, I turned to him and asked if we could watch it again. I remember his reaction; for a second he looked puzzled and then the biggest grin spread across his face. As he hit 'play' on the remote for another time, I inched up even further to the television, allowing myself to be closer to the terror that I knew awaited me. My brother may not have known it at the time (even though I like to think he did), but he had created his very own monster.

From that day on I was obsessed with zombies. My obsession first started with movies; I watched every zombie movie I could get my hands on and there was never enough. At the time I had no idea why I kept watching these movies that were so horrifying to me; zombies scared me more than any other creature out there. I have realized now that it is *because* of this fear that I am so interested. Why *do* they scare me? The more I understand this creature, the more I understand myself. As years went on I found myself going deeper and deeper into this world of the undead. I surrounded myself with books, movies, and anything else I could find; priding myself on the collection I was making that continues to grow at every chance I get. When other teenagers claimed that their hero was their mom or dad, I, without hesitation, said George Romero and I meant it.

My interest in the topic remained relatively casual until I got to Otterbein University. My very first class my freshman year was an honors class entirely devoted to monsters in literature. This was when I started to realize that studying zombies could be more than just a hobby; it could actually become academic work, something that seemed so bizarre and strange. This realization felt like a relief, what I loved was not a waste of time after all! When I decided to do research on zombies for my project, I had no idea where I would end up taking the expansive topic; I had limitless possibilities.

I started to just do research on the metaphorical significance of zombies in literature and film, which is what led me to the article that gave me a more specific heading. Kyle Bishop's² article, "Dead Man Still Walking: Explaining the Zombie Renaissance," begins to explore the connections between the attacks of September 11th and their link to the rise of the popularity of zombies in the early 21st Century. Bishop demonstrates that many zombie films' opening sequences have a connection to the fears that arose from September 11th. As an example, he looks at *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) and, Ana, the main protagonist, as she

goes through the scenes in the beginning of the movie, "The chaos, disorientation, fear, and destruction she witnesses are disturbingly similar to the initial news footage broadcast on September 11th" (22). Bishop's article also helped me to see another important connection between 9/11 and zombies: zombies are like anonymous terrorists, something that definitely pulls at the fears of Americans in the current era.

Living in a post-9/11 society has redefined the lives of nearly everyone, in some way or another. In this way, Bishop points out, zombies also relate to other "cultural anxieties arising from natural disasters and global pandemics" (Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous" 73). More than ever before, zombies have a home in our current society because there have never been this many fears that could be metaphorically linked with zombies.

Through discussing our fears post-9/11 and how they relate to the increase in the popularity of zombies, I hope to show the reader that these are basic fears, but are incredibly complicated due to the implications of 9/11. Zombies are, "an abject reflection of our individual mortality, and harbingers of societal decay, [and] force the viewer [or reader] to consider the dark possibilities of a meaningless existence" (Moreman 7). Society's fears post-9/11 are always there, but zombie narratives are what force us to confront them. The terror of the zombie narrative is that it not only forces the audience to confront these fears, but it does so in an incredibly visceral way.

I believe that the popularity of zombies arose organically post-9/11 because zombies helped demonstrate the fears that people were facing in a way that they were not expecting. The fear of zombies arises less from the disturbing appearance of the creatures and the way they often rip apart their prey or how their bodies are shown in a decomposing state, but arises more so from the fears they represent metaphorically, often even death itself, one of the most basic human fears. Zombies are the kind of creatures that haunt people in the least expected of ways; for example, driving down a country road on a foggy night, we might not expect a zombie to walk out of a cornfield. There is more to that kind of fear than to simply say that it is because they are scary, this fear reaches a lot deeper than that.

Through this project I seek to expand upon the ever-growing realm of zombie studies, in particular this connection that I have noted between 9/11 and zombies. My goal is that someone who may have never thought about zombies as a metaphorical tool will read this and start to create their own stream of thoughts in regards to the genre. I hope my own writings and curiosities on the topic will inspire others to explore another aspect of this incredibly expansive and diverse field. If not zombies in particular, then at least it will lead them to explore the monster that terrifies them and the implications of that.

At the very basic level, zombies are us. They were once human just like you and me, and if nothing else, that is what makes them terrifying. Every person can look at a zombie and see themselves, a family member, a friend, knowing that the enemy surrounds you, and it could be waiting for you just around the corner. Not only do they look like us, but they also demonstrate our devolution as a society, "We have become chaotic creatures of selfishness, violence, and unchecked aggression who do more damage to ourselves and the world around us than any reanimated corpse ever could" (Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous" 74). Therefore, we are seeing ourselves in zombies in nearly every way possible, the physical as well as the mental. We don't want to become what they have become, that aspect of this fear of zombies is part of why they are so incredibly important

to study and understand. Zombies are awakening society from a constant slumber we have been in, forcing us to live again, “To ‘start living’ is to be forced to think” (Moreman 5). Zombies are teaching us something and we need to start listening.

I truly believe this work to be significant and important, not only to zombie studies in particular, but to our own cultural awareness and understanding. When we take time to understand our fears, no matter what they are, we are embarking on a much greater journey than we may first believe. “*Monster* derives from the Latin word *monstrum*, which in turn derives from the root *monere* (to warn). To be a monster is to be a omen” (Asma 13). Monsters are warning us about the fears we hold inside, the ones that we have internalized. What we fear says a lot about who we are as people. Fear is so personal, fear makes a person vulnerable, and being vulnerable is scary within itself. That is what has made this work such a challenge for me in the best way possible; I am confronting what terrifies me in order to learn why it does so. If for no other reason this project will have been significant for my own personal growth as I have learned about myself through learning about zombies. My ultimate hope with this project is that one person will read it, or hear it, and begin to question what scares them. What scares you, defines you.

Introduction

To me, the best zombie movies aren’t the splatter fests of gore and violence with goofy characters and tongue in cheek antics. Good zombie movies show us how messed up we are, they make us question our station in society... and our society’s station in the world. They show us gore and violence and all that cool stuff too... but there’s always an undercurrent of social commentary and thoughtfulness.

- Robert Kirkman (author of *The Walking Dead* comic series)

Narratives throughout history have never shied away from utilizing the monster and showing monstrous people. Of course, why would any one shy away from the metaphorical possibilities of monsters? Writers have used monsters for a variety of reasons over the years. “Sometimes the monster is a display of God’s wrath, a portent of the future, a symbol of moral virtue or vice, or an accident of nature” (Asma 13), but no matter how it is used, if used well, it has the power to change the way people think. Zombies have become one such category of monster. Since they first appeared in popular culture in 1818³, zombies have had an undeniable role as representations (or symbols of) societal fears in imaginative narratives. Never has this role been more important and more prominent than it is now, in a post-9/11 climate. The increase in the popularity of zombies since the events of 9/11 is too drastic to ignore. Society can learn much more about its values and its fears through these more recent zombies narratives than they could before 9/11.

The Haitian Zombie

In order to understand the zombie culture that thrives today, one first needs to understand their origin in Haiti. Haitian voodoo zombies⁴ are believed to have originated between 1730 and 1790, or at the very least, that is when the outside world began to take notice. Haitian zombies are one of the most mysterious parts of Haiti’s culture; even after so many years there is still not much known about these ‘original’ zombies. Though the

accounts of the Haitian zombie are not numerous, there is one of particular interest from 1937. Zora Neale Hurston, a very popular writer of the time and one who is associated with the Harlem Renaissance, made a trip to Haiti to do research on folklore. While there, Hurston encountered the case of a woman whose family claimed she was a relative who had died and been buried in 1907 at the age of 29, 30 years before the present. Hurston pursued rumors that the affected person was given a powerful psychoactive drug. However, no individuals offered much, if any information.

Similarly, after hearing about zombies in Haiti, Wade Davis, a Harvard ethnobotanist, decided to do his own research and study on the topic in 1982 (Corbett). The result of his investigation led him to believe that zombies were, in fact, real. Davis believed a person could be turned into a zombie by two special powders being entered into the bloodstream, usually through a wound. The first, which is called the "powder strike," includes tetrodotoxin (Corbett). Tetrodotoxin is a powerful and frequently fatal neurotoxin found in the flesh of pufferfish (Corbett). The second powder consists of dissociative drugs. Together he believed they would induce a death-like state in which the will of the victim would be entirely subjected to that of the witch doctor (Corbett).

Davis' claim was severely criticized, though two claims he did make seemed legitimate. One was that zombification is not random nor is it used for profit or personal vendetta. The second claim was that zombification is the ultimate punishment to someone who has seriously violated the law of the Bizango⁵ society (Corbett). Davis' discoveries could in part explain why, in Haiti, raising the dead and using them as one's own servants is a criminal offense.

The Zombie in Popular Culture

Since the time of the Haitian zombie, popular culture has molded the way zombies are viewed and understood. The film that is considered to be the first 'zombie' film is *White Zombie* (1932), if for no other reason than it was the first to use the word 'zombie.' The plot revolves around a man who wishes another character to zombify his love interest and make her his love slave. This film follows the Haitian version of the zombie and its themes of revenge and enslavement, and illustrates what would be considered a 'pre-Romero' or traditional zombie. The filmmaker George A. Romero would radically revise this model and give it a modern form.

The 'modern' or Romero zombie has been around since George Romero first released *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968. It was a film that many people and critics alike had claimed as vulgar and disturbing, but they had no idea what kind of impact this new version of the zombie would have on popular culture. It created a whole new realm of metaphorical possibilities and commentaries. Romero's creation of this new type of zombie was more than just his making a new monster; he created an incredibly powerful tool for very real representations of society. He took the Haitian monster and molded it into his own device. Most of the qualities of a Romero zombie are completely new and different from those of Haitian descent; he kept the reanimation of the dead, but not much else. Romero's zombie has mostly stayed the same since its creation, with people making their own tweaks to the monster through the years. As a relatively static monster, it is rather interesting that Romero's creature relates most to society now than it ever has before. In a Romero context, "Zombies are the dead come back to life. Zombies feed on the living. Anyone bitten by a

zombie becomes a zombie. The only way to kill a zombie is to shoot it in the head” (qtd. in Moreman 2). *Night of the Living Dead* presented a zombie that not even Haitians had seen before, terrifying and repulsing everyone who encountered this monster.

Zombies⁶ have seen their rise and fall in popularity multiple times since 1968, but never has there been a time of such intense popularity for zombies as there is now. The beginning of the 21st Century, more accurately September 11th, brought with it a powerful new wave of zombie culture. Zombies have invaded all forms of media from television to the big screen, to books, graphic novels, and photography; even store shelves are filled with merchandise relating to zombies--lunch boxes, toys, and video games. What is society really buying into, though? This is more than a fad. There is something much more important going on here.

Post-9/11 Zombies

September 11th changed many lives in ways both noticed and unnoticed. Americans became much more fearful of not only other countries, but of other people; there was a much more present lack of trust. Simply the way someone looked was enough to stay away and fear their presence. Zombie narratives helped to express these new fears, although most people watching and reading these narratives might be completely unaware of what it is that attracts them to the subject. Simply looking at the basic characteristics of a post-9/11 zombie film and written narratives, according to Kyle Bishop,⁷ can begin to explain where people's fears of these monsters are currently situated: “[Post-9/11] genre protocols include not only the zombies and the imminent threat of violent deaths, but also a post apocalyptic backdrop, the collapse of societal infrastructures, the indulgence of survivalist fantasies, and the fear of other surviving humans” (Bishop, “Dead Man Still Walking” 20).

Looking specifically at each of these factors individually creates a nearly perfect image of societal fears generated by the September 11th attacks on America. First, the fear of violent, imminent, and unexpected deaths is incredibly relevant in a post-9/11 society. The feeling that death lurks just around the corner and could strike at any moment, especially when you are least expecting it, is an important dimension of the new zombie narratives. The morning of the attacks of September 11th was a beautiful, tranquil morning until chaos struck without any warning. The suddenness of the attacks removed the invisible security blanket that Americans felt they had protecting them and made them understand the unpredictability of death, not to mention a very real image of how violent death can be.

The fear of apocalypse⁸ is one that has become even more prominent post-9/11 and is one that the new zombie narratives rely on heavily. It is nearly impossible to create a meaningful zombie narrative without some form of apocalyptic scenario. The events of September 11th could easily be seen as very apocalyptic in nature; it was sudden, unexpected, and incredibly chaotic. After the attacks in New York, phone lines were down, making it impossible for people to contact their families on either side. Not being able to contact anyone or know what was going on outside of the city reasonably caused a great panic and concern. No one in the city knew if this was an isolated occurrence or if these kind of events were happening all over The United States, and those outside of the city did not know fully what was going on or if their family and friends were alive. These events were also visually terrifying in a way that people had not seen before in their own country. A first responder to the Pentagon after the attacks recalls the terror,

It was just piles and piles of debris ... we searched for people who might be trapped or injured. We yelled into the darkness and waited for a response that never came. Slowly the realization came over me that everyone in there was dead. It was extremely intense. Extremely emotional. (Smith, "Remembering 9-11: A First Responder Recalls 9-11")

These attacks were also apocalyptic in nature because they forced people to question what they had done to cause this. The public looked to more than just the terrorists to lay blame for the attacks, they looked toward the government as well. This fearful and panicked blaming is an apocalyptic signature.

The main connection to see here, though, is how suddenly the chaos of September 11th happened and how quickly viruses, plagues, and disease spread in zombie narratives. They tend to show this spread visually; the *Resident Evil* franchise, in particular, shows the color red (symbolizing the virus) spreading over the world map, first slowly, but then it quickly covers the entire thing. Even if the narrative is unable to demonstrate this spread visually, it surely will describe the quick and relentless nature of the spread. All of this, of course, assumes that the narrative decides to talk about how the zombies came into existence, but if it does, then the virus is almost guaranteed to have spread rapidly.

The third criterion, the collapse of societal infrastructures, has a very real, very visceral connection to September 11th. The buildings that were targeted and/or hit, the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and the White House, were all major centers of government power. All these locations represent different areas of power in society: the Twin Towers as a symbol of capitalism, the Pentagon as a symbol of the military, and the White House as a symbol of the executive government. Seeing these structures get attacked that morning brought up more fearful thoughts than just the safety of people inside, but the idea that the government and American society itself were under attack, something that most living Americans had not had to experience in their lifetimes.

The indulgence in survivalist fantasies is another interesting aspect to the post-9/11 zombie narrative. It seems that television has truly latched on to this idea of survival and made a multitude of shows; *Man vs. Wild*, *Naked and Afraid*, or *Doomsday Preppers*, to name a few. Certain ones even examine surviving apocalyptic scenarios more closely. This may stem from the possible fear that people had post-9/11, that they had no idea what they would do if something happened to the societal structures they were so used to having to keep them alive.

Finally the fear of other surviving humans in post-apocalyptic zombie narrative relates to this fear that the enemy could be anywhere and sometimes in the least expected of places. The terrorists of September 11th were just other passengers boarding the plane no one on that plane could have guessed what they would do or what kind of destruction they would cause. In many modern zombie narratives, the fear of the known human is just as real as the fear of the unknown zombie. With the zombies you know what they want, can somewhat predict what they are trying to do even, but with humans, unpredictability is always a factor. "Once the survivors take both the law and their protection into their own hands, establishing some kind of defensible stronghold ... the zombies cease to be much of a direct threat and become more animals to be avoided" (Bishop, "Dead Man Still Walking" 22).

An aspect of the zombie narrative that Bishop fails to mention is that of the zombie itself and what it represents. Of course, zombie narratives vary greatly on how the zombies are portrayed; their appearance, their mannerisms, their speed, but nearly every zombie narrative shows them as hollowed-out creatures that have lost all sense of free will, they are even unable to speak for themselves. This is a critical link to the post-9/11 mindset, the fear people have of some kind of outside force taking over, leaving them helpless and without control over their own lives and actions.

Morality of the Zombie Narrative

As demonstrated previously, zombie narratives have become a symbol for post-9/11 cultural fears, but they are even more than that. Zombie narratives have begun to mirror what it is society has become post-9/11. These zombies are representing not only monstrous entities that we must fear, but also the monsters within ourselves. They mirror back to us how far our human and moral standards can decay in our efforts to conquer what we fear. We see this especially in popular narratives such as Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* comic series:

{It} sheds a harsh light upon the potential devolution of humanity - that we have become chaotic creatures of selfishness, violence, and unchecked aggression who do more damage to ourselves and the world around us than any reanimated corpse ever could. (Bishop, "Batting Monsters and Becoming Monstrous" 74)

Zombie narratives show that society has become what it fears most. They should not be taken only as a warning of what there is out there to fear, but also what we hold inside ourselves that is to be feared.

Some people may wish to argue that we are not seen in the zombie narrative, we only see the embodiment of *societal* fears. Society is not represented through the zombie; rather society is mirrored within the living humans in these narratives. Nearly every zombie narrative shows that the real danger lies in the actions of those still living. These narratives make everyday people into murderers, thieves, madmen, or even cannibals all because it is what they claimed they had to do to survive. They illustrate how what is "morally right" is replaced by what has to be done, what is necessary for existence in a post-9/11 society. Romero's films, in particular, focus on this idea of morality: "His films are inherently moral, revealing the manner in which the cardinal virtues (love, kindness, cooperation) lead to survival - or, rather, that the lack of these virtues leads to death and, inevitably, to undeath" (Rushton and Moreman 5).

One short story, "The Things He Said" (2010) by Michael Marshall Smith, clearly shows how ordinary citizens transition into horrific creatures who are far worse than the zombies who hunt them. The narrator of this story talks about his day to day, hour by hour, routine in this post-apocalyptic scenario, in a way representing the survivalist fantasy mentioned earlier. The beginning of the story tricks the reader into believing these are all totally rational, incredibly intelligent ways of surviving in a zombie apocalypse, which in a way they are, until the point in the story when things begin to change. The reader gradually discovers that the narrator is a cannibal and has people hanging up in his shed that he will hack pieces off of and consume in order to stay alive. This story demonstrates quite clearly

how people will do what they need to in order to survive, even if it is not always the 'morally right' thing to do.

"The Things He Said" also serves to ask the question, how far is too far? Has this man gone beyond the point of normalcy without the possibility of returning? His consumption of other living people makes him more zombie than it does human. In other words, he has *become* the living dead, the enemy. In a post-9/11 era, this story does more than question if this particular man has gone too far, but rather it questions if *society* has gone too far in its response to the unimaginable acts of terrorism on 9/11. The post-9/11 world has been saturated with war and rampant militarization, forcing governments into making decisions that are rarely considered 'morally right,' yet, according to that particular country, necessary. The United States government alone has made multiple controversial decisions dealing with the so-called 'War on Terror' which have caused protestations and outcries from the American public. Protests began as early as the end of September in 2001 when the decision was made to invade Afghanistan and have continued since then. The American public always has an eye on what the government is doing, especially in regards to the 'War on Terror.' For this reason, the public can begin to see their own governments mirrored by these horrific humans seen in zombie narratives. War has become so present in people's lives around the world that it seems inevitable, and the acts that are committed during war pose the same question: have we gone too far? War crimes tend to be some of the most brutal, violent, and controversial crimes that there are and people often ask how much is too much, and when do mass killings, brutal torture, and other horrible war acts cause people to cross the line from human to monster. As with the narrator of "The Things He Said," the post 9/11 zombie culture allows us to see the metamorphosis of everyday citizens into enemies within our own society.

The Zombified Military

This transition from human to monster is represented in the ways that the military is often viewed by the public. In post-9/11 zombie narratives, the military is often portrayed as being responsible for creating the crisis that precedes the apocalypse as well as being a continuing threat during the zombie apocalypse. The military tends to be portrayed as "more threatening to the surviving population than the zombies themselves" (McRobert 105). The zombie apocalypse allows for the military to be brutal, to institute oppressive policies, to do anything they believe is necessary to keep the public 'safe.' In zombie narratives, the military and the zombies are seen as two separate entities, yet some post-9/11 narratives place the zombies in a much more sympathetic light to attempt to expose the 'real' monster within the story, the living. This humanisation of the living dead can be seen in Romero's *Land of the Dead* (2005). The main zombie of the film, or Big Daddy as he is credited, organizes an uprising. Why does he do so? He does so because he sees one of his fellow zombies get murdered by the militaristic scavengers from the city and will go through whatever it takes in order to get revenge. This kind of reaction from a zombie is not one that is normally seen and shows a much more human side to the undead.

Not only is the military revealed to be the real problem, and the more definitive enemy in these narratives, but also they are equated with these zombies themselves since they have a multitude of characteristics in common. Both are identified as a collective entity rather than a singular being; the fear that both generate comes from their size, rather than

from their individual members. This identification as one unit also allows for anonymity; each individual is not held accountable for their actions, it is the group that is responsible. This allows each individual to be more distant from the moral consequences of the group's actions.

World War Z (2006), by Max Brooks, is an excellent example of a heavy military influence during the zombie apocalypse. The novel is written as a collection of interviews conducted with people who made it through the Zombie War and their stories. The very nature of this collection being about a 'Zombie War' makes it very militaristic; many of the stories themselves come from military personnel. Even when the interviews are not conducted with people from the military, they do revolve around how people fought back and what measures were taken to ensure survival. In one interview, a man named Roy Elliot talks about a town outside of Los Angeles called Claremont, where three hundred students made a stand against a zombie horde of ten thousand. Elliot had filmed the events in order to make an inspirational film to show to survivor camps around the state. One of the military men that the narrator interviews is Todd Wainio. His demeanor can be seen as the kind of military action that people fear will happen if the government is allowed to institute whichever policies they wish during crisis situations. Wainio even speaks about how much he enjoyed the killing of the dead, "[our lobos]⁹ made it personal, empowering. You could feel the skull split. A real rush, like you were taking back your life, you know? Not that I minded pulling the trigger" (274). The way in which Wainio feels the need to kill in order to sustain himself is an incredibly zombie-like quality. He has gone so far as to no longer see the zombie as anything human. Wainio has distanced himself from the creature enough to enjoy the murdering of it, an interesting idea when thinking about the post-9/11 implications. The United States military has more than once been accused of unnecessary brutality toward prisoners of war, look no further than the events of Abu Ghraib.¹⁰

The fear of oppressive military actions post-9/11 is also linked to the more broad fear of biological warfare. The fear of biological weapons has never been as realistic of a fear as it is post-9/11, even more so is simply the fear of the spread of disease. In a world that is so connected, people fly to places all across the globe everyday, the idea that major areas of the world could be wiped out by sickness is not an irrational fear. Zombies are largely created by some kind of biological accident; someone was messing with something they should not have been, or it may have been on purpose, and their accident causes major destruction for the rest of the world.

The spread of a biological weapon in zombie narratives is about more than just the spread of disease; it is also about what that disease has done to people. The fear has less to do with dying from the disease and more so to do with what happens to you because of it. Zombie viruses do not allow for the escape of death, because it brings the host back to life once it has killed them. The only way to escape is to kill yourself or wait for someone else to do it. Not only does the zombie virus ask its host for a violent end, it also asks for a violent beginning considering most zombie narratives follow that a person must be bitten in order to contract the virus. Most importantly, the contraction of the zombie virus means a loss of control over an one's own body and a loss of free will. Most of these qualities are not present in the average disease, which makes the fear more about what is spreading rather than that it is spreading. In some narratives that spread can serve as a symbol of 'otherness,' one of society's most innate fears.

Zombies as the “Other”

Zombies can also be associated with the ‘other’ of society; more accurately in a post-9/11 society, they can often be seen as representing the terrorists. The narratives often ‘other’ the zombie, they are something to be feared, if for nothing else than just their difference. As Jeffrey Cohen explains in his essay, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” “the monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us” (7). The zombie embodies the kind of fears that people do not like to discuss, the ones that they do not want to admit that they have, “monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual” (7). There is an ever-present fear in society of the ‘other’ the one that is different from oneself, they represent what that person could have been if they were born to a different family, raised in a different country, or were from a different financial background.

This kind of fear hovers and zombies serve as the reminder of its presence. For the living in zombie narratives, their fear of difference lies in the zombies, they are what could happen to them at any moment if just one thing goes wrong. These narratives demonstrate to people that they can become that which they ‘other’ by simple twists of fate. Zombies are one of the best metaphorical tools for ‘otherness;’ they are fearful creatures placed within the human body, similar to how social differences are within the person. Zombies are relatable in this way because they were once human, in fact, they could be considered still human, just different from what society is used to distinguishing as human. Simply put, zombie narratives take that which people fear because of its ‘otherness,’ place it right in front of them as a warning that it is not so far from who they are, and show people that there is no determining if that could be their fate too.

Zombies of Consumerism

While the zombie can be seen as the metaphorical ‘other’ there are also strong connections to its role as a representation of the average person, demonstrating its malleability and the way in which it acts as a sponge to the culture of society. In this metaphorical role, zombies are an intriguing commentary on consumerism. The United States, in particular, is a country overrun with consumerism; people are constantly told what they need to buy in order to be ‘cool’ or ‘hip,’ to matter. Society has become a collective of brainless, thoughtless consumers, zombies for material, and they will not stop until they have what they want. Although consumerist ideology is nothing new, it has become much more present post-9/11 with Black Friday not becoming the largest shopping day of the year until after 9/11. The relatively new introduction of ‘fast’ zombies makes the consumerism metaphor that much more interesting.

Arguably the crowning moment of consumerism each year is Black Friday, a particularly American phenomenon. No other country collects in such large masses just to buy goods, but it is more than just the buying of these goods. American society has made a single day’s events into a consumerist culture; stores start opening at ridiculous hours, even sometimes opening the night before, people will camp outside of stores that have their biggest deals of the year advertised weeks in advance. Everything about Black Friday points to an obsession with consumerist culture, but what has this new breed of culture molded society into? Flipping through images of Black Friday, it is not difficult to see the connection to the hordes of zombies present in zombie narratives. People become so brainless in their pursuit of the latest trends that they have trampled and killed other shoppers on numerous

occasions. This uncaring, focused nature of the shoppers on Black Friday is very much zombie-esque.

One of the best examples of zombies being used as a commentary on consumerism is *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), a remake of a Romero classic by the same name. In the film, the characters make their way to the mall, an apparent symbol of safety to those involved or at least consistency with its lack of clocks and controlled airflow. Once they are inside the mall there is a sharp contrast to the world outside; inside the mall looks just like it would any other day, everything is neat and orderly, a contrast to outside the mall where chaos has taken over causing fires, the air filled with panicked screams. The group of people who come into the mall quickly encounter the mall security, an oppressive trio who insist on locking everyone else up in one of the stores because they do not trust them to wander the mall on their own. The mall security's lack of trust for the people seeking solace inside the mall points to their metaphorical roles in the film, they are the protectors of consumerism.

As the film progresses, the group makes it up to the roof of the mall, when they look out over the parking lot and into the town they can see masses of zombies headed toward the mall. One character even asks, "Why are they coming here?" and other survivors chime in and say that it may be memory or instinct. These characters are openly asking for the audience to question what it is about the mall that is pulling the zombies there, they are being asked to confront their own attraction to the mall and the consumer goods that it holds inside.

The consumerism metaphor is at its most powerful, though, when during the film, about halfway into it, there is a shopping montage or sequence, filled with the characters mindlessly going around the mall and trying on clothes, playing with sports equipment and games among other activities. They are living out a dream that any American would have if they were to be stuck inside a mall and allowed to do whatever they wanted. The most fascinating part of this whole sequence though is the music that plays during it, with lyrics like "come on get down with the sickness" and "madness is the gift that has been given to me." These lyrics point to the way in which consumerism makes people into a kind of zombie; 'sick' and 'mad' are both words that could describe zombies and in this case society as well.

Another interesting part of the *Dawn of the Dead*, with regard to the consumerism metaphor, is the birth of a very unique child. A couple of the characters in the film are a pregnant woman and her husband. For much of the film they decide that it is best to isolate themselves from the rest of the group because she is soon to give birth to her child. What is interesting about this is that the child ends up being a zombie baby. The zombification of a mere infant implies, in this context, that consumerism infects even the young; there is no escaping its grasp no matter what the age of its victim. This zombie baby is not the first youth that is shown as being infected by the disease in the film, the very first zombie shown is a child. The child in the beginning comes into the home of a sleeping couple and attacks them. Children are usually a taboo subject for any horror film, but definitely zombie films. All of this makes the representation of children in *Dawn of the Dead* important especially considering that these are the only two children the audience sees in the film up close. When taking into consideration the amount of advertising that is targeted at children, it is not surprising that they would be easy targets for such a zombifying disease as consumerism. Children are symbols of hope for the future, when even they aren't immune to this zombification, it brings to light the ruthlessness of a disease like consumerism. This role is one of the most intriguing and relevant that zombies play in a post-9/11 society.

Conclusion

The zombies of modern day have become unlikely, relatable monsters for those living in a post-9/11 era. Zombies work in a multitude of different ways to demonstrate society's fears, forcing those who consume their narratives to face that which scares them in a way that they were never asked to do before 9/11. Whether a reader, viewer, or simply a fan of zombies, people can see whatever they wish in these tales. Zombie narratives act as a mirror and what society chooses to see could be as dynamic as the zombie itself; it could be an individual's own reflection, their neighbors, the government, or their worst nightmare come to life. Zombies were once human and society's attempts to 'other' this creation, to disguise this fact, will always fail. Because when you look closely the living dead are not just in the movies or hiding amongst the pages of books, they are here: we have become the living dead.

Notes

1. The movie my brother had me watch was *Resident Evil* (2002). One of the most terrifying scenes to me as a child was when the characters encountered their first zombie. It was a man carrying a fire ax and dragging his foot behind him.
2. Kyle Bishop is an American writer and academic. He has done a lot of work on the cultural relevance of zombie cinema and has published multiple works including *American Zombie Gothic* in 2010. His work has been a major building block for my project.
3. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is arguably the first zombie narrative. It showed the resurrection of the dead; the most basic feature of any zombie narrative.
4. Zombie is a word of West African origin, but is used in regards to Haitian zombies as well.
5. Bizango is a voodoo secret society within Haiti. They are like a hidden government beneath the surface of Haiti. Those who violated their laws were punished by zombification.
6. From this point on any reference to zombies will be in the context of what George Romero molded and created, the modern version of the zombie.
7. As mentioned in the preface, Kyle Bishop is an American writer and academic. He has done a lot of work on the cultural relevance of zombie cinema and has published multiple works including *American Zombie Gothic* in 2010. His work has been a major building block for my project.
8. Here I would like to make a note demonstrating the difference, in my own opinion, between violent, imminent death and apocalypse. Violent, imminent death implies a sense of the unexpected, the death one fears because of its brutality. Apocalypse has much more to do with the reclaiming of the world by forces out of humanity's control. There is a fear which comes with apocalypse of wrongdoing, that people are guilty for their own demise, which does not often come with the idea of violent, imminent death.
9. A shovel-like weapon that Brooks invents for the book. Short for "Lobotomizer."
10. Personnel of the United States military and Central Intelligence agency committed a multitude of human rights violations against detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

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I'm a Princess Cut from Marble: Gender in the Renaissance

>>> Emma van Hessalt

Gender has played a vital role in thousands of years of history all over the world. Today most feminist scholars recognize gender as a social construct, and that allows them to analyze how gender has played a part in historical events and eras, as well as the changes that history has had on gender perception and roles, over time and location. Of the many historical eras and movements, the Italian Renaissance is one of the most famous, known for the strides made in humanism, art, philosophy, and science. However, with the rise of feminist scholars, a new question has arisen that asks what is the myth of how were women living during the Renaissance and how much freedom did they actually have? Examining the different scholarship on this topic can help construct a broader picture of the debate and the historical arguments. Some authors, like Joan Kelly, claim that women did not benefit from the Renaissance. Others, like Judith C. Brown and Monica Chojnacka, say that women had more freedom than previously thought. Each author has analyzed a different time period, taking into account different intersections and lenses by which to look at women's history throughout Renaissance Italy. Together, they have created a broad range of analysis dedicated entirely to women and the freedom their gender afforded them throughout this historical period and geographical location.

Taking the stance that women did not have freedom, Joan Kelly, in her article, *Did Women have a Renaissance?*, asserts that women did not have a renaissance, either at all- like was the case in the bourgeois- or not to the same extent- like in the nobility¹, and through her explanations she asserts that women's freedom in the Renaissance was a step back from the medieval ages. She prefaces her argument by outlining what she considered while making this thesis; regulations of female sexuality versus male sexuality, women's political and economic power and opportunities, women's cultural roles and access to education, and the prevailing ideology about women, both through the analysis of art and philosophy of the time as well as women's activities during the time.² Kelly begins her argument by setting the stage in the medieval age of feudalism and the beginning of the age of courtly love- which she claims was only able to prevail because of Europe's political situation, which granted women an amount of power between the state and the men in power. Kelly begins to explain how Italy's unique political landscape- full of city-states and shifting leaderships in which the state was above any individual man, which therefore lowered women down even more - did not allow for women to exercise the same power that the noble women in medieval Europe. In her second section, *The Renaissance Lady: Politics and Culture*, she brings up examples of two Renaissance women, Caterina Sforza and Elisabetta Gonzaga. Caterina come into her power by marrying into a powerful family, and further proved that power by acting as regent and quelling movements of unrest more than

once. However, Caterina was afforded this power because of her family situation- she was an illegitimate child of an illegitimate child, and as such was not expected to represent any noble family. Elisabetta Gonzaga, however, was the duchess of Urbino. She was the idealized woman in Castiglione's *Courtier*, schooled from childhood in subjects that would make her a wife to a Renaissance prince, while not becoming one herself. She would become a patron of the arts, but unlike medieval ladies and *their* courts, the artists would come for her *husband's* court. Kelly sums up the section by arguing that Renaissance women, through their humanist education, "...seem to have lost all consciousness of their particular interests as women..."³ while male authors wrote for other men. Kelly's final section, *The Renaissance of Chastity*, takes the topic of courtly romantic and sexual love that she discussed in the first section and explains how it evolved in the Renaissance. She argues that the idea of love in the Renaissance was primarily an asexual one. Women were expected to be sexually romantic only with their husband, as opposed to the example set by Eleanor of Aquitaine and the very idea of courtly love. With the growing stability of the nobility and the resulting concern on legitimacy, Castiglione's concern over female chastity grew. The Renaissance lady merely, as Kelly puts it, "...mediates the courtier's safe transcendence of an otherwise demeaning necessity."⁴ Kelly sums up her argument by stating that women in the Renaissance- both bourgeoisie and nobility- were removed from the public sphere and subject to a loss of power, due to a reorganization of Renaissance society, and therefore did not experience their own Renaissance.

Kelly's argument has sparked much debate, for many reasons. Her critics claim that she fails to look at the larger picture- much of her focus is on the literature of the periods, neglecting any political and economic sources. However, Kelly's article did open up important discussions that challenge the myth that men and women were equally free in the Renaissance. Judith C Brown, in her own article entitled *Gender*, refutes Kelly's claim. To preface her refutation, she first shows a mirror of the criticisms Burkhardt went through on his conception of the Renaissance. She then cites Kelly's article *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* as the first source of criticism of the myth of Renaissance gender equality.

Brown cites other authors as well, such as Monica Chionacka and Stanley Chojnacki, who also dispute Kelly's claim. Brown also brings up questions of how gender intersected with location, age, marital status, and economic class. Her last point is that gender studies can lead to an analysis of the construction of a male identity, as opposed to taking male and female as the ends of a binary. She argues that the discrepancies in the laws of Italy could lead to many different readings and interpretations. However, Brown claims "The manner in which the laws were interpreted and applied in practice and the plurality of law, both according to time and place, resulted in considerable flexibility."⁵ Brown also claims that woman had even more rights and freedoms taken away during the reformation, with Protestantism and reforms in the Catholic Church. Her final claim and restatement of her argument is there was no clear step back for women's freedoms in this time, and that women in the Renaissance constantly subverted and reinvented gender roles, as well as finding ways to get around any restrictions the state might have tried to impose on them. This, Brown argues, led to the development of a new type of social and familial community and awareness.

Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari take a step back to look at the problem from a broader context. They advise, in the introduction to their book *Refiguring Women*:

Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance that Joan Kelly's idea of "double vision", the practice of analyzing women's situation from both the inside and the outside of the patriarchal conventions that engendered the situation.⁶ They say that they hope, with the essays in their book, that this practice can help readers to call into question the blind credence associated with certain forms of authority.

In her essay *Funerals and the Politics of Gender in Early Renaissance Florence*, Sharon T. Strocchia argues Kelly's side by claiming that Renaissance Florence saw widening distinctions between the genders that came from funeral practices.⁷ Strocchia goes on to claim that gender representation in the fourteenth century was shaped primarily by a concern with one's social status, which in turn supported the strict gender binary that was a part of Renaissance society. Florentine women, though they had little power in developing the formal gender roles related to funerals, found ways of giving themselves choices in practice. Wealthy women were able to select their burial sites and give away their property, while less fortunate women would sometimes choose to be buried in religious habits. Strocchia goes on to make note of an important thing to consider while looking at the funerary records- that only adults were awarded lavish funerals.⁸ Which raises another point to consider while looking at women in the Renaissance, one of age. Girls were considered adults when they were married, typically around the ages of sixteen or eighteen, while the entrance of adulthood for boys was much more complex, relying on business and government achievements. That leads Strocchia into her next point, which focuses on politics. Between the years 1403-1433, the Florentine government passed a series of movements that licensed prostitution, control the cost of women's finery, fund dowries for poor girls, and police convents.⁹ This connection between men and authority contrasted sharply with elaborate women's funerals, due to women being widely considered separate from politics of history by Florentine humanists. This belief, Strocchia claims, led to another important difference between funerals- one of funeral orations and mourning practices. Florentine humanists did not write any public funeral orations, like humanists in other parts of Italy did, instead keeping their praises in private consolatory letters. They also emphasized the difference between mourning men and women, believing that men should mourn in silent, stoic ways, while women were responsible for mourning their loved ones with visible expressions.¹⁰ In her final comments, Strocchia reasserts her goal of showing how funerary practices impacted the redefinition of a community and its ideals in Florence during the early fifteenth century, but also that women were able to manipulate their own situations through religious, political, and economic alliances.

Elizabeth S. Cohen supports the same idea of women manipulating their situation for more power in her article *No Longer Virgins: Self-Presentation by Young Women in Late Renaissance Rome*. Although she focuses on a later time period and a different location, Cohen shows through testimonies of rape victims that lower-class women could manipulate their image in the eyes of the courts to benefit themselves. Cohen states her objective is to study the relationship between identity imposed on the girls from their family and community as opposed to their self-imposed identity. She plans to do this by examining the early modern Italian ideas surrounding sexuality and marriage, then examining the social fabric of Rome, its criminal courts, and finally examining the testimonies of the girls themselves.¹¹ With that established, Cohen begins to lay out her argument and background to the testimonies. A female's social identity, Cohen argues, was deeply ingrained in her

relationships to the men in her life- her father, brother, and later husband. Because of this, and the expectation of her keeping her virginity until she entered a legitimate marriage. If her virginity was taken before that, like in the testimonies Cohen presents, then to restore the girl's honor she must marry, or become a nun. For a girl who lost her virginity and sought to regain her honor by marrying, a dowry would become essential. The testimonies Cohen presents are primarily of lower-class girls, for whom dowries were even more essential in securing a husband. Cohen then switches her lense to take a look at how lower-class Roman citizens shaped the experiences of the girls on trial. Their lives lacked the community of a smaller village, as well as the relative security that came with economic good fortune. Cohen notes that, in the large city setting, "...parents had far fewer resources...to regulate through community pressure the behavior of both daughters and their lovers," as well as allowing any rapists to evade identification.¹² The court system in Rome also played a part in how the girls shared their stories, Cohen argues. The only parts of the lawsuits that were archived are the private interviews held with the victims and witnesses, and Cohen notes that it was likely that victims were coached in what to say- lower class families sought legal advice more than one might expect, she adds. While she was reading the testimonies of the girls, she noticed several common elements- bleeding and pain, witnesses who back up the girl's story, resistance, and gifts and promises.

With this established, Cohen moves onto the testimonies themselves. She begins by retelling the stories of two girls who she says will act as a "yardstick against which to measure other more self-assertive personalities."¹³ These two girls, Olimpia and Anna, both reported that their attackers forced themselves on them. Anna's attacker, the son of her employer, promised her gifts that, in the end, were never given- which demonstrates her case's neglect and victimization. Cohen's second example is a case much like Anna's, but Menica's former employer, Flaminia, brought a case against her current one. Menica testified that it was Flaminia who had been the cause of her rape, by leaving her alone in the house with a male friend. Menica proved not to be a passive victim of her life by cooperating with her sympathetic employer, which helped her create her own place in the world. That leads Cohen to her next group of testimonies- those of the "opportunists", as opposed to the "victims"¹⁴- of Cecilia, Caterina, Domenica, Ludovica, and Camilla. The five girls all consented- or, at least, did not resist- and when they brought their cases to court they actively sought either a dowry or marriage from the man they were accusing of taking their virginity. Caterina and Domenica, sisters, both testified that they consented to the men, and they were only angry with their father for not marrying them off and locking them away. Ludovica lived in the house of her lover, Fabrizio, and her testimony was, in addition to the usual resistance, blood, and pain, full of romantic love. Her goal was to secure a dowry that she felt she deserved from the man who had taken her honor, and she did so by painting herself as a generous girl in love.¹⁵ To conclude, Cohen reiterates how every girl who testified painted a picture of herself for the courts that she believed would get her what she was aiming for, whether that picture was of a victim or of an opportunist. Though the laws and ideologies were stacked against them, through their retelling of their stories, these girls and women could have freedom.

Freedom does not have to be measured in the way women subverted laws and political ideas, as Monica Chojnacka illustrates in her book *Working Women of Early Modern Venice*. Using tables and statistics from Venice during the late sixteenth century,

Chojnacka presents an argument that women's lives during that time in Venice were made up of a series of responsibilities and relationships that connected them to other households, parishes, and even cities.¹⁶ Her book is separated into six chapters, each helping expand the central argument. Her first chapter is "Residence, Sex, and Marriage" in which she shows and demonstrates the lack of one more prominent living situation for women, and instead they were more or less able to choose their living situations, from living with their husbands, if they were unmarried living with their married siblings or living at their workplace, or if they were widowed heading a household on their own. She argues that having a sibling living in a women's house could bring in more money, allowing her to gain that bit of power that comes from bringing in more money. Chojnacka's second chapter is on "Women of Means: Property and Possessions", which navigates the type of economic power a woman might have through their property and wealth independently of their husband, as well as the power afforded to her by being able to give away her personal possessions. Here, Chojnacka shows how women, especially widows, were active in the lease market.¹⁷ Many women owned property in their own name, managed that of their husbands, and many managed their daughter's property as well. Giving property to both daughters and sons, Chojnacka claims, strengthened sibling ties. Siblings would come together to protect familial property. Women owning property was a recorded fact as well- in 1582, one third of the tax declarations collected were filed by women,¹⁸ showing a significant number of property-owning women. Chapter three, entitled "Around the neighborhood" takes a step back from the home and looks at how a woman's neighborhood created a space for women to befriend each other, which was especially important for single women. Chojnacka uses records of the inquisition to show how Venetian women knew their neighbors and how diverse neighborhood groups were. The friendships fostered between women throughout different neighborhoods transcended marital status, occupation, or ethnicity. That leads into Chojnacka's chapter four, "Immigrant Women: Into the Neighborhood" which analyzes how immigrant women were able to find a place for themselves within Venice, sometimes creating their own pockets of community where they were able to pool their resources and help each other. Venice was a melting pot, meaning that everyone was exposed to different ethnicities and faiths. Women who immigrated to Venice without a husband or male family member were more likely to be in the lower class¹⁹, as well as being more likely to take positions as servants. Because of their low income, immigrant women were more likely to form connections to help each other in times of need. The fifth chapter, "Beyond the Contrad: Women and Mobility," takes the idea of chapter four and expands further on it, focusing on how women were moving in, around, and out of Venice across neighborhood and parish boundaries. In this chapter Chojnacka argues that, although the women remained grounded by their neighborhood and familial ties, they were not limited to the communities local to them. Women's daily travels, to visit family and friends or to take care of any business they may have had, often took them out of their parish.²⁰ In addition, if a women needed to relocate her home if circumstances asked for it, there was a large chance that she would have to move out of her parish. Venetian women changed addresses frequently, and as such they needed to make friends quickly. It was because of this, Chojnacka argues, which highlights the importance of a woman's neighbors.²¹ The last chapter, "City of Women: Institutions and Communities" examines how the themes of the past five chapters interact with intervening institutions such as the charitable house, which was meant to help women in times of economic trouble.

They offered lower class women a chance at marriage, and offered higher class women an escape from marriage that was fundamentally different than the convents of the time. These charitable houses were completely staffed by and filled with women, and they represented a city-wide sense of community.²² By starting small and first focusing on the household and then focusing on larger and larger connections and relationships, Chojnacka effectively shows how women made their own place in Italian Renaissance society.

While most feminist authors look at the freedoms of women that they managed to acquire despite of the patriarchy and official institutions that actively worked to oppress them. Thomas Kuehn, in his article "*Understanding Gender Inequality in Renaissance Florence: Personhood and Gifts of Maternal Inheritance by Women*," looks at the agency and personhood of women, especially in relation to men, during this time. He begins his argument by assessing how women's actions contributed to the patriarchal structure of Renaissance Italy.²³ Kuehn states that the nineteenth century idea of personhood, which focused on self-ownership, was useless in the context of the Italian Renaissance, which stressed the belonging to a household or kin network as the defining elements of a social identity.²⁴ With that established, he moves on to analyzing other historian's analyses of women in this time period and their opinions on their freedom. He starts with Ann Crabb's study on Alessandra Strozzi, a widow. Crabb praises Strozzi for being independent, with no male to influence her opinions. However, Kuehn counters with his own argument that Strozzi's letters show that, although they gave brief glimpses of personal friends or interests, Strozzi's main goals were to look after her sons, and that she was concerned about managing their persons and them taking wives. Kuehn adds in summary, "Indeed, it can be maintained that she did not see her person apart from her sons."²⁵ From that subheading, Kuehn moves on to looking at the sources themselves, and the problems he finds with them. He criticizes the sources that other historians chose, stating that they can not trust Florentine women to have a sense of self that is like what the historian believes a sense of self it- going back to one of his main points that the nineteenth century idea of personhood is useless in assessing the Italian Renaissance. Next, Kuehn moves onto a legal lens. Women, he says, did not *legally* have enough space to move and subvert gender laws, like previous authors have said. A woman's legal rights in Renaissance Florence did not extend far past her own self, and therefore she was not able to be a legal guardian for her children, or legally act as a witness of an important document.²⁶ That extended to property and a woman's dowry as well- a woman's dowry would go to her children equally, regardless of gender. In the event of a woman's death, it would be her husband who was the one to hand it down to the children. Kuehn cites several examples of daughters giving gifts from their dowries or from gifts they had already received, and he highlights how the pivotal relationship that is central to these transactions is the father-daughter one.²⁷ From there, Kuehn moves into women in the legal sphere, and the power they held when presenting cases or being represented. He cites the example of a woman named Lena, who gave a portion of her inheritance to her uncles and father, and whose case was brought forward by her family after her death. The court's final decision was that "All forms of obligation, for herself or on behalf of others, required consent of a *mundualdus*," which could be a father, brother, husband, or son.²⁸ Kuehn concludes his argument by explaining women who did give up their property, which previous authors had hailed as a way women showed their freedom, did share their interests with men and therefore cannot be viewed with a nineteenth century lense of individualism.²⁹ He goes on

to say that in Renaissance Florence, property played a huge role in a person's identity, and Florentine society made distinctions between different kinds of property, but the women involved in property cases were not exercising their individuality.

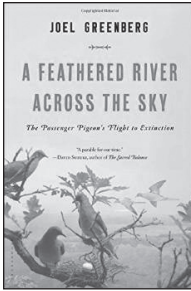
Bringing attention to how we in the modern day perceive the freedoms and lives of those who have been silenced and oppressed in the past can teach us about our own beliefs and ideological frameworks. Since the beginning of second- and third-wave feminism in the 1970s and the 1990s, and the beginning of feminist scholarship, historians have had a new lense by which to look at history and the role women have played in it. Examining the debate- and how our inherent beliefs and biases can affect our understanding of history and the changes to society and culture have taken place- challenges how we interpret the past and how we apply it to the future, both within the fields of history and feminism.

With Joan Kelly's *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* in the 1970s, more and more discussions on the freedom of women have been sparked from historians who both agree and disagree with her argument that no, women did not have a Renaissance. This is a huge step from the past interpretations, which tend to view the humanist Renaissance as relatively equal, and do not distinguish the differences in education, legal status and protections, and ideologies that the two genders would have faced. For those who believe that women in this period and place did have freedoms, they cited circumstances in which they would have subverted gender roles and moved around in the free space they were allowed under those rules and laws, and how they were able to construct their own personal identities and images as well as their social identity. The historians who say that women were not as free, as the other party claim, back up their own arguments with legal accounts that have the men shown as the woman's representative, in Kuehn's case, or show through the literature and political power. With the continued spread of feminism and women's studies through the world and higher education, then the analysis of women's history can continue.

Notes

- 1 Brown, Judith C. "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" In *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, 175-191. London: Longman, 1998. 176.
- 2 Brown, 176
- 3 Brown, 188.
- 4 Brown, 195.
- 5 Judith C. Brown, "Gender," in *Palgrave Advances in Renaissance Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Woolfson (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 185.
- 6 Migiel, Marilyn. *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- 7 Sharon T. Strocchia, "Funerals and the Politics of Gender in Early Renaissance Florence." In *Refiguring Women: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 155
- 8 Strocchia, 159
- 9 Strocchia, 161.
- 10 Strocchia, 166.

- 11 Elizabeth S. Cohen, "No Longer Virgins: Self-Presentation by Young Women in Late Renaissance Rome," in *Refiguring Women: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 171.
- 12 Cohen, 174.
- 13 Cohen, 177.
- 14 Cohen, 181.
- 15 Cohen, 187.
- 16 Monica Chojnacka, *Working Women of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xxii
- 17 Chojnacka, 28.
- 18 Chojnacka, 29.
- 19 Chojnacka, 85.
- 20 Chojnacka, 105.
- 21 Chojnacka, 113.
- 22 Chojnacka, xxii.
- 23 Thomas Kuehn, "Understanding Gender Inequality in Renaissance Florence: Personhood and Gifts of Maternal Inheritance by Women," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 2 (1996): 58.
- 24 Kuehn, 60.
- 25 Kuehn, 61.
- 26 Kuehn, 64.
- 27 Kuehn, 66.
- 28 Kuehn, 71.
- 29 Kuehn, 73.



Book Review >>> Taylor Bailey

A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction

Greenberg, Joel. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2014. 290 pp.

Published on the one-hundred-year anniversary of the death of Martha—the last passenger pigeon who died at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914—*A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction* by naturalist Joel Greenberg is a poignant memorial. Greenberg's detailed historical analysis provides readers with a comprehensive account of the events leading up to the disappearance of the magnificent bird, whose flocks numbered in the range of three to five billion birds pre-European colonization. *A Feathered River Across the Sky* tells a cautionary tale, providing us with critical historical knowledge to inform the current extinction crisis.

The passenger pigeon—although it resembled a common mourning dove—is unlike any North American bird alive today in both appearance and behavior. Passenger pigeons ranged from fifteen to eighteen inches in length, approximately “one and a half times the size of the [mourning] dove” (2). Males possessed “slaty-blue and gray upper parts and a throat and breast of rich copper glazed with purple,” whereas in the drabber females beige replaced copper, most likely as a means of camouflage (2). Perhaps most distinct, however, were the massive flocks passenger pigeons congregated in to migrate. Following known food source locations, massive flocks of millions of birds would traverse eastern North America, stopping only to feed or roost. The naturalist and painter John James Audubon famously recorded a passenger pigeon flight along the Ohio River that was said to have “eclipsed the sun for three days” (1).

In the spring, passenger pigeons nested as a flock for a period of four to five weeks. The density of birds at nesting sites was so great that “their sheer volume imposed severe damage on the trees that supported them.” (13). One account from Indiana recalls the “nightly crash of breaking limbs from a pigeon roost in a nearby maple grove” (13). Some nesting sites were so large that the noise of the birds could be heard six miles away, while the stench of pigeon dung—which “permeated the atmosphere with the scents reminiscent of a poultry farm”—drifted for over a mile (13). Not only did these great nestings impact the ecosystems of eastern North America, they represented a striking phenomena within the North American ecological consciousness.

Passenger pigeon nesting behavior, which clearly evolved as defense mechanism, also made the birds incredibly easy to catch. The historical accounts, which Greenberg deftly weaves together, tell a tragic tale. Passenger pigeons were caught and slaughtered for food in a variety of ways, often in a systematic and inhumane fashion. The memoir of George D. Smith—a resident of Auglaize County, Ohio—recalls one particular night in which the Smith family came upon a pigeon roost in a marsh near their home. Upon finding a strand of

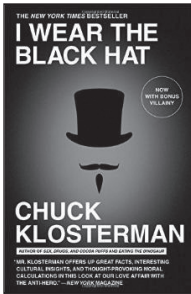
willow trees filled with pigeons, the Smiths surrounded a tree, blinded the birds with their lanterns, and clubbed a number of birds to death; in just a few minutes, the Smiths netted 114 birds (126).

As killing methods improved, pigeon meat became a profitable commodity. When this seemingly inexhaustible food source began to be sold on the market, Greenberg posits that this “new situation intensified the plundering of pigeons and ensured their extinction” (79). No longer a provisional food source for many white Americans, passenger pigeon meat was sold on national markets with the aid of railroad transportation as an economical alternative to farm raised meat. Contrary to contemporary belief, however, the passenger pigeon was not a limitless resource, and by the mid-nineteenth century populations began to dwindle.

As naturally protective woodland habitat was cleared for farming and development, passenger pigeons found it more difficult to nest. The last great nestings of the 1870s did not indicate some miraculous rebound in passenger pigeon populations; rather, the uptick was representative of smaller surviving populations of pigeons concentrating around remaining food sources (130). Passenger pigeon populations had long been constrained by natural forces (adverse weather, predatory species, food availability), but nothing could have prepared the birds for the systematic slaughter brought upon by American settlers. By the 1890s, it is estimated that only a few thousand passenger pigeons existed in the wild.

One of the greatest obstacles to passenger pigeon research (or to the research of any extinct species, for that matter) is the lack of tangible evidence. For all the passenger pigeons slaughtered in North America, few photographs exist depicting the birds in their natural environment, and the majority of photographs that do exist depict already-dead birds. Despite such challenges, Joel Greenberg skillfully spins historical accounts and known evidence into a haunting narrative with a message needed now more than ever. Greenberg’s historical documentation is extensive, which may be a bit onerous for the casual reader. However, casual readers and invested scholars alike will appreciate Greenberg’s attention to detail and thorough analysis.

Presently, human-caused environmental exploitation is rapidly amounting to what many scientists have labeled a ‘sixth mass extinction,’ capable of decimating significant numbers of amphibian, reptile, mammal, fish, and bird species. We are no longer faced with the extinction of singular species like the case of the passenger pigeon; entire ecosystems are at the risk when so many key species are eliminated. Joel Greenberg’s *A Feathered River Across the Sky* makes clear the tragedy of extinction events: the extraordinary ecological phenomena that was the North American passenger pigeon has been forever erased from human consciousness. Never again will a simple glance upward in eastern North America reveal a magnificent, thundering, ‘feathered river.’ The death of Martha—the last passenger pigeon—in 1914 was final, marking the certain extinction of a species that once compromised 25 to 40 percent of North American bird life before Europeans arrived on the continent (1). The passenger pigeon story is a testament to Greenberg’s assertion that it is within our means to ensure that such an atrocity is never repeated again.



Book Review >>> Bethany Blinsky

I Wear the Black Hat

Klosterman, Chuck New York: Scribner, 2014. 242 pp.

Society has a deep fascination with the dark mind of the villain. In *I Wear the Black Hat*, Chuck Klosterman explores this attraction. He ponders how we determine one to be an antihero, analyzing the calculation that occurs in our minds. Ultimately his thesis is such that a villain is “is the person who knows the most but cares the least (14).” Klosterman applies the thesis to as many people, real or fake, that he can. From Joe Paterno, to Batman, to Kanye West, and even the rock band The Eagles, Klosterman is on a mission to discuss the villainy in everything. *I Wear the Black Hat* reads like a series of essays that are entwined through the one thread of the thesis.

If the villain is the person who knows the most but cares the least, then it appears that this could be applied to any person, and thus one could simply deduct if they are evil or not. But if you are Klosterman, that is not exactly the case. Not because his thesis gets more in depth, but because its application is confusing. One chapter consists of Klosterman discussing why he likes Kanye West but he wants him to fail - and why he dislikes LeBron James but wants him to succeed. One might be slightly perplexed by what this has to do with villainy. That confusion is justified. Klosterman’s intention in these random subject analyses is anything but clear. Therefore the ultimate conclusion of the entire book is equally as hazy. Some chapters were far easier to understand, while some felt as if he was reaching too far with an argument that wasn’t quite strong enough.

One chapter discussed Seinfeld. Klosterman decided to elaborate on the common view that Seinfeld is essentially a show in which nothing actually occurs. However, he twisted it a little. He argues that Seinfeld’s humor is dark and this is why it is funny. Yet, that does not really seem surprising. If anything most people would probably agree that a lot of comedy has a dark mocking tone, and this may actually be why it is so amusing. He attempts to illustrate his point by bringing up a specific joke Seinfeld made - the humor being that Seinfeld could not date a woman because she was excessively nice and it bothered him. Klosterman analyzed this, “Because he’s so candid about this distaste, it feels like a traditional joke. But it’s not a traditional joke. It’s an omnipresent worldview that informs everything else, and it’s what made audiences feel like they were watching the most sinister (and the most authentic) versions of themselves (171).” Klosterman ultimately concludes that Seinfeld normalized psychopathy, writing “They sat in a coffee shop and casually discussed how civilization was awful and existence is meaningless, and twenty two million people watched it every week. It opened a window while pulling down the shades, and we can’t go back (173).” Klosterman concludes that Seinfeld’s humor serves as a deeper look into the disturbed parts of our own minds.

So we understand that Seinfeld probably had some sincerely inappropriate and dark humor. But does that mean Seinfeld is a villain? Are we, in turn, the villains for laughing at it? Klosterman does not say. Further, how his thesis fits into his analyses is confusing. It is consistently hard to determine whether Klosterman is trying to state that someone is a villain or not. But despite the fact that he is not always clear on how his thesis applies to his cases, *I Wear the Black Hat* is enjoyable to read. Klosterman maintains a witty and casual tone throughout the book. His ability to write his cases in this manner makes up for his lack of clarity in some ways, as it almost feels like one is having a semi philosophical conversation with an intelligent friend. Klosterman has an uncanny way of making his analyses of The Eagles, Kanye West, and OJ Simpson remarkably interesting. But ultimately Klosterman does not thoroughly explain how all these individual cases support his thesis.

I Wear the Black Hat is both baffling and amusing. If the reader is attempting to critically assess Klosterman's ability to construct a sound argument and explain it, the book will be perplexing. But if one is reading for mere pleasure the book will seem more like a string of comical and engaging tales. *I Wear the Black Hat* is an analysis of the dark side of pop stars, music icons, and political figures of both the past and present. The thesis gets lost in the many ideas and cases Klosterman presents – but the ultimate theme of villainy is present in every chapter. In essence, *I Wear the Black Hat* does not exactly provide the explanation to the big questions Klosterman asks - but it is an interesting, entertaining, tangent on the dark side of our minds.



Book Review >>> Byron Brenneman

California

Lupucki, Edan. New York: Little, Brown and Company. 400 pp.

With our world plagued with economic uncertainty, wealth inequality, political turmoil and unrest, it isn't surprising that dystopian fiction seems to be the popular choice amongst readers, especially young-adults. It does appear that we are a generation that loves to read about the peril and doom of the not-so-distant future. This is especially apparent after seeing the great success of Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, novels that paint a picture of a very bleak future. Edan Lupucki's debut novel, *California*, is yet another work of fiction that has latched onto this great wave of pessimism.

Where *The Hunger Games* focuses bluntly on the malevolent conventions of wealth-inequality and social-caste systems, others take a less political route, instead focusing on the effects of a post-apocalyptic world on interpersonal relationships, like that of *The Road*. *California* is a novel that attempts to take the middle ground, making a statement about wealth and inequality in our society, as well as focusing on the complexity of relationships, human emotions, and how secrets and anxieties can easily unravel seemingly steadfast personal bonds.

The story paints a very morbid picture of a United States in certain and steady decline after a series of economic and environmental catastrophes mixed with social unrest finally broke 'our perfect union.' In the meantime, the wealthiest of citizens escape the ruins of the cities to live in places called Communities, walled little bubbles of upper-class suburban utopia that somehow manage to escape the destruction. With the wealthy, skilled and mobile having fled the cities for Communities, communes or forest homesteads, an *urban* climate of poverty, helplessness and despair is thus created.

The story opens with the main characters, a young couple named Frida and Calvin, who have left the ruins of Los Angeles—a city which is now rife with "people starving on the sidewalks, covered in piss and crying out" (12). Seeing this as a bleak way to live, they decide to try a survivalist lifestyle, settling in a shed in a remote part of the Southern Californian wilderness. But they soon find that they are not alone, meeting the Millers, a family of four living not far from the couple. The elation of having someone to share in their desperation is sadly cut short when the Millers—without warning—are found dead in an apparent suicide by poison. Once again finding themselves completely isolated, Frida and Calvin are able to live for a year in near bliss, aside from the daily marital spats and bouts of loneliness that border on the edge of cabin fever.

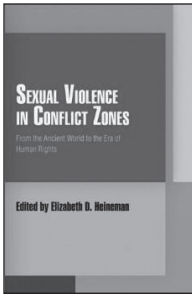
Their mundane woodland life is uprooted when Frida discovers that she is pregnant. The discovery of the pregnancy, mixed with the menacing feeling of constant isolation since

the deaths of the Millers, drives the couple to seek the civilization that lives on 'The Land,' a secretive communal society built on the grounds of an abandoned Wild West themed heritage town surrounded by a maze of ominous and crudely-built spikes. Discovering The Land brings only momentary peace, as Frida and Calvin grow increasingly conscious of the secrets that the people of the Land are hiding. They are particularly concerned about why there are no children, wondering what happened to the children that once populated the community.

Unlike the hostile and bloodthirsty youth of *The Hunger Games*, or even the cannibalistic crazies of *The Road*, the wilderness of *California* is not necessarily an exciting or dangerous place. A majority of the conflict revolves around the arguments and general marital problems of Frida and Calvin, both of whom have a habit of keeping secrets from each other. Throughout the book it is hard not to question the true ages of the two twenty-somethings, as they act much more like children than they do adults hardened by the wild. Though both are trying to escape the clutches of former civilization, Frida still holds on to random objects as a security blanket, what Calvin calls 'artifacts.' In what must have been one of the most frivolous arguments in the book, the two fight over Frida's hiding of a particular artifact (a common turkey baster), of which she is obsessed. When confronted about her lying, she tells Calvin that it was "Fun to have a secret" (132). Frida isn't the only liar in the family, because Calvin learns of the possibility of civilization beyond the spikes (The Land) from the Millers and doesn't tell Frida. Calvin keeps this information from Frida for 'security purposes,' but this could be construed as a fear and unwillingness to live within the boundaries of a society again. When they do eventually join the people of The Land, Calvin grows increasingly suspicious of their new hosts, while Frida—overcome with the joys of human interaction—blinds herself to the obvious mysteries and schemes afoot by the group at large.

The great question the couple must face is what is more important, freedom or security? This is a question that we have debated on within our post-9/11 society, particularly after the revelations of the Edward Snowden controversy and the depths of government infiltration into our private lives. The opinions vary widely, but much depends on how much freedom we are willing to surrender for the security of the nation, as is paralleled with The Land within the book. This theme of freedom, however, felt more jammed than finessed into the story. The buildup of the great wrongs of classist capitalism seemed to be paved over with this whole new concept. Finishing *California*, the reader is left with far more questions than answers, as neither theme was properly concluded. The issues within Lupeki's work are timely given the problems we now face within our world. However, the opportunity was lost in an ending that was not fully concluded. *California* is a book of good concepts, but it failed to bring home the urgency of its messages due to its execution.

It seems that many writers are currently scheming about what they believe the downfall of America (or the world) might look like. Perhaps it will be fraught with political injustice and revolution like *The Hunger Games*, or maybe it will be some unnamed catastrophe leaving society in shattered pieces like *The Road*. Perhaps human society will not go out with a bang, but with a whimper, as *California* attempts to portray. Whatever way the world shall end matters not to us now, but I do feel that books like *California* do try to raise serious questions about the ills and potential threats our society faces. No matter its faults, *California* is yet another warning bell in the potential of our culture to sew the fruits of its own annihilation.



Book Review >>> Carrie Coisman

Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights

Heineman, Elizabeth D., Ed. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2011. 352 pp.

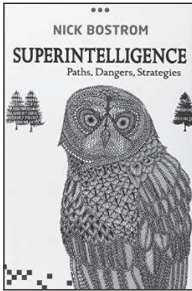
Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights is a group of academically produced and historically minded and crafted essays edited by historian Elizabeth D. Heineman. The collection focuses largely on conflicts before 1990 and across a variety of geographies in an attempt to demonstrate the lack of theorizing and historiography of sexual violence in conflict zones before the Yugoslavian Civil War and the Rwandan Genocide. These essays work to push back on dominating generalizations of sexual violence. Common generalizations include a neo-colonial working definition of primordial sexual violence and an epidemic lack of post-colonial responsibility in the case of the Rwandan genocide, and a neoliberal constructed fear of communism and islamophobia in the case of Yugoslavian Civil War. Further, the collection is concerned with theorizing about the role of sexual violence during periods of acute and extended conflict, extending the definition of sexual violence to include public and state sanctioned sexual violence, and understanding the relationship between peace, conflict, state sanctioned violence, and sexual violence. *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones* provides a new and concise historical basis for current research to understand itself in light of this fresh evidence.

The essays aim to expand and diversify the pre-existing literature on which scholars base theoretical and historical work regarding themes surrounding state and sexual violence and conflict zone cultures and cultural shifts between peace and conflict. The authors, most notably E. Susan Barber and Charles R. Ritter, explore how sexual violence can be understood through paradigms of human rights universalism and historical particularism, but they also push back on those paradigms. The collection at large attempts to understand how technological and surveillance information, media, and transnational humanitarian law have changed the way the core of the Global North digest violence in conflict zones when the violence is othered, when the violence is historically relevant to dominant culture, and when and how violence is portrayed in the modern media.

"Unlawfully and Against Her Consent: Sexual Violence and the Military During the American Civil War" is an essay by E. Susan Barber and Charles F. Ritter, two esteemed American Civil War historians. Their essay begins to postulate why the American Civil War has been "considered an anomaly to [the] pattern of sexual violence in conflict zones" (202). Barber and Ritter examine a group of court martial records that demonstrate that nearly four-hundred soldiers were prosecuted and convicted through an U.S. army court martial that was designed to address crimes of all varieties by both Confederate and Union soldiers. The records give adequate evidence to make a strong historical claim that sexual violence was prevalent and systematic throughout the American Civil War. This case is particularly

interesting, because, as Ritter and Barber note, these “court-martial trials during the American Civil War represent a time in which, however, brief, a military court system attempted to provide female victims with sexual justice” (214). This particular essay provides many opportunities for further academic inquiry, such as the application of a feminist intersectional framework. Theorizing about the demographics of the survivors of the assault through the lens of intersectionality can give scholars a greater understanding of how sexual assault incidents impacted the outcome of trials and the severity of punishment for the accused party.

Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones provides a new framework for understanding systematic and state sanctioned sexual violence by examining the histories of conflict in new geographical and theoretical ways. This collection is useful for feminist scholarship in a variety of disciplines--particularly history--because it aims to discuss sexual violence in conflicts that have been relatively unexamined and that are often used as a means of historical othering and for the purpose nationalistic forgiveness.



Book Review >>> Kevin Gebura

Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies

Bostrom, Nick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 352 pp.

Once human intellectual capacity is surpassed by human inventions, superintelligence exists (52). Forewarning, Nick Bostrom's *Superintelligence* is not an effective introduction to any of the disciplines that inform the discussion of superintelligence. Bostrom's background in physics and computational neuroscience is evident throughout the book. Readers without such backgrounds may have a difficult time following along. However, after reading about Bostrom's account of superintelligence, the topic is undeniably important and relevant to current and future generations.

The philosophical discourse in this book reflects this imperative sense of understanding and preparing for superintelligence. Readers may struggle to appreciate the work done in this book if they are without prior experience within the philosophical, mathematical or scientific communities. Given this lack of accessibility, the book may have less of an impact than it perhaps deserves. *Superintelligence* is predicated on science and rationality, creating a philosophically sophisticated account of how humans may be plotting their own demise.

In the preface, Bostrom says that the book is written to please an earlier version of himself, but that its contents can be understood with enough rigor in thought and resistance to misunderstand him via cultural preconceptions of superintelligence (viii). Because Bostrom has so many terminologies at play, it may be a struggle during the first read-through for a reader to thoroughly understand what Bostrom is trying to say. There are sections throughout the book where Bostrom elaborates further with tables, diagrams and equations. Many of these sections require an understanding of advanced mathematics and will probably not provide clarity to an untrained mind.

Bostrom maps the different paths that may lead to superintelligence, and holds the reader's hand to see where each one leads. It is likely that readers will be overwhelmed when trying to understand all the paths to superintelligence that Bostrom provides. However, overlooking these details may result in a failure to see how comprehensive his account is. No predictions are made about which path is better because each will require unique precautions, risks and outcomes. Bostrom does not explicitly offer his own preference about how to handle superintelligence. Much of his argumentation is about what will happen depending on the form of superintelligence that gets established.

The book has innumerable endnotes and readers will spend a great deal of time either reading on without full clarity or flipping back and forth dozens of times per chapter. If readers have trouble following his discussions (such as those that involve esoteric concepts) the endnotes offer further explanations and additional resources. This is yet another reason why *Superintelligence* is not an easy read. To make the author's complex account simpler, here are

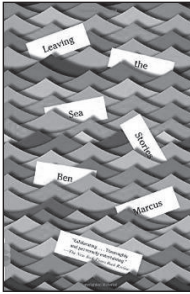
some the most essential points of argument.

Superintelligence is guided by the idea that humans are still in charge of artificial intelligence (AI) and have a chance to prevent any foreseeable usurp of human power by AI power. Superintelligent agents have specific functions, or superpowers, depending on the forms taken, and exceed humans at some cognitive task (93). Bostrom classifies the cognitive tasks that humans are capable of, all of which constitute the total general intelligence of humans. Once superintelligent agents surpass humans at each task, this creates the scenario where humans are inferior. AI domination could entail human servitude to superintelligent agents. In another case, humans impede the AI's productivity so much that superintelligent agents plan the obsolescence of the human species.

Humans program AI for some purpose, which AI values as its sole responsibility. But humans cannot completely control the actions of their creations. A superintelligent agent will outsmart any human attempts to prevent the achievement of its values (97). But there is not a total loss of control, as Bostrom puts it, "unless the AI's motivation system is a special kind, or there are additional elements in its final goal that penalize strategies that have excessively wide-ranging impacts on the world, there is no reason for the AI to cease activity upon achieving its goal" (123). With such strict agency, superintelligent agents may cause undesirable economic, cultural and environmental circumstances. Therefore, AI obedience to human values is contingent on how well the purposes of AI adhere to these values.

Support for Bostrom's account is limited because research conducted on the topic of superintelligence is limited. His philosophical work serves to motivate further investigating in the related fields of study. The greatest task facing computer programmers may be the translation of human values into programming language. For example, a purpose that prevents AI from harming humans may be one that ensures the highest amount of human happiness. Such a goal requires the codification of the human value, happiness, into programming language; but there is no agreement on the proper conception of happiness to begin with (186). Missing from Bostrom's discussion is the idea that perhaps superintelligence is the key to unlocking the truth behind such debatable concepts like happiness, love, or God. Bostrom's book may inspire readers to elaborate on philosophically interesting matters like this one.

This is not a book to be careless about. If readers want satisfaction, they may have to read *Superintelligence* multiple times and take personal notes. The subject matter does not allow for leisurely reading. Bostrom has put together a very coherent text about a topic that is surrounded by speculations while making some novel contributions to the discussion. The order of his chapters are sensible and build an overall comprehensive account of a future world. However, the fact remains that *Superintelligence* is largely based on Bostrom's own terminologies. Perhaps reading his previous works should be a prerequisite to understanding the full value of *Superintelligence*.



Book Review >>> Gretchen Heisler

Leaving the Sea

Marcus, Ben New York: Vintage Books, 2014. 249 pp.

Fiction writer Ben Marcus's newest collection of short stories, *Leaving the Sea*, is a compendium that cannot be described easily. While all of the stories revolve around the trauma of adulthood and the varied responsibilities and situations that can arise from it, each of the six sections of stories are likely to evoke different reactions from readers (though, not all of them good reactions). Marcus' stories run the gamut of style and form, and although I would be surprised if any one reader enjoyed all of Marcus's stories, every reader can find at least one in the collection to which they can relate.

Marcus begins the collection with stories written in rather traditional forms, all of which recount some stage of a deteriorating relationship. It is fairly obvious that such stories are not going to be something read to brighten one's day, but Marcus takes readers far past sympathetic or even tolerable levels of fictional misery. Even those who normally revel in the experience of *schadenfreude* will be internally screaming over the sheer pervasiveness of the characters' unhappiness. Reading these first four accounts of relationships, Marcus seems to be giving readers the impression that adulthood is the end of anything remotely approaching happiness or contentment, and all young people should prepare themselves now for the general despondency and dread that will overtake them the moment they pass through whatever invisible barrier demarcates the beginning of true maturity. On top of all of this, each of the first four stories carries heavy undertones of bitterness and resentment. This is not particularly surprising, given the subject matter, but once again becomes nearly overwhelming. By the time one has reached the fourth story, the tales of adult men dissatisfied with their lives and relationships has become beyond tiring, and there is little in the way of pity or compassion left for the characters. At the end of the first section, an impression is made of having just spent an untold number of minutes having something that is not very complex explained in four different ways, when it was understood perfectly well the first time around.

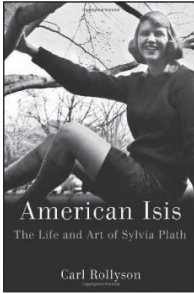
Luckily, Marcus's remaining six sections of stories change quite a bit from the traditional, and frankly exhausting, stories of section one. It is when Marcus begins these more experimental pieces that one can see why he has received such praise for his past work. While still focusing on the horrors of adulthood, stories such as "My Views on the Darkness" and the title story "Leaving the Sea" approach the topic in lighthearted or achingly sad ways, respectively, without making the focus feel redundant or overemphasized.

"My Views on the Darkness" is particularly interesting for its form. It is written in an interview style, with the unnamed main character explaining why he or she has chosen to live in a cave instead of deal with the pressures of adult life.

The interviewee portrays this choice as one based solely on survival, something necessary in order to continue living. The exaggerated reaction to the pressures of modern life, and the genuine paranoia, fear, and denial obvious in the character's words, make for an entertaining tale told in a unique way. The serious and elevated language that the interviewee uses to answer the questions only accents the humor of the piece. At one point, the interviewee even attempts to argue that the cave is not, in fact, a cave but a normal dwelling place that just happens to be subterranean. It is with this story that Marcus's talent as a writer truly begins to shine through.

As a contrast to "Views," "Leaving the Sea" is utterly heart-wrenching and evokes the empathetic response that one likely did not experience in his first stories. The first sentence of "Leaving" spans five and half pages (with the remaining six sentences of the story taking up only a few lines). Putting aside the initial amazement that a sentence that long could exist, readers are given a devastating depiction of regret, and something closely approaching madness. The sentence reveals the saga of the main character's life and his failing marriage, while offhandedly exposing his insecurities. The voice used in the piece makes readers feel unsure whether the things they are being told really happened or are just figments of the main character's delusions. The length of the first sentence is not just objectively impressive, but conveys a scattered, irrational mindset, as though the main character is not fully aware of all of the things that he is telling you. "Leaving the Sea" effectively portrays the kind of helplessness and loss a person might go through when confronted with the unraveling of their marriage, their family, and the life they had made for themselves. It is truly and outstanding piece, and it is no wonder that Marcus decided to name the collection after it.

On the whole, I believe *Leaving the Sea* has a great amount to offer. While the four stories that begin the collection are perhaps overly cynical and bitter, they are in no way poorly written, and there is little that can be said against the remaining pieces that make up the book. Marcus's experimentation with form is exceptional and makes the stories he creates memorable. I still maintain that the vast difference in style and tone between Marcus' traditional and experimental prose would make it challenging for one reader to enjoy all of his pieces, but the wide range of stories included in *Leaving the Sea* gives the opportunity for readers with varied tastes to find something they like.



Book Review >>> Katy Major

American Isis: The Life and Art of Sylvia Plath

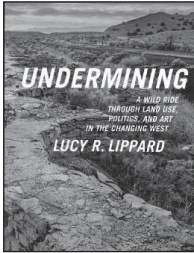
Rollyson, Carl. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013. 319 pp.

The winter of 2013 spawned several additions to an already-sizable dearth of biographical work on Sylvia Plath. February 2013 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Plath's suicide, an event which, in the years which have elapsed, has taken on the sheen of legend. Despite the substantial efforts of the Plath estate—headed by Olwyn Hughes, a formidable legal opponent and protective sister of the late Ted Hughes—biographers have speculated about virtually every aspect of Plath's existence, from her formative years on the Massachusetts coast to her notorious stint as guest editor for *Mademoiselle* in New York—recorded semi-fictionally in *The Bell Jar*—to her latter years in the chilly depths of England with Ted Hughes and their children. Each biographer is limited to the same territory of thirty years, and with the biographer's shrewd need to sell, each has taken a variable approach. In *American Isis*, Carl Rollyson has chosen an approach which explores not Plath-the-woman, but Plath-as-legend. Using Greek mythology—and, often, pop culture references from Plath's time—Rollyson poses Plath as the enigma that the fan sees her as: a figure who is larger than life, immortalized not only by her work, but by the continuing fascination of those who knew her, and those fans and feminists who believe they do. In doing so, he sometimes makes astute observations about the firsthand accounts that Plath left behind—in the form of her journals or letters—but when he waxes on about Plath as legend, the author often seems to lose sight of the woman herself, robbing *American Isis* of the credibility of a biography grounded in fact.

Given that such a wide array of biographical work on Plath already exists, newer biographers tend to emphasize their unique slant on the Sylvia Plath story. As Janet Malcolm chronicled the "Biographer's War" against the Plath Estate—and between biographers—in *Silent Woman*, rather than retracing the winding narrative of Plath's life once again, Carl Rollyson covers more metaphorical territory than literal. Rollyson offers little context to the reader, which he claims in the Author's Note is a superior way of presenting Plath, writing, "Previous biographers do [scene setting] and more, and what strikes me about their work is how distracting all that background is" (xiii). While this is a refreshing strategy for presenting Plath's life for the experienced Plath scholar or fervent fan, this lack of structural context often makes the narrative difficult to follow, which would make this text frustrating for someone new to the story of Plath's life. Furthermore, Rollyson has a tendency to skim over broad descriptions, preferring to zero in on the minutiae of Plath's day-to-day existence—this, a fascinating turn, particularly for someone who has previously read one or more of the older Plath biographies, although, again, a choice which may prove confusing for someone unfamiliar with Plath.

Rollyson begins the introduction to *American Isis* by declaring, “ Sylvia Plath is the Marilyn Monroe of modern literature” (1). Carl Rollyson appears to have an abiding interest in the women who loom in America’s collective consciousness as enigmatic and legendary; previous subjects of his biographies include Susan Sontag and, naturally, Marilyn Monroe, among other prominent figures of cultural significance. Rollyson’s comparison of Plath to Monroe is far from unfounded—after all, Plath famously recorded a dream about Monroe and Arthur Miller in her journal—however, it is jarring as the opening line of a biography about Plath, setting it up as a work that deals largely in comparison. Oddly enough, this is in fact the case for *American Isis*. The book’s title and summary offer no hint that the similarities between Plath and Monroe will be central to the text, yet Rollyson consistently inserts commentary on Monroe into ruminations on Plath. Although in many ways, Plath and Monroe are similar—particularly in their roles in the arts and their glamorous post-mortem reputations—Rollyson often seems to be grasping to support his point. For example, like many young, midcentury women, Plath saw marriage as an escape for herself, from her mother’s protective gaze as well as from her Puritan-like adolescence in New England. Rather than recognizing how common seeing a male figure as a signal for escape was for young women of the time, Rollyson states that this is proof of how Monroe functions as a double for Plath: “Sounding very much like Marilyn Monroe, who would soon wed Arthur Miller, Plath called herself a princess awaiting her white night, employing the same imagery Monroe used in sessions with her psychiatrist” (108). This seems a stretch, given both the widespread sentiments of young women in the fifties and the common nature of the imagery of a princess and her knight.

Carl Rollyson’s voice is often irksome in that he has a tendency to pontificate without any factual basis, seeming to toe the line between ‘cultural legend’ and sheer fiction. Lines such as: “ Sylvia said that working on a poem gave her greater pleasure than any other activity. She lived for it and—she eventually realized—she was willing to die for it,” ring more of the sensational than of a truth uncovered. Often, it is clear that Rollyson enjoys excising the dramatic highs and lows of Plath’s life, merely to enjoy the shock value that they elicit, which weakens his analysis. When he uses other mythologies—Greek and Roman figures, in particular—some of the comparisons are insightful. However, the distracting forays into Plath’s role as celebrity—along with the accompanying cryptic comparisons to Marilyn Monroe—and the bald sensational proclamations, offer no new information, let alone insight. Carl Rollyson’s *American Isis: The Life and Art of Sylvia Plath* will appeal to Plath’s admirers by virtue of its appearance on the market amid the older biographies, which have doubtless already been perused. However, for the reader looking for a groundbreaking new perspective, Carl Rollyson’s is hardly outside the ordinary, so it is best to keep searching.



Book Review >>> Carly Marburger

Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West

Lippard, Lucy R. New York: The New Press, 2013. 208 pp.

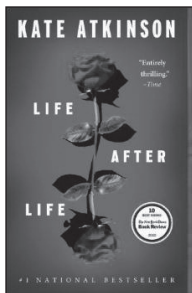
Though roughly averaging only 160 words on each of its 208 pages, *Undermining* is anything but brief. Each page is equipped with two to four photographs, whether they are photographs of landscape or objects or works of art. Between the text, pictures, and illuminating footnotes, each two page spread provides more than enough to take in. Lippard's free flowing sentences, stories and statistics reiterate that you cannot place her content into categories. Everything is connected. She travels through anecdotes about Native American relations, discussions on land art and photography, mining and fracking practices, water shortages in the West and everything in between. Using gravel pits as her symbol for the relationship between the manmade and the natural world, Lucy Lippard's thoughts stem from home and reach out to everyone. The West is her focus, yet she realizes that honing in on her beloved New Mexico provides the specificity her explorations need. The content of her pages depends on and is inspired by where she spends her daily life. She quotes Eudora Welty, who once wrote, "One place understood helps us understand all places better" (134).

Lucy Lippard positions her book around gravel. Gravel pits pop up wherever gravel is created, and in the West, this happens a lot. Someone who looks at the West from the outside and visits to enjoy the nature may relate to the definition of landscape that she asks readers to dispel right from the start. Generally, readers may think of landscape as a beautiful snapshot of nature, but this view is very selective. The landscape of a place is not the panorama that you carefully position the grandest mountain or the greenest trees within, it is the relationship between the land and the manmade. It is easy to separate the rocky mountainside peppered with elk from the landfills in a photo, but that is not representative of true landscape. Lippard ensures that her readers understand that landscape is the collaboration between people and nature and all of the gravel that comes with it, not the picture-perfect depiction of what lies on the horizon. If the majority of the images associated with the West are beautiful and alive, why be concerned?

As expected, most people who do not live in the West are not aware of its politics, resources or needs. Lucy Lippard made this clear to me, as my eyes were opened not only to things happening on the other end of the country but also to the notion that we should make a point to know these things. Unfortunately, so many things are hidden that you may not even know what is happening in your own backyard. The mining, or 'undermining,' as she calls it, that digs up the gravel we see on the surface of the Earth creates invisible graves under our feet. Many do not see the physical impact because they only see what is in front of them. It is like thousands of booby traps that have not fallen through yet; leaves and dirt cover the unstable platform, waiting for the right foot to send everything down. Lippard talks

about the Split Estate Rule that so many homeowners in the West are unaware of. Upon selling a home, land is sold twice if it is worthy. It is sold once for what is above the surface, and sold again for what lies below it. She includes a noteworthy copy of a banner created and displayed internationally by Oliver Ressler in the early 2000's. It reads in bold letters, "Imagine shaking this land from below. Stirring it up, turning it upside down to expose all of the plundering and exploitation, and then spreading it out again, without a top and without a bottom, except for its mountains and valleys" (187).

Lippard is at her finest when she is showcasing the words of other writers and the ideas of artists as she explores her own thoughts on the controversial topics she addresses. As a curator, she is responsible for taking pieces of art and finding how they fit together to create a finished installment or exhibition. In this instance, she is dealing with digital images and a book full of pages. In addition to the images she selects, she also employs amazing numbers of case studies in her writing. Each one, she states, "could have been replaced by dozens of others" (189). With so many variables to shuffle, a lot of the decisions and relationships she creates go unnoticed by the reader. It becomes an overload of sensory information when the text and images continue in the same capacity page after page. Readers may find themselves reading the book for its words and forgetting that there are pictures directly above them with footnotes below. Without reading the footnotes, most pictures remain homeless, unable to be placed in their own context by the viewer. Lippard alludes to the effect of photography without captions, arguing that without them, "We have no idea what part of the world we're seeing—where it is, how it got there, or what part of life it shelters" (168). Additionally, many viewers may not even care all that much; yet, I encourage readers to be the viewer that cares. Care to read the footnotes and care to look up an unfamiliar case study. While *Undermining* can be overwhelming, the vast number of directions that this book can take are an integral part of its value.



Book Review >>> Meghan MacMillan

Life After Life

Atkinson, Kate. New York: Reagan Arthur Books, 2013. 527 pp.

“History is all about “what ifs.”

In her novel, *Life after Life*, Kate Atkinson takes this approach to history, to explore as many ‘what ifs’ as she can through her main protagonist, Ursula Todd. Born on a snowy February night in 1910, Ursula, the third child of Sylvie and Hugh Todd, dies before she can even take her first breath; the doctor had not made it in time to deliver her. On that same February night, the doctor arrives in the nick of time and Ursula begins a life that will end, as all lives do. But in Ursula’s case, she will always begin again. For, every time she dies, she is born again on that same snowy evening. As a child, she drowns, she falls from a rooftop, and she succumbs to the Spanish flu— but all in different scenarios. Atkinson addresses these scenarios in each of her ‘lives.’ What if someone had been at the beach when she was young to save her from drowning? What if she was stopped from climbing onto that very rooftop she had fallen from?

Ursula does not have memory of these previous occurrences. Instead, she gets feelings of déjà vu and feelings of fear that she cannot explain. The Todd’s housekeeper, Bridget, travels to London to celebrate the armistice at the end of the first World War but brings influenza back with her, spreading it to the Todd family, including Ursula. Every time she returns to that day, she knows she must do something to stop Bridget, but she doesn’t know *why* she feels that way. It takes many tries (and many deaths) until she is finally successful when she pushes the maid down the stairs, breaking her arm. This is the first time Ursula is sent to Doctor Kellet, a psychologist who is the first to bring up the concept of reincarnation to her.

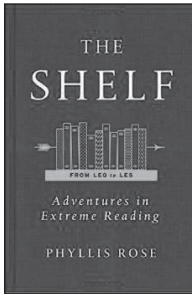
As Ursula ages, her lives become more complicated and she begins to deal with events ranging from rape and murder to everyday things such as choosing a career and falling in love. Ursula’s life takes on different scenarios each time she is resurrected. For instance, she falls victim to a bombing during a blitz. She is working to find survivors from that very bomb site in another life. She ends up living in Germany and befriends Hitler’s wife, Eva Braun. Then, of course, she is in the inner circle of none other than Adolf Hitler himself.

Through all of this, Atkinson brings to light questions of fate—how being in the wrong (or right) place at the wrong time can impact not only one life, but potentially the entire world. Atkinson is never obvious when it comes to these small moments because they should remain as they are: small, seemingly unimportant details. She explores the idea that these moments are what really matter, and how clear hindsight really is. The reader slowly becomes able to look for these clues, every action, every conversation is suddenly monumental. Atkinson shows that everything you do is important; yes—fate can exist—but we

have the power to change it. While this big, existential question hangs heavily over the whole novel, Atkinson uses the Todd family as a means to bring the story down to earth. Whether it is from the ever dependably snobby Sylvie or a kind word from Ursula's father Hugh, the reader is able to connect with the characters. Atkinson is sure to include breaks in the drama with details of a family dinner, or a conversation with Ursula's sister, Pamela. It serves as a reminder that Ursula is a human being, and it allows the reader to make connections and empathize with such an unusual character.

The book itself, with all of its reverses and rebirths, has the potential to be strange and confusing. Atkinson seems determined to avoid this by providing structure; she labels each section with a month and year, so the reader knows what context to expect in terms of the story, as well as the history itself. We know that Ursula is dying when 'darkness falls' and the section ends. A new life always begins again with snow on the eleventh of February, 1910. Since Atkinson repeatedly arrives on that day in February so often, the potential is there for the rebirths and the other repeated dates throughout the book to become tedious. Instead of rehashing the same introduction each time however, Atkinson provides different points of view and slight changes to the story. Sometimes Hugh is there on the night of Ursula's birth, other times he is still away in France.

At 527 pages, *Life after Life* is full of stories—each one full of heartbreak, complex characters and within the context of war, so it is almost impossible for the reader not to feel overwhelmed. Especially during sections like the one where Ursula is working on a rescue team during the London Blitz (which graphically depicts the bombing victims encountered by Ursula's team), Atkinson creates characters with such emotion and liveliness that they feel as if they are real people. It is a rare gift for an author to be able to make secondary and even tertiary characters feel so fully formed and multidimensional that a reader forms an attachment to each of them, no matter how small their part in the story may be. The story itself is made up of these small, emotionally charged parts. The parts flow outward, limitless in their possibilities. Even after the story ends, it does not feel like it ends. *Life after Life* feels less like a book than it does an ever changing being, almost as if it is a *life* itself.



Book Review >>> Rachel Scherzer

The Shelf: Adventures in Extreme Reading

Rose, Phyllis. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014. 263 pp.

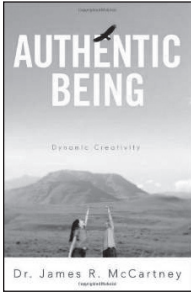
As a literary critic, college professor, and nonfiction writer, Phyllis Rose has spent her life immersed in the world of literature. In both her personal and professional reading, however, she has felt that her choices have been dictated by what is considered canonical or popular, choices that are almost always dictated by others, which has left out a variety of books and authors from her reading lists. Thus, Rose devises an experiment that will allow her “to sample, more democratically, the actual ground of literature” (1). She challenges herself to read through an entire randomly selected shelf in the New York Society Library. To ensure variety, Rose devised several rules that limited the number of books by each author, eventually leading her to the LEQ to LES fiction shelf. Rose’s chosen shelf allows a variety of books from different time periods, different genres of literature, and different geographic locations, allowing for a broad range of exploration through the pages of the novels.

Phyllis Rose presents this reading adventure through the shelf by engaging with the books from both her personal background as a lover of literature and from her professional background as a college professor, literary critic, and writer. The examinations of each novel, allow the reader to journey alongside Rose as she goes through the process of reading, from the struggle or ease of reading, to the background research each book inspires and the unique stories that develop from her experience of reading the particular combination of novels present on the shelf. Reading *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov, for example, Rose approaches a Russian classic with high hopes of a transformative literary experience. Her reading becomes complicated over the issue of translations, especially when she chooses to start with the strongly opinioned and over researched translation by another Russian literary great, Vladimir Nabokov. Her journey continues by reading Gaston Leroux, which allows Rose to experience the breadth of his literary career, reading early detective novels and *The Phantom of the Opera*, examining how a relatively unremarkable novel spawned numerous works for stage and screen. In the work of Rhonda Lerman, Rose finds a new personal favorite author, as well as questions about what makes an author choose to stop writing or publishing. The work of Margaret Leroy and Lisa Lerner allow the examination of women in literature, especially in regards to literature about motherhood. Several authors bring forward the question of national literature versus universal literature, while the massive work *Gil Blas* by Alain Le Sage explores early picturesque literature that focused on adventure and creates a story with massive scope. Using the detective fiction by John Lescroart, Rose explores the most lucrative and popular form of literature and what about it appeals to its massive following of readers. Finally, Rose reads what she considers truly bad literature by William Le Queux, whose massive output of text never reached the level of great literature,

but significantly impact authors like Ian Fleming and even led the creating of the British security service MI5.

Throughout *The Shelf*, Rose engages with questions about the divisions in literature. Why are genres more esteemed? What makes a person want to write a novel? Why do women continue to be underrepresented in the literature world, both in numbers of books published and general reputation? Is reading a classic a better use of time than reading a mystery novel? Rose reviews these questions and others with a level of curiosity and acceptance, allowing every type of reading and every type of reader to be appreciated on its own terms and values. Books are appreciated for their value in any form, even books that Rose personally finds extremely bad. At the same time, she grapples with the unanswerable question of what books deserve to be kept in a library, devoting an entire chapter to how a library determines what books remain on the shelves, while also including references to the possibilities e-Readers. Through her book, Rose advocates for a reading practice that motivated by personal taste, allowing each individual room to create their own criteria of literature.

The Shelf is a book for anyone who loves the adventure of reading, whether one is a casual reader of detective novels or a serious literary critic. Phyllis Rose's diplomatic approach to reading allows for the merit of all types of reading and all types of literature, advocating for an exploration of literature that frees itself from a strict set of rules about what kind of literature is worthy. By exploring a wide range of genres and literary issues, Rose is able to explore reading selections as one truly experiences them in a library. Rose advocates for the common experience of reading as something that is shaped by the individual, while still allowing the reviews and literary critics to have their place in the world of literature. *The Shelf* brings back the notion of falling in love with literature on your own terms, just like one might as a child exploring the library shelf with no prior agenda. Rose's book is for anyone who wants to regain that child's experience exploring in the library and truly go on a literary adventure of his or her own.



Book Review >>> Nicole Starling

Authentic Being

McCartney, James R. Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2013. 97 pp.

"I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive" -Joseph Campbell (65).

Campbell's quote, one of the many quotes James McCartney includes in *Authentic Being*, showcases a major point in the argument he makes for living authentically. The experience of being alive is what drives people to dig deep and discover who they truly are and to live their lives to their fullest potential. Contrary to the Cartesian belief, "I think therefore I am," existentialism decrees: "I exist, therefore I think, and life is incomprehensible until I create meaning through the choices I make (57)." It is through this belief that McCartney asserts that we are responsible for finding and creating our own authentic selves. The choices that we make shape who we are, and through our choices we become accountable for the world that we allow to manifest around us. In *Authentic Being*, McCartney explores authenticity by comparing existentialism and New Thought philosophies. McCartney also addresses the topics of religion and spirituality, including theism, agnosticism, and atheism.

McCartney begins with New Thought philosophy, giving the reader a brief historical overview as well as touching upon possible philosophical influences, such as The Science of Mind philosophy and Buddhism. McCartney goes on to explore existentialism by including a short history, and the contributions of major figures such as Jean-Paul Satre and Albert Camus. In his work, McCartney highlights the contributors' findings that relate to authenticity, such as Satre's classifying of emotions as choices, and Camus' interpretation of the Greek myth of Sisyphus. After establishing a foundation of beliefs, all centered around expressing one's authentic self, McCartney draws the reader back into more contemporary topics such as the influence educators, such as parents, teachers, and religious leaders, have on our being and our beliefs. McCartney also touches on the topic of technology, citing Martin Heidegger who deliberated the correlation between inauthenticity and technical devices when it came to man's distorted relationship with the natural world. McCartney also addressed chemical imbalances in our bodies and the fact that "the four top-selling items in grocery stores are used to manage our energy: caffeine, sugar, alcohol, and nicotine" (52). Because each part of us is connected, our mind and body and vice versa, it's important to think twice about the substances society promotes that affect our minds, moods, and energy – especially when we desire a natural state of mind.

Authentic Being is peppered with quotes from transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and fellow philosophers including Ernest Holmes and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. There are also vignettes of McCartney's own experiences. These experiences allow McCartney to

make a connection with the reader. There is always a personal element to the experiences he chooses to share, whether it be an epiphany he had while come close to colliding with two other cars while on a slippery slope, or his realization of intuition while fishing in the mountains.

McCartney provides few blatant groundbreaking conclusions on how to be your true self at the end of his work because, "Authenticity is what each person must personally discover...Like an artist brushing with paint his/her self-image on the canvas of life, each person chooses what the picture will look like (34)." Instead, the reader is guided on how to come to his or her own conclusion, which I found particularly empowering.

In a society where so many of us tailor our own lives, whether outwardly or through the use of social media, to appear sparkling and pristine, the idea of authenticity can be refreshing. I would recommend *Authentic Being* to any individual who has wondered what they might be like without the influence they are subjected to simply by belonging to society, and is curious on how they might discover the journey to become that person. There is freedom and liberation in exploring identity, one of the most difficult questions that we can ask ourselves being, "Who am I?" It is this realization that can help us determine the meaning of our experiences, our existence, and our role in our communities. One of the ways McCartney helps the reader with this discovery is by explaining what the opposite of authenticity looks like. When people ignore their innate knowledge of themselves they fall into bad faith which "means that a person has given himself away to external controls and has not been living in accord with his or her authentic inner being" (61). The external controls that McCartney speaks of include the pressures of conformity. When a person allows outside factors, such as societal pressure, influence them instead of coming to their own deductions, they compromise their own authentic identity. McCartney explores authenticity from many sides - don't let the slim size of the book fool you, the ideas being presented will require multiple cups of coffee and deep contemplation. But the result is worth it. After all, the bliss of finding who you are can be an achievement of great magnitude. McCartney quotes Joseph Campbell saying, "The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are" (64).

Contributors

>>> **Taylor Bailey** is a senior Political Science major with minors in Communication Studies and Philosophy. He is in the process of finishing his Distinction thesis, "Ayn Rand's Rejection of Environmentalism: Towards Challenging Right-Wing Inaction on Environmental Issues in the United States," an effort to catalogue the roots of anti-environmentalist sentiments on the part of the American Right. In addition to serving as Co-Lead editor of Aegis this year, Taylor serves as a Peer Mentor to freshman year seminar courses, sings in Otterbein's Concert Choir, and holds a student position on the Integrative Studies Advisory Committee. Taylor's post-graduation plans are unconfirmed, but he plans on either pursuing a M.A. in History or working at a farm sanctuary.

>>> **Emmanuela Bear** is a raising senior majoring in Literary Studies with a minor in Studio Art. Besides being a lover of books and art, she is involved with many of the music activities on campus, including: the Cardinal marching band, pep band, flute ensemble, wind ensemble, and flute lessons. She also works as a student resource sharing assistant at the Otterbein library. She looks forward to working with the Aegis board, and creating new experiences at Otterbein!

>>> **Bethany Blinsky** is a sophomore studying Philosophy. In her spare time she hikes long distances, goes to protests, attends music festivals, and reads philosophy. Bethany hates the binary dichotomy of gender, the meat industry, and mini golf. She considers herself a pug enthusiast.

>>> **Byron Brennenman** is a junior Public Relations major. He is originally from the quaint Appalachian town of Coshocton, about an hour east of Columbus, where he was born, raised and grew to become a strong advocate of little rust-belt towns. He is an avid reader, an admirer of art, and a lover of history and architecture. This is his first year with Aegis, and he is fully enjoying the opportunity to help craft this year's journal.

>>> **Carrie Coisman** is a 3rd year undergraduate studying History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, with minors in Cultural Anthropology and Political Science. She is an active member of the Honors program where she is working on her thesis entitled: "Sexual Violence in the American Civil War: The Invention of Tradition and the Creation of Nationalism." She has enjoyed being on the staff of Aegis this year and looks forward to serving as co-editor for the 2015-2016 academic year. She also serves as Otterbein University's Student Body President and

is involved in a variety of student organizations. She looks forward to working with Dr. Docka-Filipek as research assistant this summer before returning to Otterbein to finish her senior year. After graduation next spring, she will before pursue a Ph.D. in History.

>>> Lydia Crannell is a freshman Creative Writing and Music double major with a minor in Audio Production. She has had a crazy first year and is thrilled to be a part of the Aegis editorial board along with Quiz & Quill and Kate. Lydia is a cellist in Otterbein String Orchestra and Westerville Symphony and loves being involved in Freezone and other campus activities. She hopes to have a future in screenwriting or music editing after teaching English in South Korea. She is looking forward to her next three years at Otterbein!

>>> Kevin Gebura is Social Justice Studies (individualized) and Philosophy double major with minors in Cultural Anthropology and Psychology. His undergraduate thesis is on the philosophy of humor. He is built to withstand awkward situations. He is readily identified by his shaggy hair and chiseled jawline. He survives Ohio winters by wearing a minimum of four layers. In his spare time he does silly maneuvers on rollerblades. As a yoga enthusiast, his dietary preferences include herbal teas, chickpeas, whole grains and bananas. He has a habit of abstract thinking. He want to be a grant writer for nonprofit or government agencies.

>>> Gretchen Heisler is a senior Creative Writing major and History minor. She is a member of ALD/PES Honor Society and Torch and Key society, and is on staff for Quiz & Quill. She is pleased to be an editor for Aegis for the second year in a row. Her current endeavors include searching for a job and finding the energy to write something other than her honors thesis.

>>> Katy Major is graduating this spring with dual degrees in Creative Writing with a focus in Creative Nonfiction, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a concentration in Gender, Culture, and Representation. She plans to continue her studies next year, earning a Master's in Fine Arts in Creative Writing and eventually earning her Ph.D. In addition to studying creative writing, film, and social justice, Katy is also involved in activism on campus as a part of FreeZone!, Otterbein's sexual diversity organization. She is proud to present this year's edition of Aegis, which features a number of exceptional pieces from students in the humanities at Otterbein.

>>> Lily Mann is a first year double major in English Literary Studies, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, with a minor in Legal Studies. Lily is proudly on staff for Aegis, as well as Kate, Otterbein's feminist publication, and Quiz and Quill. She's also a peer advocate in the Women's and Gender Resource Center. Lily is a member of Tri- Iota, the WGSS honor society, as well as Alpha Lamda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma Honor society.

>>> Carly Marburger is a senior double majoring in Studio Art with a concentration in Drawing and English with a concentration in Literary Studies. She has also completed her student teaching and will obtain an AYA Integrated Language Arts Teaching Licensure. She is currently on the executive board of Otterbein's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, an International English Honor Society, and has been an active member of Aegis for two years.

>>> Meghan MacMillan is a junior Art History major with a Studio Art minor. She is actively involved with Starving Artists and Tau Epsilon Mu sorority, and hopes to continue her education after her time at Otterbein by pursuing a master's degree in Art History. She is very honored to have been given the opportunity to be on the editorial board for Aegis this year.

>>> Rachel Scherzer is a senior Literary Studies major with minors in History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She has a strong interest in social justice and social change, which she has recently explored while working on her Honors Thesis on the social justice potential of young adult dystopian literature. At Otterbein, she is actively involved in community service by acting as senior coordinator the Honors Service Project Kneading Minds and working at the Center for Community Engagement. She has also served as the President of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honorary Society, as the senior advisor to Alpha Lamda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma, and as a mentor in the Van Sant Leadership Program. After graduation, she hopes to pursue her interest in social justice by spending a year working with AmeriCorps.

>>> Nicole Starling is a senior studying AYA Integrated Language Arts Education. In addition to Aegis, Nicole is a writer for Otterbein's magazine, Tan&Cardinal, and a member of International Honors English Society, Sigma Tau Delta. She is looking forward to student teaching in the fall, as well as pursuing her Masters in Education, followed by a Doctorate in Education Policy.

