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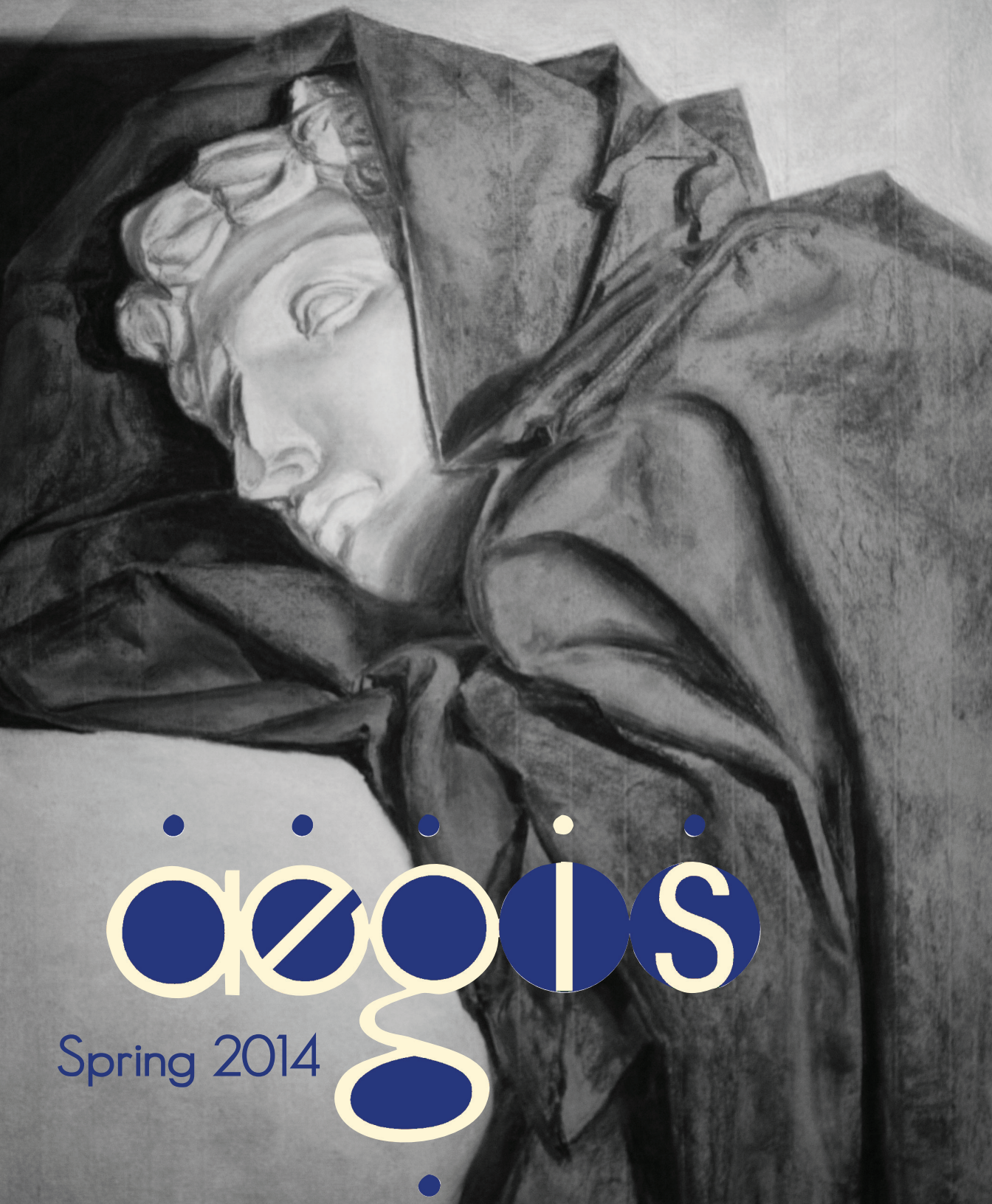


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Spring 2014
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Aegis: The Otterbein Humanities Journal

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 preferred. Please send to Stephanie Patridge, Faculty Advisor, *Aegis*, Towers Hall, Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio, 43081 at 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 Stephanie Patridge at aegis@otterbein.edu. *Aegis* is committed to nonsexist language and to wording free of hostile overtones.

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Editors' Introduction >>> Beth Gier & Megan Gray

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

The essays that have been selected for this year's edition of *Aegis* exemplify the talent and commitment to academics that are continuously exhibited by Otterbein students. The topics covered range from religion and music history to literary studies. All of the essays included in the journal meet the standards of rigorous research in the humanities, but more importantly, they are engaging pieces that adeptly address issues and topics relevant to Otterbein students and a more general readership. In "Freedom in Death: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*," Rebecca Whitney offers us an interpretation of Tolstoy's famous novella that discusses the difficulties of comprehending death within the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Brianne Buletko, in "The Nag Hammadi Library – Heresy or Homage to the Christ?," argues against popular opinion that the gnostic gospels, which comprise the Nag Hammadi library, are heresy compared to the traditional western view of Christianity; rather, she claims that the Gnostic gospels are seen as heresy only because the Gnostics thought intently and offered a different interpretation of Christ than the traditional view. In "Symbolism and Cultural Meaning in Karel Husa's *Music for Prague 1968*," Paul Faulkner provides a history of the Czechoslovakian composer Karel Husa and the Spring reforms that influenced his most famous piece *Music for Prague 1968*. These three exemplary essays are just a few of the selections that makes this year's edition of *Aegis* a comprehensive and well-rounded view of the humanities at Otterbein.

Also included in this year's edition of *Aegis* is a collection of book reviews written by members of the editorial staff, covering a broad range of recently published works relevant to the humanities. The books reviewed include exciting new works of fiction from Thomas Pynchon's newest epic, *Bleeding Edge*, to Marisha Pessl's thriller novel with a high-brow twist, *Night Film*. On the non-fiction side, this year's edition contains a brilliant portrait of Glenn Palmer-Smith's *Murals of New York City*, while a review of Susan Cain's *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* examines life as an introvert and ways to cope in an extroverted world. A review of *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison* explores the memoir that inspired the hit Netflix series.

It has been a busy and exciting year filled with guest speakers for the humanities at Otterbein. We have had the pleasure of welcoming several big names in the academic community to Otterbein. First, we were visited by Lennard Davis, one of the pioneers of the field of disability studies. Davis lectured on the two-sided nature of diversity and the importance of political activism for disabilities. Otterbein also had the privilege of hosting Sir Salman Rushdie, one of the most prolific and celebrated writers of the 20th and 21st centuries. The author of works such as *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Sir Rushdie is also considered one of the most controversial authors in recent history with a fatwa hanging above his head.

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

An Interview with

Dr. Geoffrey Barstow,

Assistant Professor of Religion, Otterbein University

Aegis: What first inspired you to study Buddhism?

By the time I was leaving high school, I had a pretty strong interest in questions of religion, and I was particularly interested in Asian religions. I was starting to learn about Taoism in particular toward the end of high school, what I would now call a very New Age approach to things. When I got to college, I had the opportunity to take some classes, and I took some classes on Buddhism, took some classes on Taoism. I thought I was going to be a literature major, but quickly decided that wasn't what I was into, so I ended up studying Taoism and Chinese and then, my sophomore year, I took a one-month J-term trip to India to study Tibetan Buddhism. I spent three and a half weeks at a Tibetan monastery. And that was kind of it. That clicked. It was just...interesting. I liked it, and it seemed to me to offer a creative and fundamentally interesting way of looking at the world. I think, in a lot of ways, religion is the rose-colored spectacles we all wear to look at the world, so, for me, Buddhism was a particularly interesting pair of spectacles to look at. And that was the start—that was January of '99, and that's pretty much all I've done since. [Laughs.] I have no other skills.

Aegis: A great deal of your research focuses on vegetarianism and Buddhism. Could you explain more about your research?

Basically, my research is a history of vegetarianism in Tibet. It's a pretty broad topic—it may not seem like a broad topic, but within religion as a field, that's a pretty broad thing to be studying. Fundamentally, vegetarianism in Tibet is one of these things that was never common...it was never the norm. And so, when I would tell my colleagues that I was going to be studying vegetarianism, they would say things like, "What vegetarianism? What are you talking about? It doesn't exist." The first thing I was saying was that it actually does. It's not common, not *normal*...but it existed throughout Tibetan history. Even when I don't have evidence of vegetarianism itself, I have evidence that it was part of the discussion. People were concerned about it. There were ethical issues that people were debating... which means that as a discourse, it never went away. That's what I study—the structure of the question that I'm dealing with involves first recognizing that there's this consistent discourse that meat is bad and that there are a lot reasons why meat is bad. And most Tibetan religions' texts, if you push them, [say that] meat is bad, or at least, it's not good. So, the question is: Why aren't there more vegetarians? And that's one of the things I'm looking at—so, you have this very strong religious ethical discourse that says meat is bad, but then in practice, you don't have that many. And so, part of what I'm trying to do is address that—

that gap. So, I'm looking at what social and cultural norms come into play. A good example is that meat is often connected with masculinity and masculine identity. A lot of Tibetans are nomads, or otherwise, and there's what is sometimes called "cowboy culture," and they ride horses, and they engage in contests involving horsemanship, shooting, archery—these sort of very masculine things, and in many ways eating meat—eating lots of meat—gets wrapped up in that. So, that's a cultural factor that mitigates against vegetarianism and these Buddhist norms.

Aegis: How does ethics factor into the work of religious studies? Do you ask your students to consider ethical questions?

Whether ethics comes into religious studies depends a lot on what you're looking at. In my particular topic it's central, because meat is a primarily ethical question. There are few or almost no instances of people becoming vegetarian for health reasons, or for environmental reasons, or for any of these other reasons we have in contemporary Western culture. It's almost purely an ethical issue. Straight-up ethics have not come up too much in classes I've taught so far...they'll come up in context, but not necessarily as a central aspect of what we're studying. Ethics are important in the study of religion, but there's a lot more to it as well. In a lot of cases, the ethics are derivative of broader cultural assumptions or religious assumptions—something along those lines. A course I've been contemplating would be an INST class called Animals and Religion, and that would have ethics at the center of it, but it's because of the particular discussion we would be looking at in that class. The INST class I'm teaching now is called The Responsible Self, and in some ways, ethics are present, but they're a derivative concern. The primary area of focus is: What do Hinduism and Buddhism in particular have to say about this notion of a self—of self-identity, of self-existence, and then, based on that question, we have second-order questions—what does that mean in terms of ethical conduct in the world? If, as the Buddhists say, you don't have a self, how does that impact your responsibilities to other people? So, we get into ethics there, but it's not as central as it would be in another class.

Aegis: So, how do Buddhists reconcile eating meat with living compassionately?

Read my dissertation! [Laughs.] There's a basic rule in Buddhism: Don't kill. And that includes animals. Buddhism makes a distinction between humans and animals, but that distinction is not as strong as it is in the Abrahamic traditions. In Abrahamic traditions, the human-animal distinction is ontological—we're different orders. In Buddhism, we're all the same stuff—it's questions of circumstance that make us different. They say, we're fundamentally the same thing, but people are smarter, which makes our lives more valuable. So it's better to kill an animal than a person, because a person has a greater capacity to do good in the world. Those are the arguments that a Buddhist would make, but fundamentally, there's not a clear distinction. If you were able to establish that a dolphin was just as smart as a human being, then the human being would not necessarily have a clear case for superiority in ethical questions.

Aegis: So it's somewhat based on the question of sentience?

The question of sentience, and relative sentience—for instance, bugs are of a lower order than monkeys. Not killing is not just about not killing people—it's across the board.

The question then becomes: How do they justify eating meat? In the earliest forms of Buddhism, when the Buddha was teaching, the monks would beg for their food door-to-door, and they were supposed to eat whatever was put in their bowl. The person who killed the animal was killing for their own personal consumption and when the monk came by, they plopped some in the monk's bowl, and the monk gets meat...but the monk has no connection, from an ethical standpoint, to the death of the animal. In the context that Buddha created the rule of Threefold Purity, monks are allowed to eat meat if they have not seen that the animal wasn't killed for them, they haven't heard that the animal was killed specifically for them, and they don't suspect that the animal was killed specifically for them. Basically, if they don't think the animal was killed just for them, there's a moral separation between the person who killed the animal and the person eating the animal. As monks started to settle down, this rule stayed in place, but the ethical separation didn't. This is where you get vegetarian arguments coming in, people saying, "This doesn't work anymore. We're not begging for our food anymore—there's a row of butcher shops right in front of the monastery so we can buy our meat." People had a problem with this.

In Tibet, the standard response would be, "We have to eat meat. If we don't eat meat, then we die." Vegetarianism is too much of an austerity for some people—there's a very strong cultural belief that if you don't eat meat, you'll get ill. It doesn't help that they don't have vegetables. You can't grow vegetables in Tibet. Traditional foods are barley—eaten as a dry flour—dairy products, and meat. That's about it. In that context, people are saying, "If we don't eat meat, we'll get sick, and then if we get sick, then we can't practice Buddhism and we can't be otherwise beneficial to the world." And so eating meat was *almost* a necessary evil. That would be one way that people would justify it, but fundamentally, most people didn't try to justify it. They just did it. Just because the religious texts are talking about something doesn't mean that the people on the streets are worried about this at all. It's just what you do. There are just a few people in the monastery having this debate, but for people on the street, it's not a day-to-day issue. This is something we see across the board in religious traditions and other ethical norms—we pay lip service to it, but people aren't actually concerned about living up to it on a day-to-day basis.

Aegis: You describe karma as "the residue of one's actions." One question that often comes up for students is how disaster strikes in the lives of good, upstanding, moral people. How does Buddhism explain this?

Karma is intimately related to past and future lives. Fundamentally, what karma is saying is that if you're born in a bad state in this life, it's a result of something you did in the past. What you did goes beyond when you were born—it could have been a hundred lifetimes ago. Karma is very much used to explain social differences, but it's important to distinguish between explaining social differences and justifying social differences. For

instance, if we're walking down the street and we see a beggar, homeless, with a bottle of whiskey...we look at that, and understand that this is his karma—the karma to have the capacity to be an alcoholic. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to help him—that we should walk past. If we do that, we're building up bad karma for ourselves, and it will come around. The response should be compassionate—this person is in a rough place, and it's their own fault, but that doesn't mean that I shouldn't help them.

Aegis: So, the disparity between, say, America, and third world countries—karma would explain that as Americans having very good past lives?

Yeah. In a nutshell. With karma, it is said that *like produces like*. If you have wealth now, you gave it away before. If you're generous—you give money to people, you help people—eventually, that will come around back to you. If you're stingy with it now, that means in the future, it won't. The question often comes up: If karma is individual, why are we in America all in a similar place? And the answer is that people have very similar karma. We share in similar ways our own individual karma, and so we have this sort of “group karma.” Karma is a really tricky subject—it's one that I like to spend a lot of time on in class because there are so many Western misconceptions.

Aegis: What classes are you teaching now? Since you have so much travel experience, do you plan on putting together a travel course?

Yeah! I'm putting together a budget right now! The plan is to teach a travel course that will run next spring, basically a May-mester course, taking people to Nepal. You won't have to pay extra tuition or summer tuition, but it will count against your spring semester hours—that's the trade-off. It'll be a month-long trip. I just contacted the monastery where I used to study to see if we can set up two weeks worth of classes with a Tibetan monk to teach Tibetan Buddhism. I'm also looking for a good introductory text that they could teach...I would also teach a complementary class with that about history and other things. It's still very much in the works, but I'm anticipating at least a week of trekking in the mountains, so we'll get people up into the Himalayas. I'm also tossing around this idea of setting people up to do a week's worth of volunteering at an NGO [non-governmental organization; international equivalent of a nonprofit], sending people out in groups three to four hours a day to different NGOs, and then we would all get together to talk about what they did, their experiences.

In the fall, I'm teaching two sections of The Responsible Self in Hinduism and Buddhism and an Introduction to Buddhism. In the spring, I will be teaching a 1000-level Introduction to the Study of Religion and a 3000-level Special Topics in Buddhism on Tibetan Buddhism through a biographical and autobiographical lens. So we'll be reading a lot of Tibetan Buddhist biographies and autobiographies and learning about Tibet through those. That should be a pretty awesome class—I'm looking forward to that one. There's no prerequisite for that, but I'm trying to get majors to do the Introduction to Buddhism as well as a preliminary. That would be ideal.

Aegis: What was the most important thing you learned from your experiences among Buddhists in Nepal, China, and Tibet? What would you most like to pass on to students?

That's such an impossible question! There are so many major important things that you learn from this, and very few of them actually have to do with Buddhism. You go on a trip like this and you're exposed to the world in a different way than you are in the U.S. It's a different way of living and in Nepal and India, the concerns that people have are different. For a lot of the people, the concern is, "Where is my food coming from?" There's an awareness of death that's more visible than in a lot of places in the U.S. It's hard to explain, but I want students to have that experience. That's why I want to do these trips—because in a way, you can't explain. They just need to go and *see*. I hope that for some of these students, this can be a really transformative event, and that some of them will be inspired to go back to Asia and work for an NGO, or do something else, break out of their ruts.

In a lot of ways, the important stuff that you learn from travelling like this is more about yourself than the other people. They have an expression in Chinese, *chi ku*. It means, "You eat bitter." It means to live rough. And so, when I first went to China—I did a semester there my junior year—we were dropped off, and that was the extent of it. I went to Tibet and was told I couldn't do that. When I went and came back and showed pictures, and they said, "Wow. You *can* eat bitter." Fundamentally, it was this awareness that...yes, *I can*. I can do this, and I can come out of it. I survived. That's actually a really valuable lesson, just to have the self-confidence that comes from doing something very difficult, when you don't speak the language very well, you don't know what's happening the next day—when you're not being shepherded around all the time—there's something valuable in that experience. Of course, that is not the kind of experience I'll be giving people when I take them on an Otterbein study abroad trip, but maybe, down the line, they'll be inspired to do that. I want to give them the knowledge that they can do this, that they can travel to a third world country and land on their feet...and along the way, I want to teach them about Buddhism, and teach them how NGOs work, and take them into the mountains because it's beautiful...but fundamentally, I want to give them the self-confidence that comes from having done that.

Aegis: Who are some of your favorite Buddhist thinkers?

I'm less of a philosopher and more a historian, so people that I like in particular are people whose biographies are really penetrating and self-aware. I would highlight people like Shabkar, whose autobiography is great because he'll totally criticize himself. You don't get that often with Tibetan autobiography—people like to blow their own horn, so it's refreshing to read that. Jigmé Lingpa is another great example of someone whose biography is awesome in a down-to-earth way. There's a passage in there about how the Tibetan government is forcing him to perform these wrathful rituals to kill an invading Mongolian army, but he doesn't want to, so he's basically forced to perform these religious rituals that are very violent. He's so frank about this discussion, and the corruption that he sees—in other people and in himself. He's self-critical—I find that really refreshing. As for philosophers—I'm going to totally give away my sectarian biases here—I really like

Chandrakirti, an interpreter of Madhyamaka philosophy. In terms of not individuals, but schools of thought, I'm quite partial to Madhyamaka—the Middle Way, as it's sometimes called.

Aegis: We also saw that you translated Shardza's *The Faults of Eating Meat*. How has translation work posed challenges for you?

It's not easy. Translation work is often looked down on within the academic study of religion. It's not analysis, so people see it as something that anyone could do. That's just not true. One of the biggest challenges is justifying the time to do it. That's actually something that's really nice at Otterbein—at least in this department—translations count towards tenure. It's great. When I do a translation, like the Shardza translation, I feel like I'm not just doing it; it's good for my career as well. Fundamentally, languages are not my strong suit. I would be very happy if somebody else wanted to translate all of this stuff, but most of the stuff I deal with is not available in English, so I have to deal with the Tibetan. I very rarely do full translation projects—it's usually a few lines here, a passage here, as I'm browsing through something. Coming up with a full translation, like the Shardza translation, is a lot of work. You do this first round of rough English—general ideas—and then you have to go back and turn rough ideas into good English. There are always questions of terminology usage—if I use this particular term, does it convey the sense of the original? Is there a better term? Is there *no* term? That's the hardest. Shardza has a certain tone in Tibetan that you want to capture, and that's hard.

Aegis: Buddhism occupies a place in the American marketplace, from the sale of Buddhist figurines to guides to Buddhism by Americans. Do you find this troubling? How can Americans appreciate Buddhism without being culturally appropriative or otherwise problematic?

It's a hard thing to do. It's hard to create rules around this kind of stuff, but there are attitudes that could be changed. I think of t-shirts that say, "Rub my tummy for luck," with a picture of the Happy Buddha on it, and I think, *If that was a crucifix and said 'Rub my foot for luck'—which is actually the equivalent thing—people wouldn't be okay with that.* That's a respect issue. And then there are specific cultural norms that get involved that people don't have any clue about. For example, shoes. In India and Indian-derived cultures, the feet are considered to be very dirty—in a ritual sense. They're polluting. In India, you don't step over someone. You would never put a religious book on the floor. And there have been occasions over the past couple of years when someone on Etsy has sold shoes with Buddha images on them. In the minds of my Tibetan friends, this is so clearly disrespectful. Then my American friends point out that they [the people selling the shoes] didn't know that it was disrespectful, necessarily—you can find shoes with crosses all over them, and nobody's complaining. That's sort of a different issue. There are two different attitudes, and one is not caring that something is disrespectful and the other is a lack of knowledge. Do I find it annoying? Yes. How do I deal with it? Well, you don't want to be encouraging people to be persnickety. How exactly you go about it is different.

Aegis: Even in terms of activism, how do you distinguish between a disrespectful sort of “white savior complex” and someone who goes in with an attitude of understanding?

It’s really hard. *Really* hard. When you go in, your work is fundamentally based on the white savior complex. It’s really difficult to extract that from what people do. At the same time, people are doing good things. You have to strike a balance somewhere between trying not to be disrespectful—not being a white savior—and actually getting stuff done. There’s a lot of theory about this in the NGO world—how do we do this? How do we engage with communities in ways that are actually beneficial? There’s a lot of talk about doing community-driven projects. Instead of the white person showing up and saying, “Your village needs a well,” a white person would show up and say, “What do you need?” That’s letting the village own the project. This includes not just giving people stuff, but working out methods of exchange. Then, there’s no loss of face involved. You create a cycle of empowerment, not a cycle of dependency. There can be trappings of the white savior complex, but it’s about trying to do your best to recognize that, see it, and almost own it, as much as you can. It’s working within the problem.

Aegis: So, this is your first year teaching at Otterbein. What do you enjoy most about teaching here and about being a part of the Otterbein community?

I’m trying to figure out how to say this without sounding hokey. [Laughs.] I’ve actually really loved teaching here. This is the fourth school I’ve taught at, so I actually have some experience. I’ve taught at the University of Richmond, University of Virginia, Wofford College in South Carolina, and I’m here now. I really like the students. It’s hard to put my finger on exactly what I like about them, but there’s a willingness to engage with material and excitement to engage with this stuff, combined with a lack of pretension. There’s a real excitement to learn, and I appreciate that. I have a real sense that my students are grateful for being in the class, and that feels really good, as a teacher. I love those days—I love going home with this feeling of opening people’s eyes to stuff. I’ve been really happy with my students as a teacher here.

Aegis: Other than the Nepal trip, what’s next for you? What’s your next big project?

The ongoing scholarship project is turning my dissertation into a book. Hopefully, within a few years, the book will be out. There are a couple of articles that are coming out—one of them is the Shardza translation. I got an email from a friend who’s editing a volume on the cultural revolution in Tibet and wants me to resurrect an old project I did years ago for that. And I’m putting together a panel proposal for a big religion conference next year. So, there are three or four significant article projects, and then the book in the works. As for teaching, I’m still settling in. There are a number of classes that I’m contemplating. I managed to be persuaded to not propose four new classes for next year. [Laughs.] I’m glad I didn’t, because preparing a new class is a lot of work. I still have two new classes next year. I’m looking forward to it.

Essays >>>

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The Nag Hammadi Library – Heresy or Homage to the Christ? >>> Brianne Buletko

The aim of this paper is to examine two of the gnostic gospels from the Nag Hammadi Library in order to provide evidence that suggests they are pro-Christ rather than anti-Christ, as tradition claims. Reviewing the gospels of Mary and Thomas¹ using an academic approach, as opposed to the scholarship that is tainted by orthodox confinement, may allow the readers to see a new side to Gnosticism and opens the door to consideration of the library as a whole. Traditionally, the Gnostics were seen as heretic, since they did not readily accept the traditional Christians views. Heresy, for the sake of this paper, can be thought of as text that dishonors or works against Jesus Christ, whereas homage can be thought of as praise to Jesus Christ.

In this paper, I will start by offering an introduction that will explain what the Nag Hammadi Library is. Following the introduction there will be a discussion of Gnosticism. In this section, I will define the term Gnostic and identify how it will be used in my paper. After that I will examine the role of Mary according to tradition and then contrast this view of Mary with a portrayal from the Gnostics. Similarly, I will then compare Thomas in the traditional view and the Gnostic view. In discussing the roles of Mary and Thomas, I will argue that the Gnostics did not hold a heretical view of Christ.

Making a distinction between three components will assist in the understanding of this paper. First, there is biblical evidence to consider. This biblical evidence comes in the form of text directly from the gospels of the Bible. Second, there is a western Christian tradition that emerges as a result of the textual teachings. This tradition is developed from interpretation of the biblical text. Third, there are the Gnostics, whose tradition began before the Christian emergence, yet also co-existed with the Christians. The Gnostics thought intently about the life of Jesus Christ but ignored the interpretation of the Christians, while offering their own interpretations of what happened in the times of Jesus. The compilation of the Gnostic works is called the Gnostic gospels and makes up the Nag Hammadi Library.

Introduction to the Library

There is a wide misunderstanding of the Nag Hammadi library and its contents, so in order to understand the library better, it is necessary to focus on its history and contents first. Marvin Meyer tells of the library's history as follows: the library exists in Nag Hammadi, Egypt where it houses fragments of sacred texts rediscovered in 1945 by a man by the name of Muhammad Ali. Ali was digging on the side of a hill when he struck a large glass jar. Inside the jar were fragments of papyrus. Ali's family used some of the papyrus to help start fires while others kept in the jars.² James Robinson was the first scholar to talk with Ali and analyze the documents. Robinson found that these writings were actually fragments of what are known as the gnostic gospels and has predated them to roughly the fourth century.³ These writings are thought to be written by the Gnostic believers of the time and were considered unorthodox. The writings in the library went against the traditional writings of the Christians. The rediscovering of the

scriptures opened the door to a whole new realm of questions and considerations about what literature was accepted or rejected and why.

Studying the Nag Hammadi Library is a challenging task as the field is very new. Conversely, consider writing a research paper on the apostle Paul. This is a topic in which there are thousands of sources and hundreds of years of research that have been done. The advantage to this is that there is a lot of ground work on which to build a scholarly project. In contrast, studying the Nag Hammadi Library offers a much narrower range of research, but more room to conduct novel investigation. In this paper I will examine foundational aspects and unveil important and provocative questions such as: What is Gnosticism? Who was Mary of Magdala and what was her role? What did Thomas have to say in the traditional gospels and in his Gnostic gospel? Are Gnostic works heresy or homage to the Christ? Each of these issues arises out of the aim of this essay which is to ultimately examine the nature behind the Gnostic gospels specifically through the gospels of Mary and Thomas.

Section One: What is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism is a difficult topic, since the term 'Gnosticism' is used in many senses and even in many fields – it is a problem of a rhetorical term being confused with a historical entity.⁴ The Greek word *gnosis* means knowledge and the Gnostics of the early Christian times were considered heretics because they deeply questioned and desired more knowledge, particularly pertaining to spiritual mysteries.⁵ The traditional religious authorities viewed Gnostics as anti-Christ because they questioned and challenged the Christians' views of Jesus. As a result of these questions, it was common for the Gnostic people to hold a different set of truths and beliefs. For this paper and the understanding of the role of the Gnosticism in the gospels, 'Gnosticism' can be defined as the diverted opinion from the unorthodox peoples of the time.⁶ Specifically, the Gnostics were a group of people that desired to know about Jesus and created their own interpretation of his life. While the Gnostics held similar beliefs, the label 'Gnostic' is one imposed by the academic world. These people never named themselves Gnostics or claimed such a label. The Gnostics, for example, may exert such a claim that the life of Jesus should be questioned in order to know him better, whereas the traditional Christians strongly believed that asking questions beyond the known knowledge displayed doubt about Jesus.

Section Two: The Traditional Mary of Magdala

In the traditional western Christian Bible, Mary of Magdala is never named as a sinning woman. In fact, the biblical text never names Mary of Magdala a prostitute, either. Birger Pearson writes, "Interestingly, the legend of Mary the penitent whore is found only in the Western Church; in the Eastern Church, she is honored for what she was, a witness to the resurrection."⁷ It is only through western Christian *interpretation* that Mary is regarded as a sinner, prostitute, and one who is demon-possessed. In fact, even when a sinning woman who is *unnamed* is mentioned in the gospels, western tradition considers this woman to be Mary of Magdala. For example, in the Gospel of John there is an account of the adulteress woman. It is said that Jesus was teaching in the temple when the Pharisees and scholars brought to him a woman caught in the act of adultery. They called upon the Law of Moses⁸, which commanded this woman to be stoned to death and they asked Jesus what he thought of this. Jesus replied that whoever was sinless in the crowd should throw the first stone. After this comment the whole crowd left and only the woman remained. Jesus told the woman he did not condemn her and told her to go with

a warning against sin. Though this portrayal of sin and shame refers to an unnamed woman, the story is infamously attributed to Mary. While it is clear that this is the traditional view of Mary, it is not clear why this is.

Section Three: The Gnostic Mary

In contrast to the traditional Mary, consider the Gnostic Mary. One of the writings in The Nag Hammadi Library is titled The Gospel of Mary. This gospel exists only in fragments and yet evokes one of the most powerful messages. While it is unlikely that the Gospel of Mary was actually written by Mary of Magdala, it is significant that this gospel is written under a woman's name.

In order to critically examine the gospel, it is first important to know its story. This is the Gospel of Mary as translated by King:

Mary goes to the disciples to comfort them as they have been weeping, see Jesus has been crucified. Before his death Jesus told his followers to keep in mind his teachings and establish no other laws other than the ones he had laid down, and to keep his teachings after his death. Mary reminds the disciples they all have to keep Jesus alive on Earth. Peter questions Mary's authority to address them and challenges her to tell of a teaching that Jesus shared with her and no one else. So, Mary tells of a time when Jesus confronted her about the seven powers of the soul. She shares the lesson with the disciples. Andrew stands and addresses the disciples that he does not believe Mary and the idea of the seven powers was far too strange to be real. Peter then questioned why Jesus would share lessons secretly with a woman and not with them. Mary rebukes that she could not just make these lesson up. Levi then defends Mary by rebuking Peter and saying, "For if the Savior made her worthy, who are you then for your part to reject her? Assuredly the Savior's knowledge of her is completely reliable. That is why he loved her more than us." Then the disciples went out to teach and preach.⁹

Mary of Magdala, who is portrayed as a prostitute and demon-possessed woman in the traditional gospels, is portrayed in the Gnostic gospels as the glue that holds everyone together after Jesus' death, the person that Jesus loved more than all the other disciples, the one who taught private lessons from Jesus, and the woman who was authoritative enough to not only stand up to the men who questioned her, but also to command them to go forward and teach the lessons of Jesus. With all of the powerful possibilities that lie within the Gnostic Gospel of Mary, it is clear that this version contradicts the traditional literature. Were the gospels hidden and buried with the hopes that someday the role of the Gnostic people would be known or considered? Or were these gospels buried deep within the hillside in hopes that no one would ever know a different perspective? This is a perspective that could have changed Christianity as we know it.

While the Gospel of Mary offers many controversial passages, there is a key passage within the story that is more significant as it suggests that Mary played a pivotal role in the future of Christianity. It is important to remember that Mary consoled the weeping disciples. The disciples, after all, shared a mutual fear. Jesus could not escape death and persecution for his beliefs, and it would be dangerous to follow his teachings because doing so meant risking

their own lives.¹⁰ Mary then, according to this line of thought, is responsible for the continuation of Christianity. She alone confronted the weeping men and women and reminded them of their duties. Without her courage, Levi would not have had the opportunity to support her idea and rally the troops. If Mary had not stood her ground and presented her case for continuing Christ's teachings, Christianity may have died along with Jesus. While there is no way to know for certain what the fate of Christianity would have looked like, it is evident that the Gospel of Mary is not a heretical work, but rather, a work of homage to Jesus Christ.

Section Four: Considering Mary in Two Ways

After examining the Gnostic Mary and the traditional Mary, it is clear that she is depicted in very different ways. On one hand, there is Mary, the sinner and prostitute, and on the other, there is Mary, the foundation of Christianity after Jesus' death. This is not a trivial mix up or slight difference of opinion. It is a blatant attempt on tradition's part to rewrite the character of Mary. If the Eastern Orthodox Church viewed Mary as a highly revered saint and the Gnostics respected Mary's role as pivotal in the continuation of Christianity, then where did this traditional Western Orthodox view emerge from? Karen King suggests it arose out of fear.

In an attempt to address this traditional view, King argues that in eastern traditions, Mary was never seen as a prostitute, adulteress, or sinner. Rather, this interpretation was brought about by the Western tradition.¹¹ According to King, the literature suggests that the Western Church felt intimidated by Mary's relationship to Jesus and what this meant for the role of His church, and in turn, there was a shift from saint to sinner.¹²

King supports this claim by offering three ways in which the Western Church was threatened by Mary. First, in the Gospel of John, Jesus commands Mary not to touch him yet because He hasn't ascended to the Father.¹³ King argues that this verse has been used to question the physicality of Jesus' resurrection. Christians believe that Jesus' body physically ascended, along with his spirit, to Heaven. If this physical resurrection of Christ was in question, then the church would have some explaining to do. Instead, it was easier to denounce the role of Mary and make her out to be a less credible figure in order to avoid being interrogated. Second, King argues that Mary was alone when she saw the Lord and thus, her testimony could be questioned by others.¹⁴ The Western Church saw this as a chance to question Mary's role and legitimacy. They saw this as a threat to their power. The third reason King offers is that Jesus came to Mary *first* and gave her private teachings. These all made the church more vulnerable. Not only was Jesus teaching Mary, but he was commanding her to go and teach the others, which gave women the authority to teach the male apostles.¹⁵ King says that for these three reasons, the western traditions have regarded Mary as a dangerous character. In order to avoid the potential shift in thought, the tradition sought to demean Mary in order to make her less credible and also less authoritative in writing Christian history.

Section Five: The Traditional Thomas & His Views on Mary

Mary is mentioned in some form in all of the traditional gospels. She is even mentioned in the Gospel of Thomas. In The Gospel of Thomas there are 114 chapters – most of these chapters are filled with accounts of Jesus' sayings. In his final chapter Thomas writes of the conversation between Simon Peter and Jesus. Simon Peter says to Jesus that Mary has to leave because women do not deserve life. Jesus responds that he will make her male and that every woman who makes herself male will be able to enter the kingdom of Heaven.¹⁶ This is how the gospel ends.

While the above verse from Thomas is perplexing and bewildering to many readers, it seems to be somewhat consistent with King's and Pearson's argument. Mary was a threat to her male counterparts. She was so problematic that she is made out to be an adulteress, a sinner, a prostitute, and even unacceptable in the female gender to Jesus. According to Thomas, even Jesus confesses that Mary must become male to be able to get into Heaven. Not only is this account in the gospel, but it is the closer of the gospel. It is apparent that Mary was on the minds of the religious Western leaders and that they needed Mary to be on the minds of the followers as well, just in a different way. Though there are many arguments about the role of Mary Magdala, there is no doubt that Mary is a prominent figure in the gospels. She always makes an appearance, and that alone suggests her authority.

Although Mary's portrayed identity and the Gospel of Mary offer rich insights into the question behind a Gnostic intention of heresy or homage, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas also offers fascinating literature on Jesus. This Gnostic gospel explores Jesus as a child and lends a unique portrait of his character.

Section Six: The Gnostic Thomas

In one of the first chapters of Thomas' infancy gospel, he tells the story of boy Jesus making sparrows. On the Sabbath, Jesus sat and made clay water pure. From this water he formed 12 clay sparrows. When the elders saw Jesus doing work on the Sabbath, they scolded Joseph, Jesus' father. Joseph went to punish his son, but Jesus commanded the clay sparrows to be gone, and they simply flew away. All of the bystanders were in awe. This story seems to be consonant with miracle stories of Jesus in the Bible. Had this account made the cut into the traditional gospels, it would be highly revered. This Gnostic text speaks to the abilities of Jesus as a child. It is evident that this work is not heresy.

Perhaps a more provocative verse from the infancy gospel would provide more of a challenge in the consideration of heresy or homage. There is a tripartite story that describes Jesus and his playmates. Essentially Jesus was on his way when a child bumps into him. Jesus condemns the boy, and he dies instantly. The onlookers and the boy's parents scream at Joseph and tell him that his family cannot keep living in the same village as them because his son is killing their children. This story is not accepted in tradition and is highly regarded as a Gnostic work.¹⁷ Is Jesus' temper as a child heresy? There are several accounts in the Infancy Gospel of Jesus killing out of anger as a boy.

The depiction of Jesus in the traditional Bible is different for many people, but there seems to be an overall passive consensus on his temperament. It is not until Jesus' character is studied more intimately that one can see the power and consequence behind Jesus' anger, even in the western books. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus curses a fig tree for not providing fruit to him, even though it was out of season. The fig tree dies instantly under Jesus' command. If a cursed fig tree is not convincing enough of Jesus' anger, then consider the cursing of Jesus' enemies in the book of Revelation. He exclaims that he will strike the children of sinners dead and cast a bed of suffering. This is the conclusive book of the Bible and what the reader is ultimately left with. Perhaps it is easier to forget about Jesus' anger and power to harm. It is more enjoyable to think of him as healer and savior. However, it is true that not all glory is earned or directed through passive acts.

Fear, in fact, is a revered characteristic for G_d and his son in the Christian Bible. Fearing their power is ultimately respecting their ability and might. The traditional books of

Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, and Ephesians alike warn the readers to fear Christ. For it is through fear that a follower can show honor and awe to Christ. While the Infancy Gospel of Thomas pushes its readers to view Jesus beyond passivism, it should not be stamped with a heretical label. It seems to be consistent in suggesting reasons to fear, as many other traditional books do.

Conclusion

Through the examination of the library and defining Gnosticism, it appears the Gnostics undoubtedly admired Jesus - so much so that they went beyond what was comfortable to ask questions, know him better, and, above all else, pay homage to Christ. Through examination of Mary and Thomas specifically, one can determine that the Gnostic Gospels deserve much more general consideration in modern Christianity. However uncomfortable or unorthodox they may be, these two gospels alone provide insights in opposition to the traditional Christian views. Whenever opposition arises, rich questions develop. While this paper is merely an introduction to the many works in the Nag Hammadi Library, it demands further questions and thus advances scholarship in religion. Perhaps it is those who dare to question that truly come to know.

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Endnotes

- 1 Both the Gospel of Thomas and the Infancy Gospels will be reviewed when considering Thomas. It should be noted that while both gospels bare Thomas' name, thus linking the character, the texts are coming from two separate gospels.
- 2 Meyer, Marvin. *The Gnostic Discoveries*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.
- 3 Meyer, Marvin. *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.
- 4 King, Karen. *What is Gnosticism?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- 5 Hoeller, Stephan. What is a Gnostic? *Gnosis: A Journal of Western Inner Traditions*, 1992.
- 6 King, Karen. *What is Gnosticism?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- 7 Birger, Pearson. *From Saint to Sinner*. Biblical Archaeology Society, 2013.
- 8 The Law of Moses is a collection of commandments that were sent from God and spoken through Moses. These laws are highly revered in Judaism and serve as a guide for acting in accordance with the Lord's ways.

- 9 King, Karen. *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 King, Karen. *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003.
- 12 Pearson, Birger. *From Saint to Sinner*. Biblical Archaeology Society, 2013. <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/was-mary-magdalene-wife-of-jesus-was-mary-magdalene-a-prostitute/>
- 13 King, Karen. *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Funk, Robert. *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. New York: Polebridge Press, 1993.
- 17 Ehrman, Bart & Plese, Zlatko. *The Apocryphal Gospels*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

"I Will Give Them an Everlasting Name": Bearing Witness through Survivor Literature >>> Meghan Crawford

The Holocaust is one of the most horrific periods in the history of humanity. It is a testament to the evil man is capable of implementing on his fellow man, exposing the dark underbelly of human existence. Of the over nine and a half million Jews of Europe prior to the outbreak of World War II, only a third survived the war as six million Jews were slaughtered in Hitler's Final Solution. Amongst those who remained fell the responsibility to bear witness. The survivors were compelled to speak not only for themselves, for what they had borne, but also to give voice to the silenced six million and the callous way in which they had been killed. As the epigraph to Claude Lanzmann's acclaimed film *Shoah* read, "I will give them an everlasting name". This is precisely what Holocaust visual representations such as literature and film aimed to do: give a name to those rendered nameless, a voice to those forever silenced, thereby preventing the Holocaust from being condemned to the dead realm of history. Those who survived sought to make known the evils of the Holocaust in the hope that it might prevent a reoccurrence. As Primo Levi notes in *The Drowned and the Saved*, "We must be listened to: above and beyond our personal experience, we have collectively witnessed a fundamental unexpected event, fundamental precisely because unexpected, not foreseen by anyone. It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say. It can happen, and it can happen everywhere" (199). Primo Levi was an Italian Jewish writer who survived Auschwitz and only became a writer because of his compelling need to bear witness. Similarly, Tadeusz Borowski, a Polish writer who was also interned in and survived Auschwitz as a political prisoner, sought to bear witness through literature in the aftermath of the Holocaust. For both of these writers, bearing witness was crucial not only to honor those murdered and prevent denial, but also to educate and inform future generations so to prevent history from repeating itself. After experiencing the horrors of the extermination camp in which all sense of humanity and connection to the world was lost, being a witness instilled in Levi and Borowski a sense of purpose and served to bridge the gap between the survivor and the rest of the world. Through Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* and Borowski's *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen*, the two survivors bear witness to the Holocaust in order to provide evidence of the atrocity so to combat denial and inform future generations, give voice to the silenced victims, and to provide themselves with a sense of purpose and identity after the dehumanizing and hollowing effects of survival.

Through *Survival in Auschwitz* and *This Way for the Gas*, Levi and Borowski seek to portray the world of the extermination camp, thereby making the viewer an indirect witness to the Holocaust. Primo Levi was an Italian Jew who was deported to Auschwitz in February 1944. In 1946 he returned to his hometown of Turin where he resolved to write about his experience in Auschwitz. A few months later he had completed his personal account, *If*

This Is a Man, which was later retitled *Survival in Auschwitz* by an American publisher. In this memoir, Levi sought to portray the world of the Lager wherein the survivors lost all sense of humanity and connection with the world outside of the camp. The world of the concentration camp or extermination camp was one in its own. It was a place that could not be described in ordinary terms, one that could never be fully explained to or comprehended by those who did not experience it. Levi sought not necessarily to explain but rather to show this unparalleled world in *Survival in Auschwitz*. Auschwitz, the Lager, was a world of namelessness, disorientation and uncontrollability. It called for its victims to forfeit any previous assumptions about the world and human existence; it forced its prisoners to adapt and readjust to this new world in which new behaviors and relations were necessary. Those who failed to adapt, who clung to their previous and false assumptions and hopes, drowned in this perplexing and crushing world. In order to subsist, Levi describes how one had to make a barrier of defense, a nest which allowed for the transplantation to this new form of existence to occur. It was only by surviving the initial "trauma of transplantation" that one could essentially survive the Lager (Levi 56). By entering this world one essentially entered what Levi later described as the "gray zone", in which each action in its time and place was the only conceivable action. There was no morality, no commitment to fellow man. Every individual was left to fend for himself, taking whatever actions were necessary to keep afloat. As Levi notes, "here in the Lager there are no criminals nor madmen; no criminals because there is no moral law to contravene, no madmen because we are wholly devoid of free will, as our every action is, in time and place, the only conceivable one" (98). This phenomenon in particular was difficult for Levi to convey to the non-survivors, those who had not experienced it for themselves. Within the Lager there was no past, no future; there was only the moment. Levi writes, "The future stood in front of us, gray and inarticulate, like an invincible barrier. For us, history had stopped" (117). He sought to show the world, the non-survivors, why it was that little to no resistance occurred within the camps. He sought to show how victims became entwined in the killing process, how they became normalized and numb to the mass extermination. In a world in which there was no morality, no future, where men were reduced to their most basic, animalistic form, in which only the actions of each individual moment mattered, all sense of humanity was lost. As Levi notes, "Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short, of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself" (27). Levi and his fellow inmates were broken, made hollow by the transplantation into the world of the Lager and thereby became numb and emotionless to the evil they witnessed and were forced to participate in to some extent.

In *This Way for the Gas*, Tadeusz Borowski seeks also to describe the world of the Lager as a means of bearing witness to the Holocaust. Borowski's use of language and description in his short stories is quintessential to understanding his perception of Auschwitz. Both Borowski and Levi rely on detailed, sensory imagery to describe this world in order to provide an accurate assessment, one that served as evidence of the atrocities committed. They write in a rather blunt, matter-of-fact style that lacks emotion and conceptual thoughts. Their accounts seek to show the Final Solution, to bear witness; not to reflect upon or try to explain it. In fact some have claimed that to try to explain or rationalize the Holocaust is to offer exoneration for the perpetrators. Borowski's stories in particular are emotionless,

as he describes Auschwitz in a rather normalized manner. This serves to show how the victims themselves had become normalized and adjusted to the world of the Lager, a world in which mass extermination became an ordinary, everyday occurrence. He writes about the camp, the killings so frankly because to try to write about it in another way would mean to provide a misrepresentation and thus not accurately describe or bear witness to this world. At the center of this world he describes are death and the gas chambers. He shows how the victims numbly accept and take part in this extermination, how everyone was both victim and executioner. The characters in his stories show no compassion for those destined for the gas chambers, they take no actions to try to prevent or stop the killings. In fact in one story, "This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen", one of the characters expresses how he and his fellow inmate needed the transports and gassings to continue as long as they were still being interned. This was so that they could continue to take the food and belongings of the doomed that kept them from starvation. As the character notes, "stop talking nonsense... they can't run out of people, or we'll starve to death in this blasted camp. All of us live on what they bring" (Borowski 31). There was no compassion, no guilt for their actions. For in a world where morality was suspended, the prisoners had lost their humanity and become numb to the atrocities they witnessed and participated in. For example in the same story the narrator describes a horrific act committed by the inmates. "Several other men are carrying a small girl with only one leg. They hold her by the arms and one leg. Tears are running down her face and she whispers faintly: 'sir, it hurts it hurts...' They throw her on the truck on top of the corpses. She will burn alive along with them" (Borowski 46). There is no emotion, no passion in this passage, only the harsh and cruel reality of life in the Lager. Through reading Borowski and Levi's accounts, one becomes transported momentarily to the world of the concentration camp. The writers seek to transport the reader through their use of language, attention to detail, and brutally honest depictions in order to cause an experience within the reader. The reader, in a sense, experiences the world of the Lager and thereby becomes an indirect witness to the Final Solution.

In *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann plays and works with the notion of watching and seeing a documentary as being an experience for the viewer. He forces the viewer to see what remains of the extermination camps and hear the survivor testimony, while in the process forcing the viewer into the position of witness. Through viewing *Shoah*, one becomes an indirect witness to the Final Solution. As Simone de Beauvoir notes in the preface to the *Shoah* script, "now for the first time, we live it in our minds, heart and flesh. It becomes our experience" (Lanzmann iii). Similarly in Levi and Borowski's works, the reader is made an indirect witness through the detailed and painstakingly honest image of life in Auschwitz. Although the reader does not actually see the camps as they do in *Shoah*, the vivid sensory imagery provided allows for the reader to create a picture, a running image or film, in their mind as they read, thus allowing for an experience to occur. Though perhaps not as powerful as that which occurs through *Shoah*, the reader experiences the Final Solution as seen through the eyes of two of its survivors, Levi and Borowski. By forcing the reader to experience this, Borowski and Levi seek to make the reader a witness and thereby gain knowledge and insight into the event that helps to combat denial and lack of engagement with the Holocaust.

Through Levi and Borowski's works, Hitler's Final Solution via gassing is portrayed, bearing witness to and giving a voice to its victims. As aforementioned, the gas chambers

were at the core of the world and life of the camp; death was inescapable. Those who did not fall victim to the gas chambers were still connected to them in some way, shape or form. For some, like Levi, the threat of “selection” for the gas chambers was always looming. For others like Borowski who were non-Jews and thus not subject to gassing, the gas chambers still lay at the core of their existence. The means of their survival, such as extra food and clothing, came from the transports of Jews destined for the gas chambers. Furthermore, several of Borowski’s characters take part in the killing process itself, helping to unload and lead the selected to their death. The disturbing images of the men throwing a disabled girl into the crematorium alive, of a man forcing an old woman to carry the fresh corpses of the babies who did not survive the trip to Auschwitz, show the extent to which the prisoners had become involved in the killing process. Also by portraying those who worked so closely to the victims and the gassing, Borowski bears witness to the departed victims of the Final Solution and in doing so gives a voice to this silenced group. His approach is similar to that of Lanzmann’s in *Shoah* where, through the survivor testimony of those forced to work in or near the gas chambers, the victims can be heard. The past speaks through the witnesses who describe in great detail, like Borowski and Levi’s accounts, the process of mass extermination. The departed victims, those whose bodies were burnt to ashes and ashes to dust, nothing of them remained. Like Lanzmann, both Borowski and Levi try to provide a testament on the behalf of the departed, to keep alive their memory and the truth of their death. They bear witness not only for themselves but for those who are unable to speak of the atrocities they suffered.

It is the responsibility of the survivor to provide a record through whatever means necessary. Borowski and Levi did it through literature; Louis Malle did so through film. In his film *Au revoir les enfants*, Malle portrays through visual, cinematic means a painful, lasting memory from his childhood: the discovery and arrest of three of his Jewish classmates and principal at his Catholic boarding school in the winter of 1944. The boys were all sent to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Malle becomes a witness to the Holocaust, to the policy of mass extermination in the final scene, the final moment of the film when he learns the fate of his friend Bonnet and the two other boys. This is a decisive moment of truth and clarity for the young Malle who becomes aware of the evil and brutality of the world in which he lives and thereby loses his childlike innocence. Writing and producing the film became a means by which Malle could come to terms with what he witnessed and also give voice to the departed, to Bonnet’s real-life counterpart, and the other victims of the Final Solution. It was a script he had to write, a film he had to make. Like Holocaust survivors, Malle felt compelled and responsible to share what he had seen and truly bear witness. Through viewing *Au revoir les enfants* one gains insight and knowledge along with Malle’s fictionalized self, Julien, into the Final Solution, serving as a further illustration of how art forces the creator and the viewer into a position of indirect witnessing.

Through bearing witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust in *Survival in Auschwitz* and *This Way for the Gas*, Levi and Borowski sought not only to give voice to the departed but also to provide evidence of the events in an attempt to combat denial. There have been two main phases of Holocaust denial. The first occurred immediately after the liberation of the camps in 1945 when the Allied armies discovered the remnants of Hitler’s policy of mass extermination. Those perpetrators and executioners of the Final Solution were rounded up, hunted down and sent to trial, the most of which occurred at Nuremberg in

1946. These war criminals claimed innocence by denying responsibility in, and oftentimes acknowledgement or awareness of, the mass extermination policy. The character of the denying perpetrator is accurately portrayed through Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. In the text Browning conducts a study into one particular unit of the Nazi bureaucratic hierarchy, the German Order Police Reserve Unit 101, whose function was to partake first in the mass shootings of Eastern European Jews and later in the deportation of the Jews to the Nazi death camps in German-occupied Poland. Browning focuses on the period from the summer of 1942 to the winter and spring of 1943, the time during which a fundamental shift occurred in Nazi policy towards the European Jews from disorganized and brutal mass shootings in the East to systematic, more "humane", mass killings in extermination camps through gassing. His investigation into this particular police unit takes the reader on the ground and therein shows the process of mass extermination. Through the evidence Browning gathers, witness is given to the part of the Holocaust not addressed by Levi or Borowski, the processes of mass shootings and ghettoization. Those members of the unit attempted to deny any responsibility, claiming they were merely following orders. But Browning shows that some of the men refused to partake in the shootings largely due to physical not moral revulsion at the pieces of brain and splattered blood coming from the victims and that Commander Trapp at the first massacre at Jozefow "made an extraordinary offer: if any of the older men among them did not feel up to the task that lay before him, he could step out" (2). The men were not bound to participate in the shootings, they had agency. Browning shows how these men who began as collaborators, ordinary men assigned to the Battalion became perpetrators engaged in carrying out the Final Solution. Browning's text is significant in its portrayal of how ordinary men became killers and its showing of what some men are capable of doing in extreme circumstances. *Ordinary Men* is closely associated with Milgram's Obedience Experiment which Browning drew upon in his exploration of the historical, social and psychological explanations of the Battalion's actions. Milgram set out to investigate how far people would go in obeying orders, even to the point of inflicting harm on fellow human beings and found that there was extreme willingness on the part of his subjects to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority. Milgram found that ordinary people were willing to obey authority even when it was in conflict with their moral conscience. Both the Milgram experiment and *Ordinary Men* showed the unpredictability of man's behavior when placed in extreme circumstances and confirmed the significance and necessity of bearing witness to the Holocaust. The fact that ordinary individuals could become killers showed how it was possible that the Holocaust could happen again in some dimension and stresses the importance of survivors bearing witness in order to educate future generations on the Holocaust in the hope of preventing a reoccurrence. As noted in Borowski's story "Auschwitz Our Home", "ordinary trucks bring people, return, then bring some more. No hocus-pocus, no poison, no hypnosis" (112). These individuals were not forced to partake in the extermination process; they elected to do so. Furthermore *Ordinary Men* shows how perpetrators attempted to deny any responsibility in the Holocaust, thus emphasizing the need for eye witness accounts to provide evidence of the deeds committed by the deniers.

A second phase of denial gained currency in the 1980s as certain "scholars" and individuals began to deny the existence of the Holocaust and the gas chambers. There was a rather broad range of denial as some outright denied the Final Solution, while others claimed

it was not as catastrophic or momentous as survivors and historians had led the world to believe. There was yet another level on this spectrum, those who did not deny the events of the Holocaust but wanted to leave the past in the past and those who chose not to ask questions or seek insight into the matter. The spectrum ranged from outright denial to dead silence. In Michael Verhoeven's film *The Nasty Girl*, the issue of bystanders to the Holocaust electing not to remember or bear witness to the incident is apparent. The film shows how the protagonist Sonja sought to uncover the truth about her town's participation in the Third Reich and met the fierce resistance of her fellow townspeople who did not want the truth to be revealed. Sonja tries to locate the exact location of a satellite camp near her town but the townspeople who were witnesses to the time refuse to relive or share their memories, wanting to keep the past buried. *The Nasty Girl* portrays the resolve of many bystanders to the Holocaust to remain silent and thereby deny their responsibility of being a witness. Such silence or apathy is combated by visual mediums of memory including literature and film that illustrate the atrocity and make it tangible.

Through their literary survival accounts, Levi and Borowski sought to prevent the silence and lack of interest or engagement in the Holocaust as part of their bearing witness. After Primo Levi finished writing *Survival in Auschwitz* in 1946, he had great difficulty getting the work published due to a lack of public interest on the topic. At the time people were not interested in hearing or reading about the Holocaust; they did not want to be made witness. Following the Eichmann trial in the early 1960s there was renewed interest into the Holocaust and a desire for survivor testimony, but each generation must decide whether or not it seeks to ask questions and gain knowledge into the event. Levi grew particularly frustrated by the lack of interest on the part of future generations into the Holocaust. He noted in *Reawaking* that "monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are...the functionaries ready to believe and act without asking questions" (214). For Levi, the notion that people did not want to hear or learn about the Holocaust was almost worse than the existence of evil if people were willing to stand by and let the evil unfold. Furthermore, Levi feared that if future generations did not ask questions and seek to acquire knowledge into the Holocaust, they would not have the means to combat denial. He claims that there will come a time when not even memory survives. Memory will only persist so long as people keep asking questions and seeking knowledge. When the questions stop and the interest is lost, that is when memory fades. Through writing literary survival accounts, Levi and Borowski provide a way to ensure the survival of their testimony, their memory. Levi's account is in fact a memoir whereby the writer recreates the moment, the memory according to his own recollection. His work is a memory that lives on, but only so long as people continue to pick it up and read its contents. Similarly, Borowski's testimony is written in ink, published for all to read if they so choose. As Levi's epigraph to *Survival in Auschwitz* notes, "Never forget that this has happened. Remember these words. Engrave them in your hearts...Repeat them to your children." It is by choosing to ignore history that history repeats itself, and the tormentors, the evildoers, succeed. Elie Wiesel, another well-known writer and survivor of the Holocaust calls one to "take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented" (*Goodreads.com*). It is in remaining silent that the departed victims of the Holocaust are truly forgotten. The task at hand for future generations is to ensure that the silence never sounds and the victims truly be given an everlasting name.

Through Borowski and Levi's literary survival accounts they sought to bear witness in order to create a sense of purpose and identity in themselves following Auschwitz, as well as a possible means of coping with the guilt of survival. Prior to World War II both Borowski and Levi as young men had hope for the future and the progress of humanity. Levi had grown up in an Italy that had only recently in the late 19th century begun to allow for the assimilation of the Jewish population. Opportunities were made available and there was hope that further progress would be made in the future. However, with Mussolini's implementation of the Italian racial laws, the progress made thus far was completely reversed, raising doubts to the hope for the future. Levi and Borowski alike were further disillusioned by their experience in Auschwitz. The camp brought an end to any optimism or hope for the future, any notion of progress. The inhumanity and atrocities they bore, the lengths to which they saw humanity go, made them skeptical of the future of society and mankind. Their accounts provide no allusions about society or progress and hope for the future. There is only what Jan Kott calls, "the cruelest of testimonies": a detached, emotionless and detailed witness account (Borowski 12). Through their experience in the camps, Borowski and Levi lost their sense of humanity and forfeited any previous identity and assumptions of the world. In *This Way for the Gas and Survival in Auschwitz*, Borowski and Levi portray this loss of humanity. In the world of the Lager, where morality is suspended, any form of humanity and previous identities are abolished, at least momentarily. Levi notes how "already my own body is no longer mine" (37). The prisoner, the victim no longer possessed his own body as it quickly gave way to starvation and impulse. The only thing left in one's possession was one's memory, or rather one's ability to remember and communicate through language. These two dimensions—memory and language—allowed for some small trace of humanity to remain; just enough for one to "survive". Levi claims "to destroy a man is difficult, almost as difficult as to create one: it has not been easy, nor quick, but you Germans have succeeded. Here we are, docile under your gaze; from our side you have nothing more to fear; no acts of violence, no words of defiance, not even a look of judgment" (150). Both Levi and Borowski acknowledged and portrayed the compliance and participation of the victim in the killing process which can be seen in accordance with the loss of humanity and all sense of moral obligation. Though at the time of their internment they did not feel, or rather could not feel, any guilt or shame for their actions in the wake of their survival, and liberation, the guilt of survival, may have played a part in their desire to bear witness. Witnessing could serve as a means of coping with the "survivor's guilt" and more so the loss of humanity and any sense of purpose. As Levi notes, "the conviction that life has a purpose is rooted in every fiber of man, it is a property of the human substance" (71). In the aftermath of the Holocaust the survivors sought to restore a sense of humanity the best they could and that humanity entailed having a function, a purpose. For many survivors like Levi and Borowski, being a witness instilled in them a sense of purpose that helped to temporarily fill their hollowed selves. The survivor thus sought not only to tell his story in order to pay homage to the departed but more so because he felt a need, an impulse to tell it. Accordingly, Levi writes that, "the need to tell our story to 'the rest'... had taken on for us... the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs. The book has been written to satisfy this need: first and foremost, therefore, as an interior liberation" (9). Levi, and Borowski also, perhaps sought to free himself from the guilt regarding his actions in Auschwitz. Bearing witness through literature could help combat that

guilt through acknowledging it. As Borowski notes, "a portion of the sad fame of Auschwitz belongs to you as well" (22). Everyone was assigned the double role of executioner and victim.

Bearing witness also allowed for one to attempt to bridge the gap between the survivor and the rest of the world. Both Borowski and Levi speak of and exhibit the profound sense of isolation the survivor bears. This sense of isolation began in the camp as they were forced to fend for themselves, to put their own needs above that of any other. Upon liberation and return to the "outside" world, they struggled with a sense of permanent separation from the world. This separation may be attributed in part to Levi and Borowski's growing disillusionment and skepticism after the war which would have separated them from those who still remained positive about the future of humanity. Furthermore, there was a sense of isolation in the fact that the world of the Lager was one that no one outside of the camp had ever experienced. It was incomprehensible and therefore remote. Levi was the only member of his family to be interned at Auschwitz, the only one to experience the horrors. Furthermore of the 6000 Italian Jews deported to Auschwitz, only 356 survived. This served to further isolate Levi and pressure him to act as a witness through writing in order to inform the Italian population of what happened in the camps.

Through the act of bearing witness in writing literature, Primo Levi and Tadeusz Borowski sought to regain a sense of purpose and identity in the world and bridge the gap between themselves as survivors and the rest of the world. However, the act of bearing witness may have become too much for the two men to endure. The responsibility of giving an everlasting name to the departed victims of the Holocaust was a weighty task indeed. Furthermore, the lack of interest and engagement on the part of younger generations may have made Levi and Borowski feel that their cause was hopeless. On July 1, 1951 Tadeusz Borowski opened a gas valve; he died two days later. Over thirty years later on April 11, 1987 Primo Levi hurled himself down the stairwell of his apartment complex. Commenting on Levi's sudden death by suicide, Elie Wiesel said, "Primo Levi died at Auschwitz forty years later" (Gambetta). Levi was unable to fill the gap, to mend the divide rendered by his experience in Auschwitz. Like Borowski and other Holocaust survivors, being a witness through writing literature had not been enough to salvage their human existence. However that does not mean the task should be forsaken, the pen abandoned. In spite of the difficulty such an act requires, literary texts on the Holocaust are a necessary means of memory. In a time when the generations of Holocaust survivors are dying out, this task becomes all the more important. For Levi, Borowski, and other Holocaust writers, survivor literature gives voice to the silenced victims and combats those who dare deny this catastrophic period of European history.

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Symbolism and Cultural Meaning in Karel Husa's *Music for Prague 1968*

>>> Paul Faulkner

Music for Prague 1968 by Karel Husa is arguably one of the most influential and symbolically meaningful pieces in the modern wind band repertoire. Written following the end of the Prague Spring Reform in Czechoslovakia, Husa's masterpiece is drenched in Czech patriotism and sincere humanitarian concern. Musicologist Byron Adams comments that "every bar of *Music for Prague 1968* is infused with the burning sincerity and compassion of its composer"¹ A highly atonal piece, *Music for Prague* details the beauty of the city, the strife of the people, and the hope of liberty. Renowned wind band conductor Mark Scatterday writes that "the emotional impact of his music, his historical significance, his musical stature, and his personal dignity embodied in his music provide a unique opportunity for ensembles, conductors and audiences to experience something of his commitment to the dignity and freedom of all people."² This piece not only speaks to the sorrow of the Czech people, but it also echoes cries for freedom everywhere. Husa memorializes the events that ended the Prague Spring reforms through interwoven symbolism in his *Music for Prague 1968*. To fully examine and understand the piece and its cultural influences, one must first become familiar with the composer's life and the historical events that inspired the composition. Analysis of the piece in relation to cultural context will follow progressively through the movements.

Karel Husa was born on August 7, 1921 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. As a boy, he played violin and piano. Husa explains, "When I was young, in Prague, I spent nearly every night either at concerts or in opera houses."³ He also was interested in composition and painting; however, at the urging of his parents, his initial career aspiration was engineering. Upon the closure of universities due to the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, Husa was unable to pursue engineering and narrowly escaped being drafted for work in a munitions factory. While working in his father's shoe shop, he unsuccessfully applied to a still-open school of art. Almost as a last resort, he found his way to the Prague Conservatory where he studied composition with Jaroslav Ridky. In 1946, he received a fellowship to study with Arthur Honegger in France; while there, he also met and studied with Nadia Boulanger. In 1954, Husa accepted a position at Cornell University, where he would teach theory, conducting, orchestration, and composition for almost 40 years until his retirement in 1992. He also taught for nearly 20 years at Ithaca College, the institution whose concert band commissioned *Music for Prague*.

Husa has written a large body of literature for orchestra, wind band, and chamber ensembles and has also written music for voice and ballet. He received the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for his *String Quartet No. 3*, although arguably his most well-known piece is *Music for Prague 1968*. Husa, originally influenced heavily by neoclassical style and folk song

traditions, became interested in serialism in the late 50's and early 60's. It was not until the late 60's that the composer began to create a more consolidated voice, retaining "the clarity and formal logic of neo-classicism, the expressive qualities and intervallic contours of the folkloric idiom, the intricate motivic interrelationships derived from serialism, and an ongoing fascination with new and unusual instrumental techniques and orchestrations."⁴ Neoclassicism, a 20th century nod to the forms of the Classical era; serialism, a compositional approach that uses numerical patterns to create musical elements; and folk songs, age-old symbols of nationalist culture, together influence Husa's unique compositional voice.

Husa explores unique choices in instrumentation and orchestration, often using extreme ranges and expecting high technical facility from the performer. Byron Adams writes that, "in his search for colorful and novel sonorities, he creates vividly expressive musical canvases, filled with arresting timbres and startling juxtapositions of texture."⁵ While Husa did not pursue his early talents as an artist, he has used his artistic ear to make unique choices in timbre and color. Especially in his pieces for wind band, Husa has greatly expanded the role and significance of the percussion section. This is particularly evident in the third movement of *Music for Prague*.

While he also has been inspired by music of the French Baroque and American jazz, Husa is perhaps most influenced by his Czech heritage. At one point, he was even referenced as "one of the greatest hopes of Czech music."⁶ In response to a question on musical influences in his early years as a composer, he responded by saying, "Definitely the music of Czech composers - Smetna, Dvorák, Janáček, as well as Suk and Novák - otherwise I didn't know much about music."⁷ Much of his early work was inspired by Czech folk music and folkloric idioms, however, his eventual melding of influences is partially evident through his interest in jazz. Husa explains, "Jazz has captured a tremendous amount of today's excitement and reminds me of much of the Czech music I learned as a young man. The constant rhythmic movement found in jazz is also characteristic of Czech composers." Husa explains that "rhythm will always be developed and expanded in my music. What I like in music is the excitement of something going on."⁸ It is difficult to argue that *Music for Prague 1968* has little 'going on' amid its rhythmic, harmonic, and technical complexities.

Music for Prague 1968 was written in response to the events that ended the Spring Reform movement. Joel Krieger writes that until Gorbachev's perestroika reforms in the 1980's, "the Prague Spring was the most important Communist Party-led reform aimed at creating a democratic and pluralistic socialism."⁹ Under the leadership of Alexander Dubček and others, reforms included an abolishment of censorship, economic decentralization, and overall more significant political freedom.¹⁰ The Prague Spring essentially began in January of 1968 when Dubček became First Secretary of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, although significant pressure for reform had been building within Czechoslovakian leadership for at least a year prior. The reform movement was furthered in March when conservative Antonin Novotný was replaced by Ludvik Svoboda as President. However, the efforts to lead the country toward "socialism with a human face"¹¹ largely came to an end in August. The Soviet politburo, displeased with the extent of these reforms, ordered 500,000 Warsaw Pact troops to invade the country on August 19-20.¹² While the invaders "had been told that their mission was to save the Czechs and Slovaks from the armed machinations of the Western bourgeoisie,"¹³ most of the Czech and Slovak people saw the invasion as a forceful end to what had been monumental steps toward liberal freedom.

Karel Husa has strong ties to his native country and its capital city. Husa explains, "After I decided I could not return to Prague in 1948, it became a symbol of my youth, of my family, of everything that I dream of but cannot attain."¹⁴ 1948 marked the beginning of Communist rule in his native country, only two years after he had left to study in France. Husa explains, "The longer I am far away from this city (I left Czechoslovakia in 1946) the more I remember the beauty of it. I can even say that in my idealization, I actually see Prague even more beautiful."¹⁵ While a resident of Prague for only 25 years of his life, he has maintained a passionate love for the city in which he started his career. Husa's love for his native city would inspire him to write *Music for Prague 1968* in response to the August invasion by Warsaw Pact troops that ended the Spring Reform movement.

Music for Prague was written in the roughly two months following the August invasion. Husa spent extended weekends at "a cottage near Lake Cayuga in upstate New York," composing "at night, from 8:00 P.M. until about 2-3:00 in the morning."¹⁶ He finished the piece in October of that year, fulfilling a commission from the Ithaca College Concert Band. Husa explains, "I always thought I would like to write a piece about Prague that would be beautiful and happy...yet when I heard the news over the radio in August 1968, it was not a time to write something very happy."¹⁷ "During those tragic and dark moments," however, he "suddenly felt the necessity to write this piece for so long meditated."¹⁸

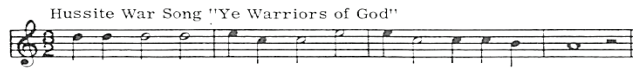
Music for Prague is an enormously influential piece, particularly within the wind band repertoire. As wind band conductor David Fullmer writes, "With virtually no precedent in band literature, *Music for Prague 1968* raised the importance of the percussion section to be equal with brass and woodwinds."¹⁹ Officially premiered on January 31, 1969 by Kenneth Snapp and the commissioning Ithaca College Concert Band at a Music Educators National Conference convention in Washington, D.C., the piece has now received well over 7,000 performances. Fullmer writes that "*Music for Prague 1968* was the first of a compositional triptych that Husa has named his three 'manifests'; scores intended to address serious issues of international concern."²⁰ In writing this first 'manifest,' as in the other two, Husa aims to express his own feelings while also encouraging others to be impacted by the message of the music. "Music somehow always represents what happens in the world, but musicians are not leaders. They are echoers."²¹ Particularly in much of Husa's music, the notes on the page do not stand alone in time and space; rather, they are influenced by the world and culture in which they were created. In speaking on how he deals with tragedy in pieces like *Music for Prague*, Husa explains:

It is a reflection of what I've seen. Since I was in my 20's I've lived through both the occupation of Hitler and the incredible turmoil after World War II in Czechoslovakia. The question of freedom and preserving it is so important...as a composer in today's society, I feel that I must also reflect what is happening around me.²²

It is almost impossible to disconnect Husa's musical work from a cultural understanding of the world around him.

Four movements make up the work: I. Introduction and Fanfare; II. Aria; III. Interlude; IV. Toccata and Chorale. The total duration, as listed on the score, is 18 minutes and 30 seconds. Instrumentation follows that of a concert wind band; however, Husa pushes expected limits by including contrabassoon, contrabass clarinet, bass saxophone, four separate trumpet parts, divisi euphonium, and parts for five percussionists.

Arguably the most important musical element of *Music for Prague* is Husa's integration of the 15th century Hussite war song "Ye Warriors of God and His Law." In fact, Adams notes that "every thematic element in *Music for Prague 1968* can be traced to the first four bars"²³ of the song.



Example 1. Hussite War Song "Ye Warriors of God," mm. 1-4²⁴

Husa describes it as "a symbol of resistance and hope for hundreds of years, whenever fate lay heavy on the Czech nation."²⁵ While this song has been used by many Czech composers, perhaps the most notable instance is Smetna's extensive use of it in the final two poems of his *Má Vlast (My Country)* symphonic tone poem cycle. Husa details his memories of this piece from the Nazi occupation in 1939 and 1940:

In one performance of *My Country* by Smetna, the conductor finished the fifth poem, *Tabor*, and tried to start the sixth, but the applause was so incredible that he couldn't go on...at the next performance the conductor finished *Tabor* and went on, but we couldn't hear anything for five or six minutes. We saw the Czech Philharmonic playing, but there was no sound, only applause.

Husa goes on to say that "the music had incredible power, and that's why I put it [into *Music for Prague*], as the most powerful war song we have ever had. Perhaps it should have become the national hymn of Czechoslovakia."²⁶ In making the Hussite war song such an important foundation to the piece, Husa builds on over five hundred years of Czech pride and honor. Not only would this melody have been recognizable to the Czech people, but it also would have inspired a desire to overcome hardship and a fervor for freedom and victory. The Hussite war song is introduced quietly in the timpani in the first movement; it will later conclude the final movement in a loud, unison chorale.

The piece opens with a piccolo solo, what Husa explains as "the uneasy quietness before the storm."²⁷ Husa also describes this as a "bird call," a "symbol of the liberty which the City of Prague has seen only for moments during its thousand years of existence."²⁸

Example 2. Husa: *Music for Prague 1968*, Mvt. I, mm. 1-5²⁹

In this seeming contradictory message of fear and hope, one can begin to feel the emotional environment Husa strives to create. Husa details his choice in writing for piccolo: "I'm sure that the flute would have sounded beautiful in that register, but that is maybe why I didn't want it."³⁰ This fearful, yet hopeful call for freedom warns that the path toward freedom is rarely beautiful. While his native city may yet have many dark days ahead, Husa still remains hopeful of an eventually free Prague. This "gray, desolate, but calm"³¹ Introduction contrasts sharply with the jagged Fanfare to follow. This B section of the first movement features the arrival of machine guns in the sixteenth-note trumpet passages.³²



Example 3. Husa: *Music for Prague* 1968, Mvt. I, mm. 39-43³³

These quick, chromatic notes create a challenge of both individual technique and ensemble timing. The juxtaposition of the quiet Introduction next to the loud and active Fanfare mirrors the reforms of the Prague Spring as interrupted by the uninvited and restrictive Communist tanks during the August invasion.

The second movement furthers the growing sense of anxiety and fear, yet still within the light of hope. He accomplishes this by using unusual orchestration and modern compositional techniques within a traditional modified song form. Husa explains: "The title of the *Aria* might be a little surprising; it is, of course, not an 'aria' in an operatic sense, the word may be a little sarcastic for that occasion: it is not a happy aria."³⁴ He is able to juxtapose the shell of a traditional aria with serial techniques and disjunct melodies in a satirical way that amplifies the sorrows of the Czech people. The movement opens with a low, haunting melody scored for saxophones plus bass and contra-bass clarinets.

Musical score for Example 4, showing staves for B. Cl., Cb. Cl., A. Saxs 2, T. Sax., Bar Sax., and B. Sax. with a low, haunting melody. The notation is in treble clef with many flat accidentals, creating a somber and disjunct sound.

Example 4. Husa: *Music for Prague* 1968, Mvt. II, mm. 6-11³⁵

Husa continues: "I have given it to the saxophones purposely; they have the tremendous ability to sing, sound strong and loud, and yet expressive at all times; also by their vibrating quality, it may be close to what we call *vox humana* on the organ. And this is what this melodic line was about: to say the anguish, fear and desolation in awaiting what will come next."³⁶ This specific scoring reflects the Czech people's songs of pain with power and resolve. "As in a funeral-march procession," Husa says, the saxophone line builds "progressively into the climax under the pulse of the vibraphone and marimba."³⁷



Example 5. Husa: *Music for Prague 1968*, Mvt. II, mm. 32-33³⁸

The climax, a few measures into the B section, features material from the first movement's Fanfare as the people's sorrows break out again into cries of resistance. Adams writes that this movement "is both the most systematically serialized and formally subtle of the four movements,"³⁹ a nod to the complexity of the Czech people's strife amid the simplicity of their desire for liberty.

Husa's use of percussion is perhaps one of the most interesting symbolic choices in the composition. Throughout much of the piece, he uses the percussion section to imitate the bells in the city of Prague, the "City of Hundreds of Towers." Husa explains that Prague "has used its magnificently sounding church bells as calls of distress as well as to signal victory."⁴⁰ Through this symbolic compositional choice, he is able to echo the sorrowful cries of the Czech people while foreshadowing their eventual victory in obtaining liberty. He even requests special placement of the instruments, saying, "I spread them [the percussion] around the wind ensemble or orchestra so that the effect is like bells ringing around the city of Prague."⁴¹ The third movement, which is scored exclusively for percussion, furthers this symbolism within the section. While three accompaniment parts mimic the bells of Prague, the snare drum and vibraphone take on unique symbolic voices.

Example 6. Husa: *Music for Prague 1968*, Mvt. III, mm. 19-20⁴²

Adams writes that “the snare drum has an elemental, menacing, and militaristic quality, while the vibraphone symbolizes a human voice growing increasingly agitated.”⁴³ If the snare drum is to represent the invading Warsaw Pact troops, then the vibraphone reveals the inner cries of the Czech people that will soon erupt again in the final movement. Husa describes this movement as “the quiet night, but the sort of quietness before an explosion or storm.”⁴⁴ This sense of uneasiness echoes the fear of the Czech people and leads progressively into the final movement.

The fourth movement consists largely of a complex toccata, followed by the Hussite chorale at the end, and is the only movement to completely lack serial techniques. Husa packs so many elements of symbolism into just the last 24 measures of the piece. Following a loud rhythmic section, the Adagio at S features soft unison D’s in the woodwinds that progressively enter and build toward a forte chorale statement of the Hussite war song. Underneath this growing texture are forte variations on the war song in the timpani part.

16 [S] Adagio (♩ = ca. 44)

The musical score for Example 7 shows the woodwind parts (Piccolo, Flute 1/2, Flute 1/3, Flute 2/1, Oboe 1, Oboe 2, and English Horn) in 4/4 time. The score is marked 'Adagio' with a tempo of approximately 44 beats per minute. The woodwinds play unison D notes, with dynamics ranging from ppp to pp. The score includes markings for 'cresc.', 'poco', 'a poco', and '(stagger breathing)'.

Example 7. Husa: *Music for Prague* 1968, Mvt. IV, mm. 307-312⁴⁵

Husa describes the contrast between the timpani and unison D’s in anticipation of the war song statement as “the idea of more and more people from afar joining this warrior on the drum and uniting in the song.”⁴⁶ One can almost hear the multitudes of Czech people joining together, at the urging of a drum beat, to sing together a cry for victory and liberty. Several bars later, Husa includes a controlled aleatoric section that continues to function within symbolism and deep meaning.

Example 8. Husa: *Music for Prague* 1968, Mvt. IV, m. 323⁴⁷

Adams comments that “the terror and dismay of this section suggests the wildness of a fearful crowd.”⁴⁸ Another drum beat leads into a final unison statement of the Hussite war song; however, it is this time the character of the snare drum, already established as representing the invading Soviet forces, which drives the people to sing.

The conclusion of the work leaves an encompassing message for both Czechs and people everywhere. Husa explains that the war song’s use “at the beginning and end of the work gives it a strong ‘center note,’ which is D, even if the last unison at the end is on E... which is the highest note in the chorale. This note...is a gesture of defiance and hope.”⁴⁹ The song ends higher than the expected tonal center in the same way that Husa hopes that his native Prague will rise from the strife it has experienced. He further explains: “I definitely wanted to write something positive at the end...the work would have finished on D if it were tonal music, but I thought the lack of resolution would represent hope at the end.”⁵⁰ As Adams points out, “The Hussite war song remains unfinished; so too the search for freedom is never finished.”⁵¹ The fight for liberty on earth can never be completely won, and it is in this truth that Husa’s message rings true for both Czechs and people everywhere.

Husa’s representation of hope at the end truly was a foreshadowing of the 1989 collapse of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Husa comments: “My native city is free now, which I didn’t think I would see in my lifetime. I hope someday it will be an additional thousand years old, still majestic and beautiful, although marked by its tragedies, sadness, and joy.”⁵² While haunted by sorrow and strife, Prague still stands in beauty to Husa and the Czech people. Husa reflects on the musical message he wrote decades ago saying, “It is satisfying to know that the belief I had in 1968 was not in vain.”⁵³ After over 7,000 performances, *Music for Prague* stands as a testament to a city plagued by strife and a people robbed of their liberty.

In a 1997 concert in Prague, the piece was programmed alongside Beethoven’s monumental 9th Symphony, a work that had both broken new ground compositionally and made important statements about humankind. One critic commented that “the substantial feature of Husa’s work rang precisely in a similar way with Beethoven’s dream for the freedom of the human race.”⁵⁴ *Music for Prague* and the message for which Husa has

written it goes beyond time and place. David Fullmer perhaps says it best: "This composition has been described as more than a memorial to a tragic episode in the history of one city; its cries of anguish and indignation are relevant whenever the innocent are crushed and victimized by the strong."⁵⁵ This message rings true for any and all people who take the time to listen to it. Husa gives listeners a challenge: "[Prague] is free now, and this all depends on people, not Czechs only but also those around them, to keep it so."⁵⁶ It is a wonder to explore the far-reaching effects of one man's decision to memorialize an important cultural event. Perhaps the message of *Music for Prague 1968* can truly be meaningful music for every willing ear.

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Still on the Road: A Comparison of Eighteenth Century North American Travel Writing and Kerouac's *On the Road* >>> Beth Gier

When examining eighteenth, early nineteenth, and twentieth century North American travel literature, one might be tempted to believe no similarity exists between writings that are separated by 200 years. However, twentieth century travel literature often covers the same ground that eighteenth century travel writers tread in their narratives, with some shifts in intention and approach. In the eighteenth century, travel writers, mostly wealthy Europeans vacationing in the newly independent colonies, commonly commented on the mannerisms and customs of Americans, while also creating and stabilizing symbolic images and expectations of the American landscape and people. Twentieth century travel writers discussed mannerisms and enforced iconic images of American ideology in their books as well. Perhaps no twentieth century travel book that looks at some of the popular themes in North American travel writing is more renowned than Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1959). It is a novelistic feat that follows the many cross-country journeys of main character Sal Paradise and his frenetic, restless, lost soul of a friend Dean Moriarty and their rag-tag group of friends. Kerouac captures the energies, mannerisms, and iconography of the era of the Beat generation—he fathered the Beat generation. *On the Road*, although a semi-fictional travel narrative that differs in genre from the (mostly) true eighteenth century narratives, explores many of the same topics as early North American travel writing, but it diverges from eighteenth century narratives when it comes to the purpose of traveling. By using several North American travel narratives from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the generation-defining twentieth century novel *On the Road*, this paper will explore the similarities and difference in the depiction of American tavern culture, inquisitive natures and intellectualism, and the work ethic and spirit of Americans in early and contemporary travel writing. It will also examine the differences in the purpose for travelling and documenting travel between the early American travel narratives and Kerouac's travel novel, specifically putting the American spirit covered earlier into the context of purpose.

One of the most popular topics of eighteenth and nineteenth century North American travel writing is the American proclivity for rowdy taverns, bar brawls, and drunkenness. Isaac Weld, an Englishman who was particularly disenchanted with American manners, gives a searing account of the taverns and patrons he encounters on his 1790s journeys throughout North America. Weld describes the American bar and the activity inside with much disdain, writing that “[t]here is scarcely a petty tavern without a billiard room, and this is always full of a set of idle low-lived fellows, drinking spirits or playing cards, if not engaged at the table” (392). Clearly, Weld does not hold a high opinion of the people he

meets on travels through North America, classifying the customers of the taverns and inns he stops at as essentially low-class gamblers who cannot hold a job. Americans, according to Weld, are a lazy group who would rather spend their time getting drunk than working. He is so disgusted by the eighteenth century American tavern that he is often “forced to proceed much farther in a day than I have wished in order to avoid the scenes of rioting and quarrelling that I have met with at taverns” (Weld 393). In this passage, Weld adds riots and brawling to the kinds of behavior he has seen in American bars to gambling and lethargy. His idea of the American people only worsens, and they become animals, wild and unable to control primal urges. Weld furthers his stereotyping of the American people as savage and degraded compared to the English when he compares bar brawlers to “wild beasts, biting, kicking, and endeavouring to tear each other’s eyes out with their nails” (393). Weld certainly paints an unflattering picture of Americans, laying the groundwork for future representations of Americans as untamed drunken slobs.

America’s love for a good drink and authors’ love for describing barroom culture and wild America did not diminish in Kerouac’s century. In fact, much of *On the Road* takes place in backroom bars across the country, and Sal Paradise and his friends spend most of their money and time getting drunk. The description of American drunkenness in *On the Road* has a somewhat more charming air, although the constant drinking may be tiring. Paradise describes one of his many wild nights in American cities when he explores downtown Cheyenne with a fellow hitchhiker named Montana Slim. Sal and Slim “started hitting the bars. [Sal] had about seven dollars, five of which [he] foolishly squandered that night...Things were going on as wild as ever outside, except that the fat burpers were getting drunker and whooping up louder” (Kerouac 32). While Sal indulges in the same kind of bar culture in the twentieth century that Weld describes in the eighteenth, Paradise’s barroom antics spreads to the streets of cities. Drunkenness becomes a widespread culture across America in the late-1940s; drinking in public becomes a celebration, an acceptable behavior. At one point, Sal even remarks, “Everywhere in America I’ve been in crossroads saloons drinking with whole families” (Kerouac 92-3). Getting drunk is no longer such a shameful activity, and it is still as widespread, if not more so, in Kerouac’s twentieth century as it was in eighteenth century North America.

Even though the consumption of alcohol became more acceptable during the time that Kerouac documents in *On the Road*, the fighting and backstreet culture Weld alludes to was still a contentious subject for the American people. Dean Moriarty, the bumbling, frenetic, ball of energy with a criminal streak is a source of embarrassment and shame for many of the people around him. Dean’s remaining family “disliked him. Dean’s only buddies were the poolhall boys. Dean, who had the tremendous energy of a new kind of American saint, and Carlo were the underground monsters of that season in Denver, together with the poolhall gang” (Kerouac 38). Carlo Marx and Dean, Sal’s friends, represent the scourge of society, the seedy undersides of America that the country would rather ignore. Even though some behaviors have become more acceptable, the poolhall and criminality that Dean symbolizes is still as shameful to Dean’s family and many of his former friends as it is to Weld. But, even so, there is something entirely American about Dean’s rebellion from the norms that Sal Paradise admires. Sal describes Dean’s spirit best when he says that Dean’s “criminality was not something that sulked and sneered; it was a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long

prophesied, long a-coming” (Kerouac 7-8). What Sal describes is not the shameful thing that Dean’s family sees—a person to be disowned— but a personality that is wholly American, something that is reminiscent of the American cowboy. *On the Road* continues the themes of drunkenness and bar culture that Weld begins, but there are slight variations in the views of wild American culture from eighteenth and twentieth century.

Not only were taverns places of questionable people and drunken lewdness, but of questionable social practices as well. Weld, naturally, is offended by the way that American bar patrons approach him and attempt to get to know him. He describes how “arriving amongst the Americans...a stranger must tell where he came from, where he is going, what his name is, what his business is; and until he gratifies their curiosity on these points, and many others of equal importance, he is never suffered to remain quiet for a moment” (Weld 390). The American propensity to interrogate every stranger does not sit well with Weld, who is used to the restrained and dainty mannerisms of England. He finds the questions that the tavern patrons pose to him violating and intrusive. Weld also alludes to the fact that Americans do not just question every unknown patron in the tavern, but they specifically target strangers from other countries. He writes that foreign travelers “must satisfy every fresh set that comes in, in the same manner, or involve himself in a quarrel, especially if it is found out that he is not a native, which it does not require much sagacity to discover” (Weld 390-91). As Weld is weary of the rowdy Americans, it seems that Americans are also cautious or suspicious about foreign travelers. Eighteenth century North American travel writing was largely written by Europeans to document their own observations of American foreigners, but the curiosity and distrust of foreigners in Weld’s piece does not come solely from the author, but also the Americans that he encounters, revealing—possibly inadvertently—the feelings of the people who are the source of so much foreign disdain.

In *On the Road*, American curiosity of strangers still permeates travelling, but the inquisitive nature is applied to hitchhikers and American transcontinental migrates. Sal, who spends much of the novel hitchhiking, describes a ride with a silent driver as one of the most welcoming and relieving moments of his journey. According to Sal, “one of the biggest troubles hitchhiking is having to talk to innumerable people, make them feel that they didn’t make a mistake picking you up, even entertain them almost, all of which is a great strain” (Kerouac 14). Much like the relentless and tiring interrogation of Weld, twentieth century drivers picking up wayfarers exhibit a caution and spectacle of strangeness. Usually, hitchhiking for a ride allows no moments of silence, no pause in a traveler’s explanation of who one is and where one is going and why. Hitchhiking was a popular form of travel, and while it did not hold the stigma of danger it does today, there was still an element of the ominous unknown that could be alleviated by questioning the traveler—at the very least, it would make the ride less uncomfortable. But there is also an element of the foreign tourist in the American wayfarer or hitchhiker, similar to Weld’s foreignness, which natives of the cities being flooded with young American travelers wanted to repel. Sal recounts a trip to a “regular Central City bar”, a mining town settled in the mountains outside of Denver that sees an influx of tourists who come to watch the prestigious operas that occur in Central City; as Sal and his friends walk into the bar they notice “a group of sullen men were ranged along the bar; they hated tourists”, and the “sullen men” warn Sal and company that they better leave (Kerouac 55). Right away, the Central City natives can spot the outsiders—the tourists who exude foreignness despite being American. *On the Road* shifts from American

distrust or dislike of the international tourist depicted in Weld's narrative to the dislike of the intranational tourist. Sal and his friends experience the same kind of questioning, and perhaps animosity, that Weld experiences simply because they, in some shape or form, are foreign to the places they are travelling.

Early American travel writers, in addition to the stereotypical drunkenness and intrusively inquisitive nature, also established Americans as an intellectually crude people. Apparently during a visit to North America "Dickens [Charles] vented his disappointment at the shortcomings of American democracy, which in his view had spawned a society beset by greed and characterized by a dull uniformity of character, outspoken ignorance, and political rancor" (Lackey 13). The "outspoken ignorance" and political rancor that Dickens describes also finds its way into Weld's own account. Weld illustrates the brashness and political ignorance of Americans, claiming that "their opinions are for the most part crude and dogmatical, and principally borrowed from newspapers, which are wretchedly compiled from the pamphlets of the day; having a few of which, they think themselves arrived at the summit of intellectual excellence, and qualified for making the deepest political researches" (391). With brutal accuracy, Weld perpetuates the common trope that Americans are loud, stubborn, and cut-throat when it comes to politics, even if their knowledge on an issue is scant at best. Yet it is also important to keep in mind that Weld, and many other English writers, was travelling in North America not long after the American Revolution. It is not a stretch to claim that some of the observations that travel writers like Weld recorded were influenced by the recent political discord between the colonies and England.

Kerouac picks up on and continues the theme of the amateur or hasty intellectual introduced by Dickens and Weld, in Sal and his group of friends. One of the first introductions to some of the many characters that flit in and out of the focus gives a general overview of what disciplines or philosophies to which Sal's friends prescribe. Sal explains that many of his "current friends were 'intellectuals'—Chad the Nietzschean anthropologist, Carlo Marx and his nutty surrealist low-voiced serious staring talk, Old Bull Lee and his critical anti-everything drawl" (Kerouac 7). Right away, one might notice in this passage the quotes around the word "intellectuals", implying that Sal's friends are not actually intellectuals—something about them is false. One might find this falseness in the absurd and esoteric focuses that each person studies (Nietzschean anthropology?), and the way that even Sal describes Carlo Marx's surrealist talk as "nutty." Some of Sal's friends are in college, but many are self-taught intellectuals like Old Bull Lee, or, though certainly intelligent individuals, they lack formal education to lend credence to an anti-everything philosophy on life or "nutty" surrealist discussions.

Kerouac, through Sal Paradise, further showcases hasty intellectualism, even faux-intellectualism, in Dean Moriarty. In one of his very first fateful encounters with Dean, Sal remembers that Dean talked nonsense the entire night. Sal recalls that Dean spoke of many "things I understood not a bit and he himself didn't. In those days he really didn't know what he was talking about; that is to say, he was a young jailkid all hung-up on the wonderful possibilities of becoming a real intellectual, and he liked to talk in the tone and using the words, but in a jumbled way, that he had heard from 'real intellectuals'" (Kerouac 3-4). Here young Dean, although he earnestly tries to be an academic, simply does not have the tools to be the lofty intellectual he strives to be. But instead of patiently awaiting more education

or knowledge, Dean hastily spouts his partial truths and meaningless intellectual lingo. One might even make the comparison between a young Dean Moriarty and the young America that Dickens and Weld castigate for not being educated enough. Dean becomes a symbol for an American desire for knowledge and credibility that represents both eighteenth and twentieth century America, and perhaps both eighteenth century America and Dean are too loud and too certain of its intellectual prowess too soon.

Despite what it seems, with Weld's constant abhorrence towards American culture and Dickens' bleak and indignant response to American politics, some early travel writers were actually impressed with aspects of North American culture. Travel writers like John Davis were enamored with the rough conditions offered by the taverns that Weld despises, and William Cobbett praised Americans for their work ethic. Davis, in his travel writings that span from 1798 to 1802, comments on the conditions of American travel that disgust Weld so much. Davis argues that if a traveler "images no other happiness to himself in travelling but what is to be obtained from repasts that minister to luxury, and beds distinguished by softness, let him confine his excursions to the cities of polished Europe" (395). Contrary to Weld's view, and possibly in direct response to that view, Davis is not repulsed by the rough and tumble conditions that American taverns and travelling present. Rather, he enjoys the less polished inns and roads of North America precisely because they offer a contrast from the well-tread routes of Europe. Weld wants the lavish European Grand Tour experiences of the eighteenth century to translate to the budding landscape and culture of America, but Davis is perfectly content with the backwoods experience that new colonies provide.

William Cobbett, in a similarly enthusiastic vein as Davis, praises American work ethic and labor. In his 1818 travel narrative, Cobbett defends American farmers from Weld's accusations that many Americans are "idle low-lived fellows" (Weld 390). Cobbett in his travel narrative compares English and American workers, and he has a more favorable view of American workers. He zealously claims that it is important

"to know, what sort of labourers these Americans are; for, though a labourer is a labourer, still there is some difference in them; and, these Americans are the best that I ever saw. They mow four acres of oats, wheat, rye or barley in a day, and...lay it so smooth...that it is tied up in sheaves with the greatest neatness" (Cobbett 404).

The American workmen that Cobbett describes differ greatly from the low-life tavern patrons that Weld writes about. Here, Americans are industrious farmers full of energy that they invest into their crops. According to Cobbett, Americans excel at laboring, and in fact, they work enormous loads of crops in a day; they are not idle at all. Cobbett further applauds American workmanship when he explains that, "Besides the great quantity of work performed by the American labourer, his skill, the versatility of his talent, is a great thing. Every man can use an axe, a saw, and a hammer. Scarcely one who cannot do any job at rough carpentering, and mend a plough or a waggon [sic]. Very few indeed who cannot kill and dress pigs and sheep" (405). Cobbett expands American craft and skill from farming to woodworking, carpentry, and tending to animals. Even within eighteenth century travel writing there are opposing descriptions of American customs and personalities. Cobbett provides a counter illustration on American industriousness against Weld's comment about the idle nature of men in bars.

In *On the Road*, Kerouac examines both the rough-and-tumble wayfarer lifestyle that Davis defends, and the energetic workmanship that Cobbett applauds. With limited funds that he spends a majority of on booze, Sal finds himself forced to live in less than ideal environments—places without feather beds and the luxury that Weld laments is lacking in eighteenth century America. Yet Sal revels in the ragged surroundings he finds himself in. When he begins to pick cotton to support Terry, a girlfriend he acquires on the road, and her son, Sal rents a shabby little tent to live in. The tent, which was “[t]he cheapest one, a dollar a day, was vacant...There were a bed, a stove, and a cracked mirror hanging from a pole; it was delightful. I had to stoop to get it” (Kerouac 94). Although the accommodations of the tent are sketchy at best, Sal gets delight from the disheveled and minimal abode. The tent represents the kind of hard scrabble life that Sal dreamt of before he went traveling. When he sits in a gleeful reverie in the tent one night after work, Sal realizes that he “was a man of the earth, precisely as [he] had dreamed [he] would be, in Paterson” (Kerouac 97). The demanding labor that Sal puts in a day picking cotton and the shabby tent with a girlfriend and child are exactly what Sal pictures as real America. Sal enjoys his fair share of feather beds during the course of the novel, but the cheap tent near the cotton field is the place that represents the America that he had dreamed of earlier. If he had traveled the country experiencing the kind of luxury Weld demands, Sal would never have had the delightful experience of working fields to afford a dilapidated tent that offers a slice of what he deems real America.

Kerouac also picks up on the energetic workmanship that Davis describes, though the labor element of *On the Road* may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of the novel. Sal and his group of friends try to avoid work throughout much of the novel; at one point, Sal gets a job at a Denver fruit market but does not show up for his first day because the hours are too early. But Dean Moriarty, a fireball of a man, when he is not spending his time running back and forth between the two women he is courting, works like a dog. Within the first few months of his first trip to New York City, Dean gets a job as a parking-lot attendant, and Sal praises Dean as

“[t]he most fantastic parking-lot attendant in the world, he can back a car forty miles an hour into a tight squeeze and stop at the wall, jump out, race among fenders, leap into another car, circle it fifty miles an hour in a narrow space, back swiftly into tight spot...working like that without pause for eight hours a night, evening rush hours, and after-theater rush hours” (Kerouac 6).

Though not a farmer harvesting crops, Dean does exude energy as he parks cars in a New York City lot. Much like how the farmers that Cobbett admires work four acres of crops a day, Dean pounds the parking-lot pavement and probably parks hundreds of cars during his eight hour shifts. While the twentieth century American that Kerouac focuses on has moved from the fields to the blacktop, there is still that exuberant energy that workers—who have jobs—release in their work.

While the similarities and the slight differences in the themes that both eighteenth and twentieth century travel writing covers are well traced, one may ask why these themes have even been documented at all, and whether the abundant commonalities still apply to the purpose of writing travel narratives. The reasons for documenting travel are where eighteenth century travel narratives and *On the Road* contrast the most. According to

Kris Lackey, "Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American travelogues offer a precedent of object-driven anthropological nonfiction road books...such books may glance at the autobiographical significance of motor travel, the emphasis remains on cultural criticism and comparison" (12). Lackey describes a separation in intention between early travel writers like Weld and the more contemporary travel writers like Kerouac. Because many of the early North American travel narratives were written by foreigners, primarily English writers, the bulk of the narratives center on critiques and comparisons of customs and mannerisms. This is why Weld spends so much time criticizing the American tavern culture, and Davis, although he genuinely enjoyed the American landscape and friendly demeanor, criticizes the institution of slavery that was prominent at the South Carolina plantations he visited. In spite of his earnest defense of the American back road inn and the people there, Davis admits that "[i]t is, indeed, grating to an Englishman to mingle with society in Carolina; for the people, however well-bred in other respects, have no delicacy before a stranger in what relates to their slaves" (398). Here, Davis illuminates a crucial difference between the English and Americans—an observation that he believes is worth noting. Davis does not further express the way that slavery makes him feel, but he continues to only record observations of what he experiences or procedures he sees taking place, which contrasts greatly with the autobiographical significance of twentieth century travel literature.

On the Road, in one final similarity between eighteenth century and contemporary travel literature, becomes a vehicle for Kerouac to critique the America and even the Beat culture, a culture Kerouac fathered, his characters indulge in. Carol Gottlieb Vopat argues that "Kerouac's response to America is typically disillusioned. America is a land of corruption and hypocrisy, promising everything and delivering nothing, living off the innocence and opportunity, the excitement and adventure of the past" (390). The characters in Kerouac's books are enamored with the myth that is America, and they often promise everything while they deliver nothing and are nostalgic for past America. When Sal and his band of misfits visit Old Bull Lee in New Orleans, Bull constantly reminisces about what it was like in 1910, yet his reminiscences also reveal some of the corruption that Vopat writes about. Sal warmly recounts how "Bull had a sentimental streak about the old days in America, especially 1910, when you could get morphine in a drugstore without prescription and Chinese smoked opium in their evening windows and the country was wild and brawling and free" (Kerouac 144). Kerouac includes the excitement and adventure of past America that Vopat alludes to by describing the "wild and brawling and free" country that Bull so fondly recalls. But the corrupt underbelly of America that Kerouac ultimately critiques by drawing attention to it is in Bull's nostalgia for when drugs were cheap and easy.

In Sal's relationship with Dean, Kerouac also illustrates the overzealous promises and the subsequent disappointments that represent Kerouac's disillusioned America and the Beat Generation that Kerouac was such a monumental force in. In the beginning, Sal believes that Dean is the answer to all of his problems; by following Dean across the country, Sal thinks that something momentous and life-changing will occur. But in spite of Sal's initial faith in Dean, Sal becomes disenchanted with him later in the novel when he abandons Sal and his friends in San Francisco with no money, no jobs, and no place to stay. Sal looks out a window in San Francisco and thinks to himself, "Where is Dean and why isn't he concerned about our welfare? I lost faith in him that year" (Kerouac 171). It is in this moment that Sal realizes that Dean will never deliver on anything that he has promised—or deliver on the things that

Sal wished he could give him. Dean is no longer the hero or the saint, but a disappointment that allows Sal to gain perspective and effectively critique the lifestyle that Dean lives. As Karen Skinazi says in a review, "If the story of *On the Road* is one that exemplifies the Beat Generation, then there remains a distance between teller and the tale", a distance that Kerouac exemplifies through Dean letting down Sal (88).

While Kerouac certainly uses *On the Road* to observe and critique Beat culture, his twentieth century travel novel features more complex introspection and thematic issues than the simple cultural observe-and-record methods of eighteenth century travelogues. As Lackey mentions, there is more of a focus placed on the self or one's identity on the road, a theme that Kerouac explores through Sal's introspection and identity crisis. At one point, Sal wakes up in a motel halfway across the country and has no idea who he is. He recalls this occurrence in the motel as the:

[O]ne distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn't know who I was—I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared; I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost. (Kerouac 15)

Sal does not panic nor freak out, but in that motel he realizes how truly lost and out of place he is. Being in an unfamiliar place and traveling to unknown cities takes Sal out of his home in New Jersey where he has a defined identity. Traveling away from what is familiar gives Sal the space and that one important moment to realize perhaps just how little he knows about himself: "the further he goes, the more unsure he is of his place" (Skinazi 91). The road provides a realm where Sal can question himself and who he really is.

Many literary critics choose to read Sal's identity crisis and the magnetic force of the road as an attempt to run away from the burdens of life, responsibility, and settled identity. Sal's moment of unfamiliarity with himself in the hotel is not a cry for definition, but a welcome experience that exemplifies his desire to get away from his home where he is pigeonholed into an already determined identity and the relationships he had previously established. Vopat claims that "Sal Paradise goes on the road to escape from life rather than to find it, that he runs from the intimacy and responsibility of more demanding human relationships, and from a more demanding human relationship with himself" (388). Perhaps no other example in the book displays Sal's abandonment of relationships in favor of the road better than his failed relationship with Terry. After weeks of playing house in their tent by the cotton fields and dreaming of travelling to New York together, neither Terry nor Sal can come up with enough cash to take both of them to New York, and Sal decides to leave. Sal explains that "[s]he was supposed to drive to New York in a month with her brother. But we both knew she wouldn't make it. At a hundred feet I turned to look at her. She just walked on back to the shack...I bowed my head and watched her. Well, lackadaddy, I was on the road again" (Kerouac 101). The road becomes a welcome and relieving thing to Sal, who quickly disposes Terry and chooses to travel back to New York alone. He rapidly shifts from bowing his head in grief to joy about being back on the road. The highway becomes a mode of escape for Sal,

not just from Terry, but from his aunt in Paterson, New Jersey, the novel that Sal struggles to complete, the pressures of college. Sal is completely devoid of responsibility on the road because he is constantly moving and unable to maintain relationships when no one knows where he is going to be from day to day.

But what event causes Sal's rebellion against responsibility and identity for an unsure life on the road? Why does he try to escape from relationships? Some critics believe that Sal's constant disruption of his life has to do with a sort of post-war malaise that creates a sense of loss that can only be fulfilled by some unknown desire found on the road. Lackey explains that after World War II, "as in nonfiction books, road trips increasingly depict a rebellion against domestic constraints, and erotic matters that have less to do with marriage and children" (28). World War II disrupted the conventions and settled traditions that America had established. Post-war America was divided, with younger generations trying to establish a new order while older generations desperately clung to their familiar customs like marriage and traditional families. Young writers like Kerouac ushered in "novels of rebellion against the postwar nesting frenzy" (Lackey 139). Authors like Kerouac and William Burroughs sought to challenge the return to pre-war America, to further disturb the order until a radically different America was achieved.

The disruption of traditional relationship structures was accompanied by internal disruptions within the young men and women of America. In addition to attributing Sal's reliance on the road as an escape from responsibility, many literary critics argue that Sal and his friends are searching for some indefinable thing that they lost after the war—some sort of unknown "it" that will complete them again. According to Regina Weinreich, this "'IT' is satisfying as a form of instant gratification, a thrill for the moment, an epiphany. This momentary satisfaction becomes more significant to Sal than the pursuit of more conventional values such as permanence and ultimate security--the delusion of the hearth" (55). Weinreich argues that Sal is searching for something that will at once challenge the conventional values of the time and momentarily give him the feeling of being complete. But like Weinreich mentions, this satisfaction is momentary, leaving Sal to continue wandering the blue and red lines on maps for more epiphanous moments. But Sal himself offers a different view of loss, one more psychoanalytical in nature that very well could have been brought to the surface by the war and shifting values of America during the late 1940s. Sal informs Dean and Carlo of a dream he has in which a Shrouded Traveler pursues Sal across a desert. While stumped about the meaning of the dream at first, Sal later concludes that "naturally... this is only death: death will overtake us before heaven. The one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nausea of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death" (Kerouac 124). Instead of simply searching for momentary thrills to feel complete again, Sal hits the road to find those thrills to elude death, to find a substitute for death rather than succumbing to the only thing that Sal knows will make him feel whole again. And Sal is not the only person who develops a primal urge for death: it seems to be something that he shares in common with at least Dean, if not the rest of his group of wayward friends. When Sal tells Dean of his deathly theory, Sal "instantly recognized it as the mere simple longing for pure death; and because we're all of us never in life again, he, rightly would have nothing to do with, and I agreed with him then" (Kerouac

124). So Dean and Sal set forth together on the road, indulging in women, booze, and craziness not simply to escape responsibility and relationships, but their own mortality—something that the war put into all too real of perspective.

Early and contemporary travel writing like Kerouac's *On the Road*, although there are nearly 200 years between each other, share many surprising similarities. Drunkenness and American tavern culture were popular topics for North American travel writers in the eighteenth century. Isaac Weld, a particularly grumpy Englishman, thought Americans drank too much, and that bars were hotbeds of impropriety, savageness, and intrusive curiosity. However, by the twentieth century, drinking became a widespread public activity, even a family affair. But the brawling and criminality that Weld associated with taverns still held some weight in Kerouac's day and age, represented by the way in which Dean carries an air of jaillid about him. But Kerouac turns that criminality surrounding Dean into the American trope of the cowboy. Kerouac and the early travel writers also examined the amateur intellectualism rampant in America. Weld and Dickens focused on the political ignorance and brashness in early America, especially because of the American Revolution. Kerouac focused on the amateur intellectualism in his group of friends, which were mostly kids attending college and people who gained their education on the street. But while there were many negative aspects of American culture that early American travel writers picked up on and Kerouac continued, some eighteenth century travel writers praised the American back road taverns and work ethics. John Davis enjoyed the rough-and-tumble accommodations that the taverns provided, and he thought that travelers who expected luxury should have remained in Europe. William Cobbett was simply astounded by how many crops American famers could harvest in a day and the versatility that American workers possessed. Kerouac also examined American work ethic, although that may be somewhat surprising considering that many of the characters in *On the Road* avoid work as much as possible. But when he had a job as a parking-lot attendant Dean Moriarty worked at a frenetic pace for his entire eight hour shift every day.

While eighteenth and twentieth century writing shared similarities with some slight variances, they diverge when it comes to purpose and intent to document the journey. Kerouac delves into serious themes like identity, escapism, and even a psychoanalytical reading about death resulting from a post-war disturbance in the order of things. But even though *On the Road* provides more thematic dilemmas than the simple observe-and-record travelogues of the eighteenth century, Kerouac critiques America and the Beat culture that he was a serious part of through the aimlessness and ill-advised nostalgia of his characters as well as the European travelers who intended to critique American customs. However, the topical similarities and differences in the purpose for travelling and documenting travel show a continuous evolution in the genre. It is an evolution that makes travel writing an ideal form to reflect the moods of a nation and make cultural comparisons; a genre that will continue to be relevant as long as people travel.

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Essayist Examination: Lauren Slater

>>> Rachel Scherzer

Lauren Slater is a contemporary essayist whose work has won many awards in the genre. Slater's work often incorporates her background in psychology and her experiences dealing with mental illness, writing in a way that makes these very specific experiences universal. Her work connects through the tradition of essay writers from Michael de Montaigne to F. Scott Fitzgerald, yet is innovative in the form. This essay will explore three of Lauren Slater's essays, "Tongue and Groove," "Love: Scientists are Discovering That the Cocktail of Brain Chemicals That Sparks Romance is Totally Different From the Blend That Fosters Long Term Attachments. So What, Really, is This Thing Called Love?" published in *National Geographic* magazine, and her essay from the *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Modern Fiction*, "Black Swans." Lauren Slater's essays will be explored through various elements of her writing, including ostensible topic, tone, and persona to show how Slater has been inspired by other essay works to create a sense of universality and innovated the genre of the essay.

Formal Elements

Lauren Slater is a master of the use of an ostensible topic to open a deeper discussion. Her essay "Tongue and Groove" appears to be all about building a kitchen table, but in actuality takes on the topic of masculine and feminine gender roles in the home. The discussion of building a table is highly detailed, as she explains what caused her to start building through every step of the process, from the selection of tools to discovering how to make corners. The essay ends with a finished table, but on the way we learn about the complicated nature of gender roles in the home. Slater writes of being "disgruntled by domesticity" yet also being "delighted by domesticity" ("Tongue & Groove" 17). As a woman, Slater still feels that she has to work on the cooking, cleaning, sewing elements of the home, even when her husband says she does not. She finds herself in an odd position, as she secretly enjoys the tasks that cause the most grief, while deciding to experiment with carpentry, a male dominated activity. As the essay progresses, Slater begins to see how her carpentry skills have brought her together with her husband in a gender-neutral world that had been trapped between them. Slater comes to the conclusion that "At the very end carpentry is not about power: carpentry is joinery" ("Tongue & Groove" 26), bringing together both her and her husband's understandings of their place in the home and finding out that it is ultimately okay to both love and hate that place. A simple essay about carpentry takes on a new meaning with the introduction of the generated topic of gender.

In the essay "Love: Scientists are discovering that the cocktail of brain chemicals that sparks romance is totally different from the blend that fosters long-term attachment. So what, really, is this thing called love?" (henceforth referred to simply as "Love"), Slater takes on the ostensible topic of the science of falling in love. The essay's main draw is the scientific facts sprinkled throughout from researchers in psychology, psychiatry and anthropology. The research discusses biochemical pathways, medical brain terminology, psychological studies,

and mental illness. Slater uses the research of Helen Fisher, Arthur Aron, and Lucy Brown, who took MRIs of people in love: “Love lights up the caudate nucleus because it is home to a dense spread of receptors for a neurotransmitter called dopamine” (“Love” 3) to build an understanding of the science of love for the reader. Through these scientific facts, the reader expects the essay to answer the age old question of what love really is and what falling in love and getting married truly mean. Slater, however, takes the essay in a different way, using the scientific ostensible topic to get to a much deeper personal level of what love is in her own life. The essay uses examples of her own marriage, her past, and even examples from other people’s lives intermixed with scientific work to really talk honestly about love, without the clichés generally associated with the discussion of love. Building off of the scientific research, she is able to create bits of advice, such as: “Love and obsessive-compulsive disorder could have a similar chemical profile. Translation: Love and mental illness may be difficult to tell apart. Translation: Don’t be a fool. Stay away” (“Love” 4). Love can be treacherous and confusing, but the reader sees examples from Slater’s own life that prove that even difficult love is worth it. The essay retains its form by not coming down to a grand conclusion, instead simply using these facts to understand her own life and show that even knowing a great deal about the psychology of love does not always guarantee success.

“Black Swans” has a more straightforward topic with her discussion of mental illness, but has an undercurrent about how people handle life in different ways. In this essay, she discusses how obsessive compulsive disorder touched her life early, but did not become a problem until her mid-20s. Her discussion of mental illness focuses on how she first felt about her OCD, her year spent with forms of treatment that were only minimally helpful, and finally finding Prozac. Slater describes the onset of her OCD with, “I was doomed to think about thinking instead of thinking other thoughts. My mind was devouring my mind” (“Black Swans” 486). Once she finds Prozac, Slater undergoes an immense change in personality, where Slater writes, “In a matter of moments I had gone from a fumbling, unsure person to this—all pragmatism, all sure solutions” (493). She became “a ‘happening’ kind of person” (492). Eventually, the effects of the Prozac began to fade and the compulsions came back, forcing Slater to begin to discover the importance of finding a place between illness and euphoria. “Is this adaptation a spiritual thing?” she writes; “When I’m living in moments of clarity, have I transcended disease, or has disease transformed me, taught me how to live in secret niches? I don’t know” (498). While the essay focuses on the very specific description of mental illness, Slater brings the reader into that world, allowing them to experience her OCD. The underbelly of the essay speaks to how nearly everyone experiences bits of mental illness or their own forms of struggle in their own lives, and must find their “Prozac” to gain clarity, even if the euphoria does not last. In ending the essay, Slater writes that “an answer to illness is not necessarily cure, but an ambivalent compensation” (498). Within life, in many areas, solutions to problems are hard to find, and compensation is required to move on with life. Slater’s insights on deeper topics allow her essays to create a sense of the universal from a specific, personal account.

Another formal element Lauren Slater works with is tone. Her essays have a lighthearted, casual feel that is reminiscent of a conversation, even though there is rarely direct dialog anywhere within her essays. For example, in the essay “Tongue and Groove,” Slater opens the piece by jumping right into a discussion about her kitchen table, which she describes by saying “if it is possible for a table to be two faced, ours was” (16). She

imagines the table going down the hill outside their home, of “opening the front door and sending the table sailing-swoosh-out over the porch and down the hill we lived on” (“Tongue and Groove” 16). The essay continues to take on an exploration of gender roles, but keeps this generally open and amusing storytelling tone, treating the conversation as a puzzle, a project to work on and discover solutions. In the essay “Love,” Slater jumps quickly between psychological examination to discussions of her own love life, intermingled with sentences like “A good sex life can be as strong as Gorilla Glue, but who wants that stuff on your skin?” (6) or “So first dates that involve a nerve-racking activity, like riding a roller coaster, are more likely to lead to second or third dates. That’s a strategy worthy of posting on Match.com” (10). Even within her deepest essay, “Black Swans” where she is describing her experience dealing with OCD, the tone of lightheartedness still has a place. For example, when the first doctor she meets describes her as a “primary ruminator,” Slater’s first thought is of a cow “chewing and chewing on the floppy scum of its cud” (“Black Swans” 488). Despite the intensity of her mental illness, the tone does not capture or convey the horror completely, instead allowing the truth of the mental illness to act as more of a subtext in the writing style of the piece. The lighthearted tone gives the reader a way into deep discussion by making the essay highly entertaining to read. The reader becomes interested in the story and the deep discussions are slipped in in a way that allows the reader to continue to be invested.

Conceptual Moves

Lauren Slater follows the typical rules for essay writers and creates a persona that examines topics with a bit of humor, but underneath really forces you to look at your own psyche. The specific experiences she uses are extremely personal, but the themes that are brought out are universal. When Slater writes about love, a reader can easily compare their own experiences with love, from the first crush to falling head over heels to long term attachment. When she writes about mental illness, even if you have never experienced OCD, you are put into the situation and connect elements of your own life to that discussion. Everyone knows what it is like to lose concentration or become distracted, thus they are able to envision how horrifying it would be to feel like you can never gain that concentration back.

Making the personal universal is a pretty standard move for an essayist to make. What makes Lauren Slater different is the fact that she is not always a reliable narrator, although reading her essays never gives one the sense that she might have lied. In an interview with the blog *Days of Yore*, Slater discusses the fact that she has changed events in essays she has written to make them more interesting. She says that she will “swerve away from the actual events” and “mold them to themes of the essay” (*Days of Yore* 5). Slater gives the example of writing about her daughter’s dead cat, whose body was never found in real life. In her essay, however, Slater writes that her family heard the cat die, and buried the body, using this description to create a better narrative for her examination. While this change may not be a major one, it opens the reader up to question how truthful Slater is with more personal elements in her essays. Phillip Lopate describes essayists as being in a constant “struggle for honesty,” where most essayists admit that “few of us can remain honest for long, since humans are incorrigibly self-deceiving, rationalizing animals” (Introduction xxv). Essayists are expected to have a certain level of honesty, even if they are skeptical of anyone’s ability to be honest. The honesty, however, does not come from getting every detail of a situation correct. Instead “we must trust [the essayist’s] core of sincerity”

(Introduction xxvi), where the introspective work tells the truth, even if the physical details are not entirely reliable. The reliability of the essayist counts when it is able to “awaken that shiver of self-recognition” (Introduction xxvi) in the reader. Essays are able to perform their work in this way from the fact that “at this historical moment the essayist has an added freedom: no one is looking over his or her shoulder” (“What Happened to the Personal Essay?” 127). Slater uses this openness of genre to create a narrative that is truthful where it counts in their introspective work.

Knowing this information, Slater’s persona reads somewhat differently. The change in details could cause the reader to no longer trust Slater as a writer, yet she retains authority from her ability to open up her life to the reader, even if details have been changed to create a better narrative. The truths Slater tells are relevant and easy to latch onto. For example, in “Tongue and Groove,” Slater goes on a rant to her husband about vacuuming three times in a certain week, while she also “took Clara to the dentist, plus I got her socks and underwear plus made her a new skirt plus I patched the wallpaper in the bathroom” (19). As a reader, it never crosses one’s mind to even consider the falsity of these statement, because changing everyday descriptions does not have the same impact as changing how she feels and responds to those everyday things, since an approximation of these details is not a lie, but rather a crafting of the truth. Changing a banal detail is not an intentional deception, but almost a question of careful crafting. As long as Slater is telling more or less the truth about her feelings, the everyday details only elaborate her discussion of gender, and the reader is more interested in her admission to loving domestic tasks, a statement that does not make sense for someone to lie about. The truth is molded in a specific way to elaborate on more deep sorts of truth.

The persona also changes from essay to essay. In “Love,” Slater brings out much more of her psychological side and includes a lot of elements of actual research that would not be out of place in an academic essay. In this case, the personal essay style has rules entirely different from the Francis Bacon style essay that is common in academia, with its specific paragraph structure, clear introduction, thesis, and conclusion, deeply researched with a persona of authority and absence of the “I” voice. The personal voice in the essay does not distract from the research elements, but instead enhances it. A conversation about the ventral segmental area and caudate nucleus is made interesting as Slater calls dopamine “our own endogenous love potion” (“Love” 12) and connects the psychological phenomena to the way a person newly in love can “stay up all night, watch the sun rise, run a race, ski fast down a slope ordinarily too steep for your skill” (3). The psychology is able to back up real world examples.

The persona in this essay is also affected by the fact that the essay was originally published in *National Geographic* magazine. In her interview with *Days of Yore*, Slater discusses how she takes on magazine writing jobs to make her living. “Many pieces I write on assignment are pieces that are not inspired,” Slater says; “I’m writing them just to make money. The magazine pieces, I see more as my bread and butter” (*Days of Yore* 5). A piece like “Love,” however, does not feel like uninspired writing and retains its rich level of examination. The tone is lighter than an essay like “Black Swans,” but the introspective work done by Slater still feels interesting, deep, and connecting for the reader.

“Black Swans” and “Tongue and Groove” were both published in literary journals, thus they are narrated by a slightly different persona. “Black Swans” is all about performance

of mental illness, and captures one in the sense of the moment, right in the struggle. “Tongue and Groove” has more of a façade of spontaneity, casually discussing how Slater is going to build a table for her home, digging below the surface simply and naturally, as if a discussion of power tools always leads to a discussion of household gender roles. Yet “Tongue and Groove” also immerses you in the moment, as she discusses the Home Depot code of etiquette, where “it’s okay to stop someone in an aisle and ask whether or not they think a shank or a dowel would do a better joinery job” (21). The details of the essay are much like the details shown in “Black Swans,” in which Slater brings you into the world of OCD, where a Walkman with the tapes of her saying she cannot concentrate has “little red studs for buttons. The tape whirled efficiently in its center like a slick dark heart” (“Black Swans” 489). In the room of the Prozac doctor, Slater provides a wonderful description of the clock that ruins the calmness of the place by its ticking:

“The clock is ruining my concentration, I think, and turn toward it. The numbers on its face are not number but tiny painted pills, green and white. A chime hangs down, with another capsule, probably a plastic replica, swinging from the end of it. Back. Forth. Back. Back” (“Black Swans” 491).

The persona allows the details of the essay to draw one in, allowing one to see things from Slater’s perspective. The reader is a part of the essay, seeing the world through Slater’s experience, allowing them to connect these very specific moments more universally with the rest of the world.

Historical Connections

Lauren Slater’s essays are deeply connected to the history of the essay writing genre. The essay “Love” is reminiscent of the essays written by Michel de Montaigne. The father of the essay was known to take a simple topic and expand upon it with quotes from classic literature, myths, historical background, and etymology. This style can be found in essays such as “On Smells,” “On Sadness” “On the Cannibals” and “On Thumbs.” “On Thumbs” is a prime example of the form Montaigne originated. The essay focuses on the mundane topic of thumbs, yet is able to make it an enjoyable conversation for the reader. The sections of the essay read like fun facts, allowing the reader to learn a little more about thumbs than they normally would care to learn through stories of Roman history, quotes by scholars like Plutarch and Virgil and entomology like, “Doctors say that our thumb is our master-finger and that our French word for it, *pouce*, derives from the Latin verb *pollere* [to excel in strength]” (“On Thumbs 784”). Slater’s essay reflects this style, though focusing less on classic scholars and more on psychology, anthropology, and science. The tidbits act in much the same way that they work in Montaigne’s essay, providing information the reader would normally not consider. Take for instance the statement from anthropologist Helen Fisher: “Scientists think the fickle female orgasm may have evolved to help women distinguish Mr. Right from Mr. Wrong” (“Love” 3). Historically, the reader learns that “Anthropologists used to think that romance was a Western construct, a bourgeois by-product of the Middle Ages” (“Love” 7). The essay abounds with great tidbits in the style of Montaigne.

Lauren Slater innovates on the classic style by including personal elements. In Montaigne’s time, the writer including themselves in their work was unprecedented. Montaigne’s use of the “I” voice was revolutionary, but it did not go as deeply as essayists

today, keeping most personal details of his life out of his exploration. He may write, "Even if nobody reads me, have I wasted my time when I have entertained myself during so many idle hours with thoughts so useful and agreeable?" ("On Giving the Lie" 755), but the quotation is about his essays, not his personal life. From his essays, readers learn little more than that Montaigne has dealt with kidney stones and has a mustache. Slater's "Love" essay dives into highly personal details of life with her husband, from their wedding as thirty-somethings who "considered [themselves] hip and cynical, the types who decried the institution of marriage even as [they] sought its status" (1) to people who attended a kissing school they have a chance to experiment, but overall learned "we don't have time to kiss" (10). The essay allows us into Slater's life and gives an honest portrayal of her experiences with love. A reader of the essay would likely use the essay to gain advice for their own love life, and Slater is right there with you, explaining how she has used the information she learned to do the same thing. Slater writes about her and her husband's failed "experiment" with intimacy, where she tried to rekindle the spark of love by staring into her husband's photograph while talking to him on the phone. The personal elements work to deepen and expand the style popularized by Montaigne.

The essay "Black Swans" connects historically to F. Scott Fitzgerald's essay "The Crack Up." Fitzgerald's essay was the start of essays about breaking down and mental illness, as he was one of the first people to discuss himself this intimately in writing. Slater's essay follows in this tradition as she writes about her OCD. The essays both approach writing about intimate mental health issues in a way that is understandable to readers. Fitzgerald's essay touches the universal sense of how this happens, in some way, to everyone. Fitzgerald writes:

"Of course all life is a process of breaking down, but the blows that do the dramatic side of the work-the big sudden blows that come, or seem to come, from outside-the ones you remember and blame things on and, in moments of weakness, tell your friends about, don't show their effect all at once" (520).

Slater's essay is more personally focused, instead of claiming that everyone feels the same things she feels, she invites one into the world of her OCD, explaining in depth what it is like for her in the place she is with her illness. She explains what it is like to have compulsions so that the reader nearly experiences what she is feeling: "There were a thousand and one of them to follow: rules about how to step, what it meant to touch my mouth, a hot consuming urge to fix the crooked angles of the universe. It was constant, a cruel nattering" ("Black Swans" 487). Slater performs mental illness in this essay, as all of her thoughts and feelings show in what she is saying throughout the essay. She goes through a range of emotions, as she discusses the good and bad times with Prozac, as well as how she makes it through in the end of the essay to live a productive life with mental illness as a factor. Fitzgerald opens up the world of a mental breakdown to the readers, making the readers understand what it is to crack up. Documenting the up and down of a crack up he writes, "And then suddenly, surprisingly, I got better.-And cracked like an old plate as soon as I heard the news" (Fitzgerald 522). Without Fitzgerald's previous work creating such deep introspection, Slater's essay would never have been possible.

Lauren Slater's essays "Black Swans," "Love," and "Tongue and Groove" show how she is able to use ostensible topic, tone, and persona to create deeply personal essays that resonate universally for the reader. By building off of the work of historical essayists, Slater

was able to innovate the genre of essay by taking classic approaches and even pushing the boundaries of honesty and personal expression. Overall, Slater's essay writing career has innovated the genre and added unique work to the essay writing tradition.

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Freedom in Death: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* >>> Rebecca Whitney

Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is a fifty-some page novella. With the title, there is no ambiguity as to the fate of Ivan Ilych; we know he will die, but we expect it will take the full fifty pages to get there. However, the opening scene of the novella presents the opportunity to come face-to-face with death right from the start. In the first paragraph, Peter Ivanovich, a friend to Ivan Ilych, reads the newspaper and exclaims, "Gentlemen! Ivan Ilych has died!" (Tolstoy 3). There is something about beginning with death that comes across as backwards. But by shaking things up this way, Tolstoy puts death center stage. There is no getting around it, or warming up to the idea, or putting it off until the end. No chronological following of a life that ends in death. This unsettling beginning provides an ideal platform to apply theories learned from Freud and others in the field of psychoanalysis and to psychoanalyze our own reactions to death appearing in the most unexpected moment. We are drawn into the experiences Ivan Ilych endures, and we wonder how we will face our own deaths.

According to Freud, none of us are fond of contemplating our own death. In his essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915), he writes:

So immense is the ego's self-love, which we have come to recognize as the primal state from which instinctual life proceeds, and so vast is the amount of narcissistic libido which we see liberated in the fear that emerges as a threat to life, that we cannot conceive how that ego can consent to its own destruction. (Freud 252)

It is in our basic instincts to fear anything that is "a threat to life." Not only are we not fond of merely contemplating our own death, but we are unable to comprehend anything that could cause our destruction. With this understanding, we appreciate the reaction of Ivan Ilych's friends. Unable to confront their own death, they feed their narcissistic ego. Tolstoy's narrator states, "the mere fact of the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual, in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, 'it is he who is dead and not I.' Each one thought or felt, 'Well, he's dead but I'm alive!'" (4). Unable to face death, the people that surround Ivan Ilych only focus on themselves, a natural narcissistic reaction. One critic explains, "Death is life's greatest insult. Psychoanalytically speaking, death is the greatest possible narcissistic injury. Nothing forces one to think so much about one's very self as the imminence of death – not just anyone's death, but *my death*" (Rancour-Laferrriere 117, italics original). Thinking about death is so unpleasant that whatever thoughts may have crept up concerning their own death, Ivan's associates push it away. In doing so, they become free to contemplate life as a means to accomplish self-satisfaction and can now consider "the possible transfers and promotions likely to result from Ivan Ilych's death" (Tolstoy 4).

Rimgaila Salys explains this reaction: "Ivan's death triggers only surprise and thoughts of their immediate, professional future, not of the day when their names will be announced in black borders" (103). For example, Ivan's wife is not mourning the fact that she lost her husband (acceptance of which means accepting her own mortality), but mourns that she is now forced to see to everything herself. She states, "I look after everything myself," and then later weeps as she exclaims, "How hard it is! How terribly, terribly hard!" (Tolstoy 8-9). With the missing antecedent, one wonders what exactly it is that is hard for her. Whatever "it" is, she seems to get over it quickly enough with her narcissistic means of living: "She knew how much could be got out of the government in consequence of her husband's death, but wanted to find out whether she could not possibly extract something more" (Tolstoy 9). At the funeral, we see the so-called friends of Ivan also scramble to regain their footing in their narcissistic lives. They are annoyed that death has interrupted their self-seeking entertainment and hope to return to card playing after the funeral has finished. One friend decides that the funeral "would certainly not prevent his unwrapping a new pack of cards and shuffling them that evening while a footman placed fresh candles on the table: in fact, there was no reason for supposing that this incident would hinder their spending the evening agreeably" (Tolstoy 6). Death is only an "incident" that can be easily set aside.

Before his death, Ivan Ilych was not immune to the narcissistic calls of his own ego either. Through the process of dying, Ivan refuses to admit the possibility of death. Immediately after sustaining his fatal blow to the side, the narrator informs us of Ivan's reaction: "The bruised place was painful but the pain soon passed, and he felt particularly bright and well just then. He wrote: 'I feel fifteen years younger'" (Tolstoy 20). That Ivan fools himself into feeling younger is a direct way he is able to deny his impending death. As discussed earlier, Freud explains that we are unable to grasp the idea of dying. To further explain this, he states, "at bottom no one believes in his own death, or to put the same thing in another way, that in the unconscious everyone is convinced of his own immortality" (Freud in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915), as quoted in Rancour-Laferriere 117). Rancour-Laferriere expands this idea: "Tolstoy's Ivan Il'ich illustrates Freud's point: he cannot conceive of his own destruction; he is never truly reconciled with what is about to happen to him. For most of the duration of *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* Tolstoy's hero is busy fending off thoughts of death" (117-118). Fending off death works for most of the novel, but eventually things get more serious. Ivan is no longer able to feel immortal and so must change his tactics. This he does by seeking attention from others. Naturally, he thinks of his childhood, when being sick was a sure way to get attention:

[W]hat most tormented Ivan Ilych was that no one pitied him as he wished to be pitied. At certain moments after prolonged suffering he wished most of all (though he would have been ashamed to confess it) for someone to pity him as a sick child is pitied. He longed to be petted and comforted. (Tolstoy 38)

Ivan does not receive the pity he is after, however (except as given by Gerasim, the butler's son, and own son, which will be discussed later). Society does not allow Ivan to stroke his ego the way he hopes to. Instead, he is left alone to face the reality of death.

Naturally, Ivan is upset at the lack of attention or pity he receives, as this attention-seeking behavior has been a key part of his life. From the time he was young, the attention he sought after came in the form of approval from others. This behavior is not unique to

Ivan. In the book *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Bruce Fink explains how a child learns to navigate the world from the first interactions with its parents. Here Fink further expounds Lacan's theory:

In the attempt to discern their desire – which I will henceforth refer to as the Other's desire (the desire of the parental Other) – we discover that certain objects are coveted by the Other and learn to want them ourselves, modeling our desire on the Other's desire. Not only do we want the Other's desire to be directed onto us (we want to be the object, indeed the most important object of the Other's desire); we also come to desire like the Other – we take the Other's desires as our own. (54)

The child learns to value the Other's approval by following the desires of the Other. In this pattern, the child learns to desire like the Other. Slavoj Žižek offers an additional explanation: "The original question of desire is not directly 'What do I want?', but 'What do *others* want from me? What do they see in me? What am I to others?'" (9). From early in his youth, Ivan learned to adapt his preferences to conform to the Other: "but from early youth he was by nature attracted to people of high station as a fly is drawn to the light, assimilating their ways and views of life and establishing friendly relations with them" (Tolstoy 11). By assimilating their ways, Ivan seeks to become someone that is worthy of the approval of the Other, even if the Other's ways are not his own. Eventually we see that Ivan Ilych "succumbed to sensuality, to vanity, and latterly among the highest classes to liberalism" (Tolstoy 11). He is becoming the Other, as found in the society which gives him approval. Tolstoy gives us further evidence that Ivan required conforming to an outside force, as the activities he participated in were, at first, not pleasurable to him:

At school he had done things which had formerly seemed to him very horrid and made him feel disgusted with himself when he did them; but when later on he saw that such actions were done by people of good position and that they did not regard them as wrong, he was able not exactly to regard them as right, but to forget about them entirely or not be at all troubled at remembering them. (11)

Here we see how completely Ivan changes his desire to value what is valued by the Other, the "people of good position." He chooses to forget or set aside his previous distaste for things that he did not like to become more like the "people of good position." Feldman offers, "Ivan's life philosophy was based on propriety and decorum, that is, always acting to meet the standard for outward conformity. He had an unquestioned belief that 'correct' social behavior would provide him with an easy, comfortable, and pleasurable life" (314). The pleasurable life that Ivan thinks he has obtained is only possible with the approval of the Other.

Along the path of following the dictates and expectations of the Other, Ivan Ilych eventually becomes a judge. This gives him a specific identity which allows him to seek approval of the Other. In fact, he had two distinct identities in his life: an official career-man and a man of society. Ivan became expert at meeting the requirements expected in each circumstance:

Ivan Ilych possessed this capacity to separate his real life from the official side of affairs and not mix the two, in the highest degree, and by long practice and natural aptitude had brought it to such a pitch that

sometimes, in the manner of a virtuoso, he would even allow himself to let the human and official relations mingle. He let himself do this just because he felt that he could at any time he chose resume the strictly official attitude again and drop the human relation. (Tolstoy 21)

Ivan Ilych's career choice puts him in a unique position. As a judge, Ivan is able to operate within specific definitions of right and wrong. This is a comfortable position as it allows Ivan a specific identity. But as his illness progresses, Ivan is forced to reevaluate his life and find a new definition. As a dying man, he must give up his idea of what previously defined him. In order to understand this change, we must first understand how an aspect of our identity is formed. Fink explains Lacan's idea that we start to understand what it means to be who we think we are at a specific stage of development, particularly what he calls, "the mirror stage." Fink explains:

According to Lacan, it is the child's mirror image that first presents the child with an image of its own unity and coherence which goes beyond anything that it has yet achieved developmentally. The mirror image is jubilantly invested with libido by the child and internalized, becoming the nucleus, core, matrix, or mold of the child's ego. . . . Lacan views the mirror stage as providing a structuring image – one that brings order to the prior chaos of perceptions and sensations. It leads to the development of a sense of self, anticipating a kind of unity or self-identity that has yet to be realized. And it is what allows a child to finally be able to say "I." (87)

But for Ivan Ilych, looking in the mirror as a dying man achieves a direct reversal of what Lacan's child in the mirror experiences, and everything starts to fall apart. No longer is he jubilantly pulling himself together to bring a sense of order from previous perceptions and sensations; now there are new sensations which create mounting chaos – a chaos that peaks when he looks in the mirror and can no longer recognize himself:

Ivan Ilych locked the door and began to examine himself in the glass, first full face, then in profile. He took up a portrait of himself taken with his wife, and compared it with what he saw in the glass. The change in him was immense. Then he bared his arms to the elbow, looked at them, drew the sleeves down again, sat down on an ottoman, and grew blacker than night. (Tolstoy 29)

Ivan begins to break down after seeing his disturbing mirror image. He can no longer reconcile himself with his past images. His identity is losing its definition. In order to appreciate more fully the effect of this mirror scene on Ivan, we again turn to Lacan. In 1960, Lacan offered a reformulation of his original idea of the mirror stage. With his new idea, Lacan provides a key to understanding what Ivan is missing:

Lacan suggests that the mirror image is internalized and invested with libido because of an approving gesture made by the parent who is holding the child before the mirror In other words, *the mirror image takes on such importance as a result of the parent's recognition, acknowledgment, or approval* – expressed in a nodding gesture that has already taken on symbolic meaning, or in such expressions as "Yes, baby, that's you!" often uttered by ecstatic, admiring, or simply bemused parents. (Fink 87-88, italics original)

Unfortunately, for Ivan Ilych, there is no one watching him as he looks in the mirror. There is no one around to offer, “Yes, Ivan that’s you! See! You are the one in the mirror who is dying!” Lacan explains that with the parent’s affirming gesture, the child then “brings its parents’ (perceived) view of the child into itself, and comes to see itself as its parents do” (Fink 88). With this event, the child puts stock in how he is viewed by others and seeks out their approval. Lacan poses that the child begins to see his actions “as the parents see them, judged as worthy of esteem or scorn as its parents would (the child believes) judge them” (Fink 88). Ivan misses out on this ability to weigh himself against the response of the Other because no one will acknowledge the fact that he is a dying man. Everyone around him refuses to talk about what Ivan Ilych has seen in the mirror. There is one brief moment of hope for Ivan to be identified this way when his brother-in-law comes to visit:

[Ivan’s brother-in-law] raised his head on hearing Ivan Ilych’s footsteps and looked up at him for a moment without a word. That stare told Ivan Ilych everything. His brother-in-law opened his mouth to utter an exclamation of surprise but checked himself, and that action confirmed it all.

“I have changed, eh?”

“Yes, there is a change.”

And after that, try as he would to get his brother-in-law to return to the subject of his looks, the latter would say nothing about it. (Tolstoy 29)

As Ivan Ilych’s brother-in-law “checks himself” against offering the gesture to affirm Ivan’s dying state, he denies Ivan of the opportunity to seek approval and definition as a dying man. There is no one to see Ivan as he sees himself in the mirror and thus no one to judge his actions. He is no longer able to know “what I am to my others” (Zizek 9). This is infuriating for Ivan and he desperately tries to get an acknowledgement from anyone:

What tormented Ivan Ilych most was the deception, the lie, which for some reason they all accepted, that he was not dying but was simply ill, and they only need keep quiet and undergo a treatment and then something very good would result. This deception tortured him — their not wishing to admit what they all knew and what he knew, but wanting to lie to him concerning his terrible condition, and wishing and forcing him to participate in that lie. (Tolstoy 38)

At best, the Others around Ivan only acknowledge him as merely one who is sick and will shortly resume his previous identity. Yet, this role of a sick person is one that Ivan has already abandoned. He has given up taking medicine and going to the doctor, which is what sick people are confined to do. Even the doctor will not allow him the new identity of a dying man, but corrals him into a definition of “sick people” as he states, “Yes, you sick people are always like that” (Tolstoy 40). Caught in this deception, Ivan can no longer go about getting approval from the Other. This is a difficult stage of limbo for Ivan - knowing he is no longer the previous child in the mirror, but not being offered a substitution which will allow him to confidently navigate his next phase of life. He is unsettled on how he should act from here.

Not only is Ivan unable to grasp a new identity, but he is quickly approaching something in itself that is indefinable: death. Death is the ultimate “Real” that cannot be defined. As one critic explains

The Real, like death, seems ineffable. Indeed, Lacan finds it necessary ‘to define the Real as the impossible’, because ‘it is impossible to imagine,

impossible to integrate into the Symbolic order, and impossible to attain in any way', and from this arises its essentially traumatic quality' (Evans, 1996, p. 160" as quoted in Bendle 232).

This is a difficult idea for Ivan to grasp and he is continually trying to define death. At one point he asks, "If only it would come quicker!" But then catches himself and ponders, "If only *what* would come quicker? Death, darkness?" (Tolstoy 40). He is unable to answer what exactly he is expecting. He also questions why he suffers, as a way to attach meaning to death. As critic James Olney explains, "a 'what for' or a goal clearly implies a pattern, and a pattern implies a meaning" (104). Ivan is constantly questioning the meaning behind his suffering:

He suffered ever the same unceasing agonies and in his loneliness pondered always on the same insoluble question: "What is this? Can it be that it is Death?" And the inner voice answered: "Yes, it is Death." "Why these sufferings?" And the voice answered, "For no reason — they just are so." Beyond and besides this there was nothing. (Tolstoy 47)

There is no meaning behind his suffering because there is no meaning in death; it is without definition.

The fact that there is no specific definition to death is actually a good thing for Ivan. There is no "right" way to approach death, or rather to "be dead." With this realization, Ivan is no longer dictated by the Other. With this freedom, he approaches his own desire: "'What do you want? What do you want?' he repeated to himself. 'What do I want? To live and not to suffer,' he answered" (Tolstoy 45). The nearer he approaches death, and consequently, the more he questions what he wants, he begins to relive times in his life when he was able to desire something, and enjoy what he obtained, for his own sake, not for the Other. Naturally, the moments he remembers are found in his early childhood:

Pictures of his past rose before him one after another. They always began with what was nearest in time and then went back to what was most remote — to his childhood — and rested there. If he thought of the stewed prunes that had been offered him that day, his mind went back to the raw shriveled French plums of his childhood, their peculiar flavour and the flow of saliva when he sucked their stones, and along with the memory of that taste came a whole series of memories of those days: his nurse, his brother, and their toys. (Tolstoy 48)

The joys and delights of childhood came to Ivan Ilych in the form of simple pleasure; he recalled the distinct taste of the plums and the security of family in his childhood. The sensations and happy memories were available to him only in the pureness of childhood — at a time when he wanted and enjoyed these pleasures on his own and not as dictated by the Other.

This pureness is also reflected in the butler's son, Gerasim, who is described as "a clean, fresh peasant lad, grown stout on town food and always cheerful and bright" (Tolstoy 36), and in Ivan's own son. Gerasim and Ivan's son are not caught up in the web of falsely living for the approval of society. We are openly told that "Gerasim alone did not lie" (Tolstoy 38). In Gerasim, Ivan was relieved of the falsity around him. In childlike innocence, Gerasim's actions are not dictated by the Other, but rather are motivated by his pure desire to help someone in need. Tolstoy explains:

Everything showed that he [Gerasim] alone understood the facts of the case and did not consider it necessary to disguise them, but simply felt sorry for his emaciated and enfeebled master. Once when Ivan Ilych was sending him away he even said straight out: "We shall all of us die, so why should I grudge a little trouble?" — expressing the fact that he did not think his work burdensome, because he was doing it for a dying man and hoped someone would do the same for him when his time came. (Tolstoy 38)

Gerasim embodies the honesty and untainted desires that are found in childhood. Tolstoy uses this to contrast the way in which Ivan acquires his illness. David Shepherd states, "the progress of his illness is brought on, as it is obligatory to point out, by a fall from a step-ladder, crudely symbolic of the social ladder which he had devoted so much energy to climbing" (404). As Ivan climbed away from his childhood and up the social ladder, his body becomes tainted with the poison of not being able to live according to his own desire. He learns that the injury he received while hanging the curtains most likely damaged his kidney or his appendix. Interestingly, these organs play the role of purifying the body, of flushing out toxins. Ivan's choice to seek the approval of the Other eventually was something his body could not handle and kept him from processing pleasure correctly.

As Ivan's body, which was so completely full of the taint of society, begins to fail him, he is able to ponder what gave his life meaning. Through the physical touch of Gerasim holding his legs up to obtain relief, and the kiss of his child, he is able to reconnect to the pleasures of his youth. From this, he is able to approach the possibility that he lived incorrectly:

It occurred to him that what had appeared perfectly impossible before, namely that he had not spent his life as he should have done, might after all be true. It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses which he had immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false. (Tolstoy 49)

As Ivan is finally able to accept the falsity of the life he spent pursuing the acceptance of others, he is now able to truly see the people in his life as they really are. He no longer acts under the influence of the Other but has a pure, childlike compassion for the suffering he is causing his wife and child: "'Yes, I am making them wretched,'" he thought. 'They are sorry, but it will be better for them when I die'" (Tolstoy 52). Ivan has a pure feeling of being sorry, not because he feels that he should be sorry, as dictated by the Other. Rather, it is a pure impulse that is not suppressed. The effect is liberating for Ivan: "And suddenly it grew clear to him that what had been oppressing him and would not leave was all dropping away at once from two sides, from ten sides, and from all sides" (Tolstoy 52). At this moment, he is able to let go of the desire to define death and be defined by it: "He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. 'Where is it? What death?' There was no fear because there was no death" (Tolstoy 52). The oppression is gone and he is now able to obtain what he desires for his own sake. He looks at his family, feels pity, and asks for forgiveness. He is now able to feel the pleasures he felt as a child and is in position to obtain ultimate freedom in death.

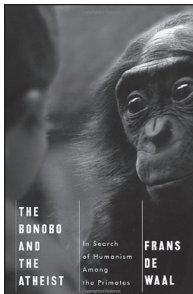
Like it does for Ivan Ilych, death presents itself unexpectedly. Despite our narcissistic clinging to life and living, there is no denying the reality of death. But, as Ivan Ilych found, the process of facing death offers freedom - freedom to stop living for the Other. This freedom gives place not for a new identity, but rather no identity. Without definition, we are no longer dictated by the desires of the Other. Tolstoy puts death center stage and in so doing, uncovers a key to truly living.

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Book Review >>> Taylor Bailey

The Bonobo and the Atheist

De Waal, Frans. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013. 320pp.

In *The Bonobo and the Atheist*, primatologist Frans de Waal combines decades of primate research with philosophical discourse on morality to expertly argue that morality indeed comes from within, rather than from a religious grounding. Citing his research with bonobos and chimpanzees, de Waal explains that apes contain the “critical ingredients” of morality, including prosocial behavior, emotions, and intuition (108). Bonobos care for others in need, and chimpanzees collect food for elderly members who are weak and unable to gather food from high in the trees. Given our genetic closeness to bonobos and chimps, it is therefore logical to conclude that humans may not require religion to be moral. Instead, morality is built in to us, and we could not have survived as a species for very long without it. While de Waal is a biologist by trade, he takes the opportunity in *The Bonobo and the Atheist* to remark on the philosophical implications of this ‘innate morality’ he has observed.

De Waal links his extensive research and ideas to the work of his favorite Renaissance painter the famed Hieronymus Bosch. Bosch’s well-known triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, envisions a world without the oversight of a god, and de Waal utilizes the Renaissance painter’s work as a metaphor for his overall argument. While definite expressions of passion and pleasure are present in the painting, de Waal contends that “such a world still requires morality,” and would surely “punish those who fail to lead decent lives if, instead of going to hell, they’d be visited by it on earth” (169-70). This unfortunate end for immoral beings is painfully expressed in the far-right portion of the tableau, which depicts a fiery wasteland of torture and pain.

Without morality, de Waal agrees with Bosch that life would ultimately be “hell on earth”. Much like Thomas Hobbes argues in *Leviathan*, Bosch envisions a world devoid of morality as a savage “state of nature,” exposing humanity’s supposed innate sinfulness. Yet de Waal asserts this could not be farther from the truth. The fatal misinterpretation that religion presupposes is the existence of “original sin,” or the intrinsic evilness of human beings. Contrary to Hobbes and Bosch, de Waal considers humans to be capable of evil, but inherently good. He sees the beginnings of this evolved morality in the behavior of some non-human animals, especially our primate cousins.

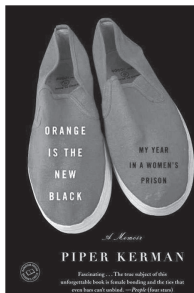
Religion, instead of bestowing morality to humans from the top down, is a “Johnny-come-lately” when it comes to the moral evolution of humanity (239). Morality developed first, and religions subsequently implemented it on a massive scale. De Waal theorizes that the rise of large scale societies caused religions to eventually take form. “We humans were plenty moral when we still roamed the savannah in small bands,” he argues (220). In small societies in which everyone knew everyone, there was no opportunity for moral deviation.

He further states that, "Only when the scale of society began to grow and rules of reciprocity and reputation began to falter did a moralizing God become necessary" (220). Ultimately, de Waal contends, the emergence of a God or gods is a manifestation of the morality that is inside us, working to ensure that we remain moral in larger communities where the human capacity for immorality is expanded. Morality, instead, seems to have arisen similarly to the way life itself originated; life's humble beginnings mirror the primordial development of intuition and emotions, both of which are critical ingredients for morality.

De Waal is intensely critical of the 'neo-atheists,' such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens, who demonize religion and urge humanity to abandon it. He warns of the dangers of dogmatism of any kind, whether it be in the "blindness of biblical literalists for science or the self-righteousness of some atheists," both have the same effect of closing the mind to opposing viewpoints (108). The enemy of science is not religion, but the "substitution of thought, reflection, and curiosity with dogma" (109). Much like the miraculous (and seemingly impossible) evolution of the human eye, morality is itself the result of small evolutionary changes over time that has allowed our species to thrive. This leads de Waal to assert that "if there is such thing as the moral law," it is "unlikely to be identical everywhere" (178). Morality is subjective to the society in which it developed. This is precisely why dogma (and its assumption of an absolute truth) is problematic.

De Waal's past scientific findings have long interested his primatologist colleagues, but *The Bonobo and the Atheist's* pairing of biological research with philosophical revelations will certainly intrigue the everyday reader. Yet, de Waal's work is in need of some clarification. If his supposition that religion is the manifestation of our innate morality, what about religious traditions that we consider today to be immoral, such as human sacrifice? There are even movements today that argue that male circumcision, practiced in many Judeo-Christian denominations, is immoral. Do these violent facets of certain religions reflect parts of our moral psyche as well? De Waal does not account for these exceptions.

Overall, *The Bonobo and the Atheist* is a gentle reflection on the philosophical consequences of an evolved morality that comes from within. De Waal discusses a splattering of topics, ranging from Charles Darwin to art history, and at times his argument is clouded by these frequent diversions. Nevertheless, de Waal's central question, "But what if morality is created in day-to-day social interaction, not at some abstract mental level?" is poignant (23). De Waal does not advocate the extermination of religion (as neo-atheists advise), but a society of tolerance in which human potential is emphasized and nurtured. The problem de Waal has with religion is its central contention that morality can only come from it alone. De Waal does not provide readers with a moral guidebook. Instead, he offers critical insight on how humanity is to approach the waning influence of religion in our social context.



Book Review >>> Sammi Birri

Orange is the New Black

Kerman, Piper. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2011. 327 pp.

What comes to mind when you hear the word “prison”? What are some of the characteristics of people who end up in prison? Go on, think about it. Prison is a place where criminals go, where they wear orange, fight with each other, and waste our tax dollars. The people who end up in prison are low-lives, thugs, and drug addicts. That is what came to mind when you heard the word “prison,” right? Now, take all those thoughts and banish them. In her memoir, *Orange is the New Black*, author Piper Kerman documents her year in a women’s prison, creating a story that is both beautiful and fascinating, all the while challenging her readers to question every thought they ever had about prison. Most importantly, however, Kerman’s story is one that captures the strength of the human spirit.

Kerman begins her story by taking us back to the time she was working for West African drug lords, smuggling massive amounts of money and paraphernalia into the United States. How did she get into this? It was simple, really: she did it for love. Kerman’s girlfriend at the time got her into the business, and there was no way out, or so Kerman thought. Fast forward five years and Kerman has put her past behind her and now has a real job, a loving boyfriend, and a supportive family, at least, until she is summoned to court. Her past has come back to haunt her, and now, it is time for her to do her time at Danbury, a correctional facility in Connecticut.

Throughout her stay in Danbury, Kerman learns a lot about herself, the people society labels as criminals, and the United States social justice system. The women Kerman encounters are not the faceless drug addicts that one pictures when they think of a criminal. Instead, these women are mothers, wives, fiancées, friends, and resources of hope, encouragement, and strength in a place where those qualities are what matter most. The more time Kerman spends at Danbury, the closer she grows to some of her fellow inmates. As the novel progresses, we see Kerman change from the woman who was determined to make no attachments while in prison to the woman who thrives on the company and support of her fellow inmates. These women teach Kerman how to remain optimistic, how to be strong, how to survive prison, and, most importantly, the resilience of the human spirit. Despite the conditions of the prison, or how long their sentences may be, these women have a way of banding together and supporting each other, creating an environment of strength despite the circumstances. Kerman has found a way to capture the human spirit and put it into words in a way that leaves readers feeling inspired, moved, and somewhat humbled.

The Netflix series based on Kerman’s book does an excellent job of capturing the themes of human resilience and strength. While the series does stray from the book’s story and includes much more drama, it is definitely worth watching. One scene which is

portrayed in the beginning of the series that is actually accurate is when Kerman first arrives at Danbury. In prison, women of the same race usually stick together and look out for one another. Therefore, when Kerman arrived in her bunk, the other women in the room already had a toothbrush, toothpaste, and shampoo for her until she received money to buy some at the prison convenience store. Her first roommates also taught her how to keep her bunk clean enough to pass inspection, when to take a shower, and which prison guards to be wary of. From the very beginning, Kerman learned that, while her sentence may be her own, she certainly was not serving it alone. The women of Danbury were there to offer their advice and support throughout the entire process. The Netflix series portrays the relationships between the women fairly accurately, with one major exception, of course (there has to be a plot twist, after all), and I think that the series should be watched to truly understand the prison dichotomy. Granted, the book should be read before the series is watched.

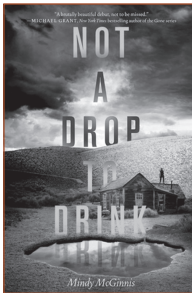
Speaking of the book, the time comes to discuss the ending. Towards the end of her book, Kerman reflects on her thoughts before she arrived at Danbury. She states that she had a strong sense of self, and reveled in solitude. Therefore, she imagined she would do fine with prison because she was under the impression that you came to prison, did your time, and minded your own business. However, she discovered that prison was not something one went through alone. Kerman's family and friends who wrote to her and visited her went through it, too. Of course, there are also the women that Kerman lived with and interacted with on a daily basis. Kerman writes,

“most of all, I realized that I was not alone in the world because of the women I lived with for over a year, who gave me a dawning recognition of what I shared with them...we shared a deep reserve of humor, creativity in adverse circumstances, and the will to protect and maintain our own humanity despite the prison system's imperative to crush it” (292).

That, I believe, is what Kerman wants us to think about most as we part from her memoir. No matter how hard outside forces try to tear us apart, we as humans will band together to hold on to our humanity and our sense of self. The will to support and survive is part of our human nature, and nothing can ever crush that.

Orange is the New Black should be read because of its rawness and its relevance. Kerman writes about both the bad and the good in a brutally honest manner that should be acknowledged and admired. After all, any of us could have been Kerman. We could all find that person who drives us to dare to do something dangerous or illegal. We are all human and are therefore easily influenced by others, just as Kerman was influenced by a girlfriend to become involved in the drug business. There is so much of ourselves that we can see in Kerman that we should take her story to heart and be reminded that, while we are all vulnerable, we are all capable of surviving whatever detours life takes us on, and whatever prison we are thrown in, whether it be literally or metaphorically. However, due to some of the content and language in Kerman's memoir, I would advise it for the college-age reader and above.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Orange is the New Black* because of Kerman's voice as a writer, the power of her story, and the importance of her message. Her story flows very well and her message is truly inspiring. Kerman is proof that the human spirit will always prevail despite any attempts to thwart its strength.



Book Review >>> Meghan Crawford

Not a Drop to Drink

McGinnis, Mindy. New York: HarperCollins, 2013. 320pp.

“‘Do you want to die like this?’ Mother had asked that night and every night since then.

Lynn’s answer never changed. ‘No.’

And Mother’s response, their evening prayer. ‘Then you will have to kill’” (McGinnis 4).

Mindy McGinnis’ debut novel *Not a Drop to Drink*, at first glance, may appear to be yet another post-apocalyptic dystopian Young Adult novel. It is clear that the dystopian genre is “in”, the market continuously gorging upon these dramatic, action-packed survival thrillers that could not be complete without an epic romance between the fiery and gorgeous heroine and her equally valiant and handsome beau. And while I admit to binging on these texts, what *Not a Drop to Drink* has going for it is its divergence from the typical dystopia. There is no corrupt totalitarian regime that we are made aware of, no epic battle between good and evil. At its core, *Not a Drop to Drink* is a gritty and sparse tale of survival and what an individual must sacrifice in order to live.

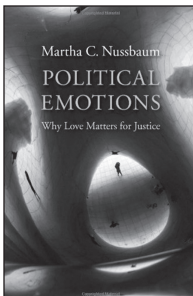
Not a Drop to Drink is an enthralling expedition into a bleak, desolate and all too probable future. Within McGinnis’ world there is a shortage of water of such alarming rates that people are forced to wander throughout the country, looking for a drop to drink. Lynn, the novel’s sixteen year old protagonist, and her mother are fortunate enough to have a pond. But this gift comes at a heavy price, the mother-daughter duo forced to guard their precious water source daily against wanderers and vicious coyotes. The first line of *Not a Drop to Drink* reads, “Lynn was nine the first time she killed to defend the pond, the sweet smell of water luring the man to be picked off like the barn swallows that dared to swoop in for a drink,” (1). This is the first image we have of Lynn; this bleak existence, this daily survival routine of purifying the pond’s water, hunting and salting meat, and shooting down any trespassers from their rooftop perch. It is the first image of the desolate reality McGinnis creates. The story is less the triumph of good over evil and more the human being’s capacity for survival and how this survival mechanism shapes one’s life and character. Lynn grows up in an environment where morality and ethics are as unfamiliar as the sound of music or running water. She kills without thinking, without knowing that it is wrong, in order to survive. Primo Levi, the late author and Holocaust survivor, defined the suspension of morality in Nazi death camps as “the gray zone”, in which each action in its time and place was the only conceivable action. There was no morality, no commitment to fellow man. Every individual was left to fend for himself, taking whatever actions were necessary to keep afloat. Thus bread was wrenched from a dead prisoner’s hand or in Lynn’s case, passerby’s

shot without a second thought. Thinking, like morality, was a luxury inaccessible in such environments.

There is a sort of homestead feel to the world McGinnis creates; a regression to the 19th century American prairie lifestyle. Lynn is Laura Ingalls reimagined: a fierce and spirited farm girl who is ruthless with a shotgun. Although *Not a Drop to Drink* is set in the near future, it presents a world of regression rather than progression and technological advancement. For those like Lynn's mother who remember all too well the luxuries of indoor plumbing and electricity, this reversion is particularly grim. Like the American frontier, survival is of utmost importance on this small Ohio farm. As Lynn makes known at the novel's start, "Regret was for people with nothing to defend, people who had no water;" (5). She and her mother harbor no regret, no remorse for the lives they take. Lynn recalls at one point that she never thought of these people as having faces. They were always face-less, nameless, strangers. Lynn is not a heartless creature. She is the product of her environment, the savage world in which she was born. In killing these strangers she was protecting herself and her mother. She was defending the pond. She was in essence, surviving.

When tragedy strikes the homestead, Lynn's isolated existence, her stark reality, is distorted. With the emergence of the Streamers—a family of city folks with few survival skills—and the old neighbor Stebbs, whom Lynn has never had a conversation with before, Lynn is introduced to another reality in which survival is not chief. The poor state of the Streamer mother leaves Lynn to take in and care for the daughter, Lucy, a spirited and mature little girl. With Lucy, Lynn's personal survival is put on the back burner. This second part of the novel focuses largely on the development of these relationships and Lynn learning there is more to life than survival. Lynn begins to fill in the faces of strangers, to question mother's ruthless rules. In doing so the beautifully bleak and desolate reality McGinnis creates is suspended until the novel's merciless close.

While survival is no longer the only thing on Lynn's mind, it is still the most vital. Just as the novel begins with a mother and daughter guarding their pond, the novel ends with a surrogate mother and daughter guarding that same pond. Lynn learns to love, to laugh, to live throughout the course of the story, but most importantly she continues to survive. Sure to be a success within the young adult community, McGinnis' grim and gray subject matter borders the genre's line, possibly winning over adult audiences as well. For fans of dystopian literature and classic frontier tales, this is a must read. Written in a sparse prose that mirrors the bleakness of McGinnis' dystopia, *Not a Drop to Drink* will have you turning the page until its powerfully unremorseful close.



Book Review >>> Kevin Gebura

Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice

Nussbaum, Martha C. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2013. 480pp.

Martha Nussbaum's *Political Emotions* is a work of political philosophy, accessible to anyone who is intrigued about knowing why they feel the way they do about animals, people, governments, the arts, or global issues. A background in philosophy is unnecessary for readers, although Nussbaum does display her expertise in the field with this book. Setting up conceptions of justice that an imaginary, ideal society will do well opting for, a case is made that a society is best if its population can feel emotions when it needs to. The nature of emotions is a topic that Nussbaum explores in various other works. In *Political Emotions*, she develops potential, though not inevitable features of justice. The book draws from individuals who were aspiring for justice rather than those who achieved justice (220). Even though the book takes on a liberal stance, it will only benefit her project for conservatives to hear her out and give counterexamples to some of her more convincing conclusions.

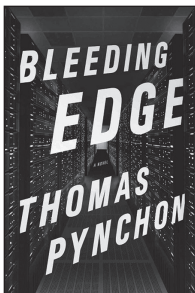
The book's first section, "History", is an import from faraway lands brought to us from international scholars such as Rabindranath Tagore from India, August Comte from France, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau from Switzerland. Nussbaum's articulation of these people, places, and times is astute, as she is able to make their aspirations relevant to her own. Their works guide her intuitions of social justice. In Nussbaum's account of social justice, emotions play a major role in determining what is right and wrong. The book uses timeless literature and turning points in history to illustrate how that can happen. People need to properly respond through their emotional faculties to understand what might be just. Just what are these proper responses? Nussbaum spares readers by not arguing her way to this answer. Instead, her analysis deals with the kinds of events where some emotions turned out best. For example, in the second chapter, Nussbaum analyzes Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in a way that has Cherubino neglecting to strive for honor and high status that the "male world" imposes on him as standards to live by (50). Cherubino becomes the most lovable character and preferred by women when he comes to value for himself the standards imposed on females. Additionally, Nussbaum uses the worldwide tidings of democratic leaders to show how a just society run by democracy can be good for all. Nussbaum includes analyses of speeches, notably of Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln, in addition to other more foreign pieces of writing, music, and other expressions of art.

The second section, "Goals, Resources, Problems", shows how Nussbaum's research includes more than history lessons and biographies. *Political Emotions* is not merely an argument laid out for philosophical importance. Nussbaum advocates emotions to be essential for well-being, agreeing with sources from psychological experimentation, poetry comprehension, philosophical analysis of politics, and animal behavioral studies.

Utilizing these disciplines that strive for similar interests, Nussbaum's view has evidence supporting it. She does not focus solely on art and love as the means to a just end. People must not only respond emotionally when tragedies occur, but also revisit these hard times with compassion. That is one reason why compassion is a necessary emotion even though it is essentially being pained about the suffering of others (142). Love is the heart of such reciprocity. In order to feel compassion towards those whom are disgusting to others (i.e. India's untouchables), one must love humans unconditionally. Nussbaum advocates: "The thought of similar possibilities has considerable importance in preventing or undoing denial of our own animal nature" (144).

Integrating the conditions of people aside from American society, Nussbaum portrays the relevance of values held from culture to culture. It seems that the world is a community that refuses to agree on the basic conditions of living a human life. This refusal, termed "anthropodenial", projects hatred, disgust, and other emotions that are "motivated by deeper anxieties about mortality and helplessness" (184). Even so, emotions are the answer to our common dilemma. To overcome the perception, people must embrace their humanness instead of avoiding the reality. The type of thinking that categorizes minorities as the only filthy, foul-smelling, and mortal people is clearly mistaken. Loathing these conditions leaves no room for relationships and impedes establishing what can mend their intensity: emotions like unconditional love, compassion, etc. Anthropodenial leads to inappropriate anger. It is not worthwhile to try and prevent emotions like anger and fear; it makes sense to be appropriately angry and afraid. This starts politically, shaping norms to influence the society's efforts as a collective.

The third section of the book "Public Emotions" is meant to show how emotions are not only needed for people in politics but everybody else as well. This is why you need not have any background in philosophy to be swayed by her political philosophizing. Nussbaum incorporates storytelling and anecdotes so seamlessly that it is as if the book is not supposed to be formal philosophical literature. "Arguments are only as good as their starting points, and tragedies such as these promote an emotional insight that connects people to the reality not only of what their own side is suffering but also of what they are doing to others," she says (261). Nussbaum gives an account that can guide an understanding of proper human responsibilities to their nature. Those who suffer on account of a greater cause, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi, can instill more than what they aimed. To feel emotions in the appropriate way, people need the arts in theaters, in books, in public memorials, and anywhere that a critical mind can direct its attention. It may seem that this is a lofty goal that can only be understood as an ideal, never to manifest itself in reality. As the book concludes, the call for love in the political sphere is by no means only working in abstract terms.



Book Review >>> Beth Gier

Bleeding Edge

Pynchon, Thomas. New York: Penguin, 2013. 477 pp.

Bleeding edge technology may be a term that many people aren't familiar with, but the concept that the word describes impacts our lives every day. The term "bleeding edge" is used to describe technology that is extremely complex, experimental, and risky. Thomas Pynchon's latest novel, aptly titled *Bleeding Edge*, discusses the topic of risky technology; following suit with Pynchon's other frenetic and beloved novels of the post-modernist style.

The novel is set in New York in the year 2001, months after the dot.com bubble had burst, which sets the stage for an examination of advanced and uncertain technology—the kinds of bleeding edge technology that made so many people wealthy and just as quickly left their lives in shambles. But like many of Pynchon's novels, it is difficult to capture the essence of the novel in a quick plot summary. The superficial gist of *Bleeding Edging* revolves around Maxine Tarnow, a Beretta-toting mom who works as a private investigator specializing in accounting fraud. After she is approached by a friend who asks her to take a look at a tech megacorporation's sketchy finances, Maxine gets dragged into a turbulent investigation of the technological world's seedy underbelly that involves: an interactive world-building program in deep space, run-ins with the Russian mob, an undercover stint as a stripper in a dive joint called Joie de Beavre, and an attempt to uncover a mass governmental conspiracy. However, Pynchon's work is notable for its layers of meaning. The events on the surface of the book may serve no purpose other than to simply be vehicles for the reader's descent into a complicated, fast-paced plot that confuses her and leaves her unable to trust her instincts—a re-creation of the craziness and incomprehensibility of life. Maxine's journey through the illicit and seedy undersides of New York City and the tech industry serve to precaution people about the dangers of omnipresent technology: losing the ability to distinguish between people and pixels. As Maxine becomes more intimate with and entranced by the deep web world-building program, DeepArcher, she realizes that she increasingly has trouble distinguishing between the worlds that people create in this escapist program and the real, tangible New York City. Worlds blend and reality becomes subjective. Anyone who accesses DeepArcher can build their own landscapes, utopias, dystopias which anyone else can experience. People even create avatars of their dead friends or loved ones, keeping their memories alive while that person no longer physically exists in reality.

DeepArcher is exactly what it claims to be: a departure from the complications and reality checks of meatspace, the tangible world that we physically occupy. But the more that Maxine uses the program as means to escape, the more hours she spends in DeepArcher, neglecting some of her responsibilities and checking up on people who are supposedly dead. Maxine eventually comes to the dangerous conclusion that "'objective reality' would sure

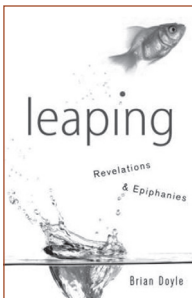
be nice if you could manage it, which side of the river being not so important as which side of the screen" (Pynchon 433). The pervasive and dangerous nature of the bleeding edge technology that is DeepArcher prevents people from actively participating in real life, while also creating a defense mechanism against the meatspace they are neglecting.

Naturally, the events of 9/11 cast a shadow over the novel, the Twin Towers loom over the characters, though the tragedy is not spoken of until over halfway through the novel, and even then, Pynchon uses the tragedy to further warn readers about the excessive and intrusive nature of technology. Once the Towers fell, the entire atmosphere of New York City changed. Landmarks reflective of the nature of America that seemed permanent were left in ruins, and the people who worked their desk jobs in the Towers or rushed in to save those in peril were suddenly gone or the surrounding restaurants and businesses—vanished in the smoldering wreckage. But Maxine is so entrenched in technology—both in the world of DeepArcher and the technological scandal she investigates—that she can only use technological analogies to describe the new New York. Maxine observes,

"Family, friends, friends of friends, phone numbers on the Rolodex, just not there anymore...the bleak feeling, some mornings, that the country itself may not be there anymore, but being silently replaced screen by screen with something else, some surprise packages, by those who've kept their wits about them and their clicking thumbs ready" (Pynchon 339).

She compares the disappearance and death of people and the atmosphere of catastrophe to computer screens being wiped clean, the systematic erasure of everything we once knew by some unknown entity operating behind the scenes.

In this effect, *Bleeding Edge* provides an eerie form of nostalgia that mirrors the present. Through the technology scandal and the feeling Maxine describes relate to NYC circa 2001, Pynchon's warnings can also be interpreted into the modern day because we still experience the same pervasive kinds of technology and control through things like the ever present SmartPhones, iPads, and the NSA scandal. In this regard, most readers will be able to identify with or relate to some of the main themes that Pynchon highlights, though he touches on many big existential subjects. However, unless readers are willing to dedicate time and thought to *Bleeding Edge*, they will most likely never finish the book. At nearly 500 pages, the novel is hefty to say the least, and Pynchon inundates the book with extensive pop culture references, technological jargon, and complex plotlines that easily get lost in the sheer bulk of the plot. But Pynchon's genius in creating enthralling plotlines and hilarious wit are great rewards for the dedicated reader looking for a book that will leave them sitting with questions about the role of technology in society and our lives.



Book Review >>> Megan Gray

Leaping: Revelations and Epiphanies

Doyle, Brian. Chicago: Loyola P, 2013. 222 pp.

Essayist Brian Doyle is a professed Catholic and celebrated author. His newest collection, *Leaping: Revelations and Epiphanies* centers around various Catholic and Christian topics including communion, the benevolence of Christ, the reason for being Catholic, and moments of Grace in action. Despite these very specific topics, this collection, much like other essays and collections, is not decidedly *about* Catholicism. Rather, it seeks to better understand our relationship to spirituality, each other, and with ourselves. Through a mix of questions, hard truths, and humor, Doyle offers a view of the human condition that can be both admired and appreciated by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

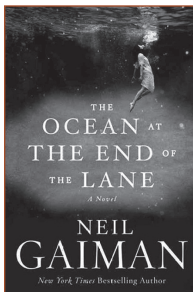
The essay from which this collection gets its name is perhaps the most powerful piece, and will resonate strongly with anyone old enough to remember the events of September 11th. The essay, entitled “Leap”, is a two and a half page account describing the people who jumped from the burning towers. In particular, the narrator focuses on two people caught on camera who seemingly leapt towards one another simultaneously. The essay begins with this image: “A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped” (151). Doyle writes in a very factual, distant manner at first, describing the mist of blood and giving succinct accounts from witnesses. Halfway through, the voice shifts to a personal tone utilizing the personal I and tries to make sense of the chaos. The narrator leans on scripture for comfort, as many turn to spiritual guidance in times of hardships. He likens their reach for one another as a powerful prayer; a prayer that they will not die alone, and that there is peace after death. The essay circles back to the beginning, ending with the lines, “Jennifer Brickhouse saw them holding hands, and Stuart DeHann saw them holding hands, and I hold on to that” (153). These powerful lines bring a sense of comfort to an otherwise horrific scene. Doyle recognizes that even in the direst of circumstances, we look for something to hold on to, in which to have faith. Here, the couple who leaped and held hands act as our source of comfort. Yes, they leapt, but they were not alone.

The second essay of the collection, “Room Eight”, holds an entirely different tone. Here, Doyle presents small scenes from the class of second graders he taught in Catholic education. Doyle does a good job of integrating spiritual ideas with his own modesty (professing to both the children and the reader that he does not know all the answers, nor does he claim that his choice of religion is the right one). The children act as a natural form of comic relief in the piece. For example, in response to Doyle informing them that they must pick the name of a saint they wish to be like for first communion, the children respond with, “Can you be a saint if you like Pokémon?” (32). Not only does this add great humor to the piece, but it also resonates with readers who have children that like Pokémon, and those, like me, who grew up watching it. This

essay functions as a great starter piece. The use of the classroom experiences helps readers unfamiliar with Catholic practices to ease into the customs and better understand the references throughout the rest of the collection, as well as to connect with readers who are Catholic or are already familiar with the practices. It also functions, as many others in the collection do, as an example that even someone who identifies with a specific spiritual sect has doubts, concerns, and questions about their faith. In other words, it shows that Doyle is essentially “just like everyone else”.

The best example of Doyle’s own humanness is in the essay “A Thin Ragged Man.” This essay at first appears to be one of complaint. Doyle recounts a story of a man who visits his home looking for work, but ends up essentially robbing them of a significant amount of money, a backpack and sleeping bag, and an unfinished job. Doyle confesses that he hates this man, and he struggles with trying to forgive him, to love him despite what he’d done. The second part of the essay is a letter that Doyle received in response to the first part of the essay from a man in prison who wished to paint a better picture of what their thief’s life may have been like; a life that was probably much like his own. He informs Doyle that his hate for the man is not necessary and not comparable to the hate he probably feels for himself and what he had done to Doyle’s family. He reminds Doyle that actions are ever complicated, and may not be as spiteful as one assumes them to be. The fact that Doyle includes this letter as part of the essay shows not only a growth in him as a human, but also gives the reader hope that they can grow as well.

Though the collection is clearly aimed at a Catholic audience, anyone who practices a faith, is looking for or appreciates spirituality will appreciate what Doyle has to say. Through his own exploration, Doyle has captured the curiosity of the human mind as it tries to make sense of the world the best way it can. Indeed, in his introduction “Why Write?” Doyle quotes John Steinbeck: “We search for something that will seem like truth to us; we search for understanding; we search for that principle which keys us deeply into the pattern of all life; we search for the relations of things, one to another” (13). The collection is divided into six sections that organize the pieces into loose categories or themes. Each section begins with a short epigraph, usually from one of the essays within that section. The collection is best read by mature, free-thinking and curious individuals.



Book Review >>> Gretchen Heisler

The Ocean at the End of the Lane

Gaiman, Neil. New York: HarperCollins, 2013. 181 pp.

"I remember my own childhood vividly...I knew terrible things. But I knew I mustn't let adults know I knew. It would scare them" (1). This quote by Maurice Sendak begins *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, the newest novel by English author Neil Gaiman. The book continues Gaiman's tradition of engaging writing that blurs the lines between young adult and adult literature. Fans of Gaiman's previous works, including *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, will not be disappointed with the new book, which retains the elegance and flow characteristic of Gaiman's writing, while giving readers the unique fantasy stories for which the author is known.

The Ocean at the End of the Lane is the story of an unnamed middle-aged man who returns to his hometown for a funeral and begins to remember an incredible series of events that occurred when he was seven. As can be expected of Gaiman, and as the mentioned epigraph would indicate, they are events most adults would find it jarring to think of a child enduring. From the death of his pet, to discovering the dead body of a man who boarded at his family's home, being trapped by a monstrous creature posing as a housekeeper, and other terrible things, the narrator's past is full of sad, terrifying, and sometimes outright dangerous episodes. These events inspire in the reader feelings of unease and sympathy, mostly due to the young age of the narrator when the events occur. The first person point of view gives the narration a feeling of placidity not often associated with young children, conflicting at times with the stated emotions of the narrator when he was seven and giving the text a certain sense of nostalgia, despite the horror of many of the events.

The idea of children handling adult problems almost entirely by themselves is a recurring theme in Gaiman's work. Those familiar with his novella *Coraline* or his novel *The Graveyard Book* will recognize similarities in the theme of the works, if not in the stories themselves. All three stories involve the clever child protagonists encountering evil in forms unrecognized by the world at large, particularly their parents/guardians, and eventually having to save their families and others from this evil. All three main characters exhibit a resilience characteristic of young children and apply that resilience to the extraordinary situations in which they find themselves.

Gaiman's proclivity for writing child characters that take such horrible things in stride both inspires and unsettles readers. The writer dismisses the idea that childhood is a time of innocence and fun, and that children are unaware of or immune to the same problems in life that adults must face. Though he does not deny that children are not likely to understand everything (he includes several references to adult events in *Ocean* and has the narrator note that, "I would react differently to that now. At the time, I do not believe I

thought anything of it at all. I was seven.” [68]), Gaiman makes it clear through the narrator’s thoughts and emotions that the lack of full comprehension does not mean the narrator’s seven-year-old self did not realize that something was wrong, only that he did not know exactly what was wrong.

In fact, Gaiman’s child characters are often incredibly mature for their ages, and many readers may find themselves frustrated when the adults in the stories dismiss the children and their concerns. Gaiman seems to use his mature and clever child characters and the things that they encounter to make a statement about child-adult relationships. Frequently his stories with young protagonists have moments where the adults charged with caring for the children not only disregard the children’s worries, but also purposefully work against them. The narrator of *Ocean* is particularly aware of the tyranny that can evolve from the abuse of power that adults have over children. When the boarder at his family’s home accidentally kills the narrator’s kitten, and the boarder comforts the seven-year-old by saying, “Disposed of the corpse. Don’t have to trouble yourself,” (11) it becomes clear that the narrator’s youth allows others to judge his responses to events and people as melodramatic or irrelevant. He acknowledges that his powerlessness in his memories is not just because he was seven at the time, but also because his otherworldly opponent is masquerading as an adult, giving it automatic dominion over him. When his eleven-year-old friend Lettie comes to help him in defeating the monster posing as his housekeeper, he strongly doubts that anything the girl can do will help. Although he knows that Lettie is more than she appears, and he has seen her in action before, he still despairs, saying, “when adults fight children, adults always win” (87).

This is not to say that all adults in the novel are demonized or abuse their power. Lettie’s grandmother and mother both assist the narrator in his dealings with the housekeeper. However, these grown-ups are distinct from the others in the story, not only because of the fantastical abilities that they possess, but also because they actually listen to the children. The fact that Gaiman characterizes these women as wise and powerful, as well as being the only adults who respect the narrator, is an indicator that Gaiman believes children are often not given the credit they deserve.

All in all, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is a beautifully written work perfect for readers of almost any age. The story is enthralling, and Neil Gaiman’s ability to make the most impossible events seem real is as present as ever. The transition from the present to the past is nearly seamless, and the calm of the older narrator as he recalls his past naturally heightens the tension. Practiced readers of fantasy, and even those unfamiliar with the genre, will find something to love about the book.



Book Review >>> Brie Lovensheimer

Murals of New York City

Palmer-Smith, Glenn. New York: Rizzoli, 2013. 228pp.

While Glenn Palmer-Smith's *Murals of New York City* appears to be just another picture book that would grace the top of some mahogany coffee table, let it be clear that it is much more than that. Though it's not a fiction book of a created fantasy world you can lose yourself in, it's an entrancing compilation of what just some of the world around us has to offer, but we are often too busy to notice. Centered on famous historical and influential murals of New York City, the reader delves in to a side of the art scene that often too few of people truly appreciate and often take for granted.

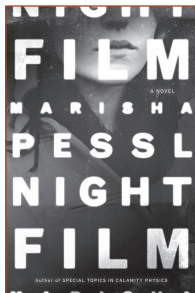
The murals are photographed extensively so the reader can see not only the overall composition of the work and the context of the mural within its surroundings, but other intriguing angles that accentuate the detail of the mural. Going along with each mural is a brief one to two page description of what the murals depict, background information about the artist and style they were working in, history of the mural's welfare; restoration or location change, client/muralist relationship, and it's location in the city. Other intriguing details sometimes listed in the mural description are commission price and appraisals, lists of celebrities who frequented the mural's location, and common misconceptions that accompany some of the murals.

While that seems like a lot to take in for leisure reading, in all actuality I kept looking forward to the next interesting fact. I came out of reading this book knowing that Grand Central Station's ceiling in the main concourse depicting the night sky is painted backwards because it was done by an Australian painter. Useless fun facts that one somehow always remembers are abound in this book, like how the Knickerbocker Hotel is the American birthplace of the Bloody Mary. Even though these descriptions are just one to two pages, they cover an immense amount of information on a broad range of topics, and satisfy the interests of most, if not all readers. Thirty three murals are discussed; however, their brief descriptions keep the reader focused and attentive to the works and the history.

While it may seem like this book is directed at those who have a background in art history, and are frequenters of NYC, in all actuality the book is aimed at a general audience. The book is a lovely combination of art history and history, and tells a story of not only collective history of the murals, but an individual history of the muralists. There are heartfelt stories in the book that will pull at the heartstrings of any person, like the real story of Madeline which became the popular children's tale most people know today. Art lingo such as glazing techniques and its affects, trompe d'oeil, diptych, and triptych are explained for the non-art oriented reader to understand. A general interest in NYC and art are all it takes to be satisfied by this read, and who knows, maybe you've never given thought that they might be of interest to you.

This book “beckons for the reader to make the journey to the sources” and shows how murals “keep alive the epic tale of mankind in all its splendor and vanity” (Palmer-Smith 4). Although focused solely on works in NYC, diverse styles, heritages, mediums, and locations surprise the reader with all the information given about them. Many things get lost along the way in art history, and many things go by unnoticed or unquestioned; *Murals of New York City* brings to light what has sadly been left in the dark. Understanding the intention that murals have, such as the Chrysler Building’s intention to display “work ethic, power of Industrial America...and the virtues of hard work and achievement” often go by missed (Palmer-Smith 43). It’s a shame for such display of talent and narrative should go by unappreciated.

For some, this book will be another coffee table book with pretty pictures to look at in order to pass the time by while waiting for something better to come along. For others, this book will be a gateway into another place, one that is very much of this world, and that lives on even as they turn the page. Some of these murals are passed by every day, some haven’t been seen by the public in years due to their vacant building, but this book gives these murals a chance to be appreciated for the stories they really tell. These murals tell a story of artist and craft, narratives and lifetimes; a history of both individual and collective, and this book allows these stories to be told. Allow yourself to be cultured by this book and have a better understanding of art, and what art can mean. Not only will you learn to appreciate these murals more, but it just might affect how you view the murals that are all around you; whether it be on the street or at the post office. This book will make you stop and take a minute to appreciate the art that is all around.



Book Review >>> Katy Major

Night Film

Pessl, Marisha. New York: Random House, 2013. 624 pp.

A dead girl in a warehouse. A gruff veteran investigator. A couple of likable young sidekicks. Marisha Pessl's *Night Film* has all of the expected elements of another mass-market paperback thriller. Luckily for the reader, *Night Film* is far from expected. Even in the unsettling genre of the gothic, Pessl's second novel stands out as one that conquers new territories of fear and paranoia in the minds and hearts of readers.

When twenty-four-year-old Ashley Cordova is found dead from what is deemed a tragic suicide, rumors begin flying. Ashley's father, Stanislas Cordova, is a legendary film director, famous for the disturbing, mind-bending nature of his cult horror films. Shrouded in anonymity, the elder Cordova is an enigma, little seen and beyond public comprehension. His methods of creating these "night films"—so dubbed by his fans due to their dark nature and their late-night showings—are equally as unknown. The cast and crew are forced into silence regarding the process of creating the films, certain films are limited in their release, and all production is contained in the Peak, the massive estate belonging to the Cordova family, surrounded by twenty-foot electric fences and guarded carefully.

Scott McGrath, a scorned former investigative journalist, quickly sees a chance at redemption in young Ashley's mysterious death. After being shunned from the journalistic community for a past attempt at unearthing the mysteries of Stanislas Cordova and making a crucial wrong move, he is seeking more than just the satisfaction of unveiling the truth of Ashley's death when he launches his investigation. Before long, he finds a haphazard investigative team in young Nora, an aspiring actress and former coat-check-girl at the Four Seasons, and Hopper, an indecipherable teenage boy with mysterious ties to the late Ashley Cordova. Together, the three submerge more deeply into the dark, twisted depths of the Cordova family's existence than even the most rabid of Cordova fans ever have.

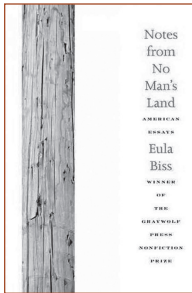
Despite the seemingly sensational—and thus, potentially overdone—plot set-up that Pessl presents in the novel's beginning, it quickly becomes clear that Pessl has crafted a book that deserves to join the celebrated ranks of the contemporary gothic. Her prose is delicately beautiful—a stark contrast with the dark content—entrancing the reader nearly as much as the narrative. The book itself is also artistic in Pessl's incorporation of fabricated webpages, newspaper and journal articles, photographs, and film stills. Though this may seem like a minor addition to the novel, it lends the story an authenticity that is, at times, startling.

Perhaps the boldest choice in *Night Film* was Pessl's unhesitating foray into the world of fantasy. The book itself hardly falls under the category of fantasy; it is set in modern-day New York City, and Scott McGrath is a staunchly cynical investigator. The setting is mired

in reality. Thus, *Night Film* hardly seems like an obvious choice for myth and magic. However, to my astonishment, Pessl does indeed call to question the existence of magic in the modern world—what role could witchcraft possibly play in a modern urban setting? What is the price of cynicism? And, more importantly, what is the cost of accepting the existence of the fantastic? The reader is forced to confront these questions along with McGrath, as he struggles to reconcile what he knows with what he is beginning to see.

Night Film will satisfy readers of adventure stories, those thrilled by dangerous exploits and secret missions. I was pleased to find that in addition to being exciting, the novel is well-written, and will appease even the strictest judge of literary merit. The amount of plot lines, subplots, and side characters is staggering, but what is more astounding is Pessl's ability to draw together loose ends, slip in conclusions, and effortlessly fill in plot holes. I carefully double-checked each stray question, each minor clue, and found that all of them could be resolved. As someone who has read a great number of promising books soiled by dropped threads and a disappointing lack of thoroughness, I appreciated Pessl's attentiveness to the narrative and her loyalty to the story.

Night Film is most masterful in its dualities, the contrasting contradictions that are emphasized time and time again in the book. In addition to the juxtaposition of myth and fantasy with the stark actuality of the city in *Night Film's* setting—perhaps the novel's most powerful duality—the plot is laced with questions that reject the black and white conclusions that people are trained to gravitate toward. McGrath—along with the reader—is forced to toe the line between fiction and reality, intrepidly exploring a metaphorical gray space occupied with witch doctors, a priest, a stealthy police investigator, and of course, The Peak, the space that holds the Cordova family and, McGrath fervently hopes, an explanation behind Ashley's death.



Book Review >>> Carly Marburger

Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays

Biss, Eula. Saint Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2009. 208pp.

Eula Biss treats issues of race in America with an unexpectedly honest heart in her collection of essays, *Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays*. Biss is a young contemporary writer whose work has been published in numerous anthologies. *Notes From No Man's Land* received the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize. The take on race that she offers in her essays comes from a place that I think readers need to be exposed to. It may be difficult to agree with everything she claims, but the strength of this book comes in the number of reactions that I am convinced it sparks; she leaves her readers no choice but to think critically.

Through thirteen essays categorized by geographical location across the United States, she presents a wide range of historical facts that are capable of bringing news reports and social studies textbooks to shame. She presents the hard facts about the relationships we have with the world around us, and spins them in ways that we, as a society, are not conditioned to see. She starts off her collection with "Time and Distance Overcome," which is an essay that tells the story of Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone. She writes about the telephone poles that popped up across the country, addressing their aesthetic qualities and the backlash that followed their inception. Americans did not want to share their property with one another via utility lines, but as a precursor to so many new ways of sharing information, the telephone was revolutionary. She writes that Thomas Edison declared that the telephone "annihilated time and space, and brought the human family in closer touch" (Biss 6). This statement is directly followed by a page break and the story of a black man in Mississippi hanged from a telephone pole. Throughout her essays, Eula Biss links historical facts such as these two together in order to create the jarring truths she wants to share. Telephone poles have always simply and innocently reminded me of manmade tree trunks, and Biss brutally solidifies that connection. She makes you sit back, take a breath, and open up your mind to what she wants to tell you.

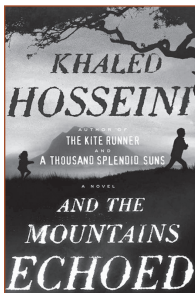
While making claims about the inaccuracies that surround our society, Biss is able to maintain the trust of her readers, because she does not present herself as an innocent bystander who is simply picking apart the injustices that she has seen. She is able to present such a hair-raising critique of racial relations because she is very much in the middle of her own analysis, and is by no means immune to discrimination. She doesn't place any more blame on anyone else than she does on herself, as she reveals the awful truths of her own prejudices that she has been conditioned to hold. We all have expectations about our own stereotypes and it is impossible to get rid of them if we are reminded of them on a daily basis. As a woman with strong family ties to a few different cultures and ethnicities, she

knows how to fit in with more kinds of people than most, yet she will always be white, and look white, and carry every stereotype that a white woman can hold.

Children in this country grow up believing that slavery is bad, and it is; but it is all too common to grow up and never truly understand what that means. Somebody will always have it worse than the guy next to you, and progress will always be noted and celebrated even if it is just the tip of the iceberg. Biss brings up circumstance after circumstance that opens wounds deeper and deeper, making readers feel the infection. We are not and cannot be aware of every injustice in this world and Biss reminds her readers not to pretend that they are. She reminds us of the moment when the Irish were finally considered “white” in America, she reminds us of the strings we pull on the marionette of Mexico’s trade, she reminds us that if we apologize to one, it only makes sense that we say sorry to all. As a country, we are responsible for displacing and killing Native Americans that we once promised to respect, and that will always hang over our heads. Saying sorry won’t cut it. Yet, we still apologize for things we do without a second thought. Biss concludes her final essay in a way that showcases the helplessness of the human condition, despite how much we all may think we have it figured out. She does not have the answers, but rather, more questions. She presents scenarios and questions that work to displace the answers that already exist because we are by no means done asking questions.

She illustrates this idea beautifully in her final essay titled “All Apologies.” In this essay she lists numerous examples of political apologies over the years, apologies that never happened, and apologies that were never accepted. With every short anecdote and one liner Biss is simultaneously letting her readers in on history that they may not know and proving that our answers are often too generalized or over-used to be genuine. The more you wear your favorite shirt, the more it loses its value. It becomes no longer the new piece of clothing that you were dying to add to your wardrobe, but just another rag in rotation. It has lost its appeal. Eula Biss reveals to her readers what it looks like when our apologies get spun around in too many loads of laundry. We no longer know who we are apologizing to anymore, or what we are sorry about.

One of her thoughts on apologies is, “There is only one word for apology in English, but there are several words for a loss of freedom – ‘internment,’ ‘imprisonment,’ ‘detention,’ ‘slavery’” (198). This is one sentence, yet it evokes a lot of thought. We assume that we are being considerate when we tell someone we’re sorry, but the way she pits facts and stories up against each other will change the way you look at apologies, whether it be apologizing to an entire nation for an act of war or dropping the ball in a game of catch. *Notes From No Man’s Land: American Essays* is a very deliberate and provocative must-read and I encourage everyone to use it as fuel to keep the questions coming.



Book Review >>> Rachel Scherzer

And the Mountains Echoed

Hosseini, Khaled. New York: Riverhead Books, 2013 404pp.

Khaled Hosseini is known for his storytelling abilities, creating detailed narratives about life in Afghanistan in his bestselling novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In his newest book, *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini creates a story with an extensive span across space and time, spanning nearly seventy years and locations from Afghanistan, to France, to California. The novel revolves around family, especially focusing on the special bond found between siblings; both biological and the one's we create for ourselves.

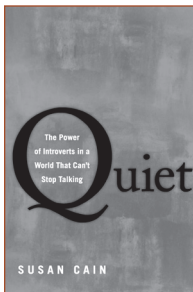
The story begins in rural Afghanistan in 1952, where a father makes a devastating choice to sell his youngest daughter for adoption in order to support the rest of his family. His daughter Pari is his last connection to her mother, who died giving birth to her. Yet the father has little choice, as he has two other sons to support in a country where harsh winters have taken children from him in the past. The offer is unique, allowing his daughter to live a better life in the capital city of Kabul with a rich family where his wife's brother Nabi is employed. The transaction has the deepest effect on Pari's brother Abdullah, who is especially connected to his younger sister. Abdullah's whole world revolves around Pari, and losing her opens a hole in him that never fully closes.

After the opening chapter, the novel examines the story of a new set of characters each chapter. These stories interact and intertwine with Abdullah and Pari's in interesting ways. Some characters are directly related to Abdullah and Pari, like their stepmother Parwana, their uncle Nabi, and Abdullah's daughter. Other characters are only minimally connected to Pari or Abdullah, yet their stories reinforce the themes that Hosseini uses throughout. Markos Varvaris is a good example of the relations that are created among the story. He connects to Pari and Abdullah's story while working as a doctor in Afghanistan in 2001, fifty years after the initial start of the novel. While there, he gains possession of a letter explaining Pari's history and becomes involved in the quest to connect her again to her brother. Yet, his own story is also compelling in its own right, as a chapter about his childhood in Greece reveals how a disfigured girl named Thalia becomes his adopted sister and creates interesting questions from Markos about responsibility and motivation. The various characters like Markos explore a wide variety of familial themes and situations, including how a family handles a secret, the responsibilities expected by family, and the kind of joy and pain that can come from caring for another human being. There are discussions of jealousy, abandonment, absence, and loss of trust. These themes exist in all types of family bonds, whether the familial relationship is one of siblings, parent and child, cousins, or even in a relationship that is not one of blood, where a friend acts as a sibling. Despite

the difference of culture and time, the same themes emerge in each familial story, creating a sense of universality throughout the novel.

Throughout the novel, the story will touch back on Pari or Abdullah. Nabi, Pari's uncle, has a chapter devoted to the circumstances of Pari's adoption to the Wahdati family, his employers. Mr. Wahdati, a closeted homosexual man from Kabul, Afghanistan, marries a Westernized woman named Nila. To impress the beautiful Nila, Nabi offers up his step-niece to fulfill her need for children when he discovers that she cannot birth them on her own, although this does little to create a relationship between Nabi and Nila. Instead, it further complicates an already complicated family dynamic, eventually leading to Nila taking Pari away to raise her in Paris. Throughout her life, Pari is never told that she is adopted, and suffers an unexplainable sense of absence, even as she grows successful and has a family. Abdullah eventually finds his way to the United States, where he continues to mourn the loss of his sister, passing on those feeling to his only daughter, who he has also named Pari. Abdullah and Pari's story affects many of the others characters as the novel works to reunite the siblings.

Overall, the novel is a compelling study in what it means to be part of a family, with all its deep complications of connection and absence. Despite the wide variety of stories over time, places, and even familial structure, the narratives share many similarities and themes. The novel questions motivation and responsibility when it comes to those we love. Simple choices can affect a family deeply, in ways that may never be known or dealt with. Khaled Hosseini creates a vivid, complex narrative that will allow readers to go into a world of deep emotions and be completely immersed in a story that is nuanced and entertaining to read. The novel will resonant most with late teens and adults, likely warranting multiple readings overtime as one travels through their lifetime. This novel is destined to become a classic alongside Hosseini's other works.



Book Review >>> Karly Smith

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking

Cain, Susan. New York: Broadway, 2013. 368pp.

I have been called “quiet” for as long as I can recall. Is that a compliment? Is it a judgment? Or is it a neutral fact that no one can conclude is a positive or negative trait? Susan Cain deals with the same experience in *Quiet: The Power of Introverts In A World That Can't Stop Talking*. She approaches the question, “What is introversion?” For me, the Myers-Briggs’ definition was not sufficient, and neither were the hundred memes, lists, and comics I have read in the past. I wanted to understand what introversion truly looked like and why introversion seemed to be a weakness in the eyes of colleges, businesses, and peers. Susan Cain answered my inquiries in detail, though unexpectedly in some ways. Her answer to “What is introversion?” is complex, involving many factors and the admission that her definition is not the only definition. Her clear goal, however, is to discourage undervaluing the quiet persons.

The book begins with a story many of us know: a bus, a woman named Rosa Parks, and a spark at the beginning of a movement that would leave our country changed. What I and many other readers may be unaware of is the fact that Rosa Parks, aside from being known for her courage, was known as quiet and shy. Rosa Parks was an introvert.

Cain begins to investigate the word “introversion.” Introversion has as many definitions as there are psychologists to define it, but there are certain words that are generally not considered synonyms, such as hermitry, misanthropy, and shyness. “Introverts *can* be these things, but most are perfectly friendly,” says Cain (12). The book is a journey following Cain’s search for what an introvert really is. Over the course of the book, she builds a larger understanding of what introverts are, but never boils it down to a single definition, which was frustrating but understandable.

She addresses the “extrovert ideal”, or the basic patterns of behavior exhibited by extroverts that are more valued in our culture, such as profuse talking. Cain discovers the history behind our society becoming a “Culture of Personality” from the previous “Culture of Character.” The emphasis in the “Culture of Character” was on behavior in private. Our modern “Culture of Personality” places more emphasis on behaviors in public or impressions, making everyday life a performance. This shift coincides with a burst in advertising in the early twentieth century, when it began to be more widely accepted to “sell” oneself by creating a public image to get a job or even friends.

Cain approaches the definition of an introvert through investigating many studies. A few of these show that highly sensitive people who react more to stimulants as infants are more likely to become introverted children and adults. The studies she investigates show that all people have different levels of comfortable stimulation. For my incredibly extroverted

friend, a room full of people is comfortable. He can focus and function easily in a crowded room. If he was called upon to explain a topic he knew well, he could focus enough to explain without too much trouble. For me, a room with one or two people is more comfortable, since I am highly sensitive to stimulation. If I had to speak to a crowded room about a topic I know very well, I would find it more difficult since my concentration would be hindered by the amount of stimulation in the room. My friend and I can function successfully in either situation, but our levels of focus and concentration will be different, and the level of ease will be different. Now, according to Cain's research, some extroverts are highly sensitive, and some introverts have low sensitivity to stimulation, but trends indicate introversion and high sensitivity to stimulation are correlated. In the book, Cain makes clear the existence of exceptions and the holes in theories, an attribute I appreciated as I read.

How are introverts to survive in this world? Cain offers a few ways. First, we can see the strength of introversion, and encourage others to see it as well. Many creative works and genius ideas were formed by people who were alone. Athletes and musicians who practice alone tend to perform better. Valuing solitude for focus and the natural strength introverts have for concentration when alone can be valuable for companies, schools, and organizations. Most of all, it will help the introverts. Secondly, introverts can act extroverted when they need to. If I am studying to be a teacher, then I have to act extroverted in the classroom. Responding to large amounts of stimuli can be taxing, but not uncomfortable, especially when practiced. Cain tells us introverts have to act extroverted for the right reasons, however; they have to care about what they are doing. She would want to be sure I care about my students and about teaching, for that is what makes the exertion worthwhile. I found it difficult to agree with this point at first; my instinct was to shy away from conforming to the extrovert ideal. However, she emphasizes that introverts should stay true to themselves as much as possible by creating "restorative niches" that allow time to recharge (219). These can be the simple closing of an office door, sitting at the end of the table rather than the center, or keeping weekends free from heavy socializing.

Cain's book is deep, brimming with research, history, and information. While she clearly does not buy into the "extrovert ideal," she does make plain the fact that humanity would be less wonderful without the two ends of the spectrum and all of those in-between. The book is dense, not for the impatient reader, but if facts and information intrigue you, then this book is a must-read. However, the book can be especially interesting to those who truly wish to understand how their fellow humans—and maybe even their own selves—function as introverts.

Contributors >>>

>>> **Beth Gier** is a senior Business Administration and English major concentrating in marketing and literary studies. She is in the process of finishing her senior English thesis on the evolution of violence in the American novel of manners. In addition to her two years of work as an Aegis editor, Beth works as a Writing Center Assistant, serves as Vice President for Sigma Tau Delta, and is the president of the Otterbein chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Beth appreciates all of the amazing support and guidance that her professors have given her during her sleep-deprived journey at Otterbein, and she is excited to begin looking for jobs to repay her student loans.

>>> **Megan Gray** is a senior English and Psychology double major, with a math minor. She is currently in the process of completing her Honors Thesis, a piece of dystopian fiction that draws criticism to certain social constructs. When not busy with on campus work at the Writing Center, she works off campus for a local psychologist. Megan also serves as President of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English honor society and Co-President of Torch and Key. She would like to thank this year's *Aegis* staff for all of their hard work; her fellow Co-Editor, Beth, for keeping her sane; and to Dr. Patridge for her encouragement and support as the new faculty advisor. Thanks also to all of her friends and professors for their guidance, wisdom, and humor over these last two semesters, as well as over her four years here at Otterbein. After graduation she will return to her homeland of West Lala, and start the terrifying transition of being a real adult.

>>> **Taylor Bailey** is a junior Political Science major with a triple minor in Communications Studies, Environmental Studies, and Philosophy. He plans to pursue a Doctorate in Environmental Studies after graduation. Other than serving as an editor for *Aegis*, Taylor is a member of Alpha Lamda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, Pi Sigma Alpha National Honor Society, and Torch and Key Honorary Society. He is excited to continue work on his Distinction Project this summer, which will critically examine the philosopher Ayn Rand's position and philosophy of the environment.

>>> **Sammi Birri** is a senior French and English Education major currently finishing her French degree in France. In addition to *Aegis*, she is involved in Greek Life, Panhellenic Council, and has served as an Orientation Leader for two years. She is looking forward to student teaching in the fall and graduating in December.

>>> **Meghan Crawford** is a senior History and English double major with a concentration in Creative Writing. In addition to her work with *Aegis*, Meghan is an assistant editor to *American Imago* and enjoys volunteering at the CHA animal shelter and the Ohio Historical Society. After graduating, she hopes to pursue graduate school in Creative Writing or History with the aspiration of becoming a historical fiction writer.

>>> **Kevin Gebura** is a Philosophy and Social Justice Studies (Individualized major program) double major with minors in Cultural Anthropology and Psychology. In addition to *Aegis*, Kevin is the copyeditor for Otterbein360's Arts & Entertainment section. He also volunteers part-time for Mid-Ohio Workers Association and is currently the organization's Design & Advertising Coordinator. His future plan is to be involved in community grassroots social change and has aspirations to travel while conducting anthropological fieldwork.

>>> **Gretchen Heisler** is a junior Creative Writing major and History minor. She is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society and the Otterbein branch of Phi Alpha Theta, the History Honor Society. She is futilely hoping that her procrastination will not prevent her from getting an internship this summer but will also be happy to have free time to work on her Honors thesis project. She is currently studying abroad at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

>>> **Brie Lovensheimer** is an Junior Individualized Art History major with a History minor. She's heavily involved with Otterbein's Music Department; playing in the Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, stage managing, and is Senior Assistant to the Cardinal Marching Band. Along with those roles, she's Historian and Fashion Coordinator for the Gamma Omicron Chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, national honorary band fraternity. She holds a position as Torch and Key's co-president and is a tour guide for Otterbein. She hopes to continue her education by attending graduate school to pursue a master's in Art History and Museum Studies.

>>> **Katy Major** is a junior studying Creative Writing and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, with minors in Vocal Music and Film Studies. She has enjoyed being on the staff of *Aegis* this year, as well as being on staff for Quiz & Quill and an editor for *kate*. She also serves as an officer for FreeZone and a facilitator for SafeZone. She looks forward to returning to Medina, Ohio, for the summer to spend time with her family and then finishing her senior year at Otterbein, before pursuing a Ph.D. in English.

>>> **Carly Marburger** is a junior double major in Studio Art, with a concentration in Drawing, and English, with a concentration in Literary Studies. She is also studying to obtain an AYA Integrated Language Arts Teaching Licensure. She works as a Host and Tour Guide at Otterbein and is currently on the executive boards of Starving Artists and Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society. She is honored to be an active member of *Aegis* this year, and is looking forward to her senior year.

>>> **Rachel Scherzer** is a junior Literary Studies major with a History minor. She is actively involved in community service on campus, working as a Co-coordinator of the Honors Service Project Kneading Minds and as a student worker in the Center for Community Engagement. She is a proud member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, and also serves as an officer in Alpha Lambda Delta/Phi Eta Sigma, the Freshman Honor society. She has enjoyed being involved with *Aegis* this year and is looking forward to working on her Honors Thesis this summer.

>>> **Karly Smith** is a senior English Education major. Having completed her student teaching in the fall, she is preparing to enter the teaching field, hoping to work in a high school. She is a Resident Assistant in Mayne Hall and is honored to have been a member of the editorial board this year.

