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Spring 2010

Aegis: The Otterbein College Humanities Journal

Statement of Editorial Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aegis 2010 Editorial Board

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Students interested in serving on *Aegis*' Editorial Board for the 2010-2011 school year should contact Dr. Karen Steigman at ksteigman@otterbein.edu.

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Editors' Introduction >>> Ashley Butler and Will Ferrall

As this year's editors, we are excited to present, to the Otterbein College/University community, the seventh edition of *Aegis: The Otterbein College Humanities Journal*. The essays included herein cover a wide range of topics; this diversity is itself a reflection of both the astounding breadth of what we generalize as "the humanities" as well as a reflection of the depth of research taking place here at Otterbein.

The nine essays included in this journal are representative of a variety of disciplines, which include music, political science, English, philosophy, religion, and women's studies. They were selected for their quality, academic merit, and relevance to real world issues, both past and present. In "Deconstructing the Myth of the Shi'a Crescent," Kirsten Peninger analyzes the history of Shi'a Islam, and how the supposed fear of a radical 'Shi'a Crescent' is unfounded. Vicki Mullins utilizes *The God of Small Things* in order to explore the complications stemming from India's caste system and patriarchal culture in her essay entitled "Uncovering the Politics of Hierarchy in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." And, in Ruthann Elder's "Creative Integrity Despite Oppression: Soviet Realism and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5*," she examines the struggle Shostakovich was faced with in finding a balance in conforming to the mandates of Soviet Realism while maintaining his personal creativity in his musical endeavors. These, and the other essays included in this issue of *Aegis*, reveal the commitment and passion within the Otterbein student body, to explore contemporary and historical issues and pose critical questions about our modern world.

This issue of *Aegis* also includes book reviews chosen and composed by the members of this year's editorial board. The literature reviewed charts multiple genres, ranging from non-fiction and fiction to graphic narrative. The chosen literary works explore such issues as the history of American women, what it means to be a foreign correspondent in a hostile, traumatizing war zone, and the literary merits that can come from projecting a contemporary, gothic spin on a classic Victorian novel. We hope that these book reviews give our readers insight into new works of literature and help spark interest in the humanities.

Also included in this issue is a personal interview with this year's featured humanities speaker, Dr. William Ian Miller, who is the Thomas G. Long Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School. Dr. Miller's academic interests include Icelandic sagas, Medieval history, social and political theory, emotions, vices, and virtues. In our interview, we mostly discussed his recent book, *Eye for an Eye*, which examines the history of revenge. We also conversed about his lecture to the Otterbein community, entitled "Kill the Messenger," and the direction of his future work.

We, the editors of the 2010 edition of *Aegis*, hope that our readers enjoy this year's selected essays. As the essays include a wide variety of topics, represent an array of disciplines, and truly showcase the amount of depth and individual passion of our students here at Otterbein, it is our hope that there is an included piece to match the interest of any reader. The essays, reviews, and interview included within this issue are sure to provide you with a new perspective on the topics they discuss and the questions that they raise.

"While thought exists, words are alive and literature becomes an escape, not from, but into living."

- Cyril Connolly



An Interview with Dr. William Ian Miller

You have a JD and a PhD in English—which love came first, and in what ways do these two areas of study go hand-in-hand with what you teach and research now?

The PhD came first, then I decided to get the JD. Obviously I teach in a school of law, but as far as my studies are concerned, they are less within the realm of “legal studies” and more tied to history and English in focus.

We’ve noticed that a lot of your books and projects deal with medieval history and Iceland. Where did these interests stem from and how did they come to inform your work?

I think with this interest, it happens as a lot of things do—by chance. It just so happened that someone gave me an Icelandic saga to read and the interest really started there. I found it fascinating, and as can be seen in my work, the sagas very heavily inform the connections I am able to make and the information I am able to communicate by way of example. A lot of my material for *Eye for an Eye* came from this working knowledge and fascination of not only Icelandic culture, but just Medieval history in general—

Also regarding your interests, you seem to incorporate a lot of linguistic study in your work. How does this study of language origins influence your research?

You know, I was never formally trained as a linguist, but when you decide to study Medieval history and literature, you really have no choice but to study the language in which it was written. We can never really understand the elements of the literature unless we fully understand that language. Irony, for example, is impossible to pick up on unless you know what those words meant when they were first written—rather than basing our knowledge on the way we understand words now. The origins of the language and understanding the way language has changed over time is the basis for any true understanding of historical study.

Your work is extremely multi-disciplinary in focus, using literary studies, history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, legal studies, and others. How do all of these disciplines join together and inform your work in new and innovative ways? And how does the multi-disciplinary approach enable you to explore new areas and ideas of research?

In my work, I kind of like to grab information from all sorts of areas. I’m what one might call “methodologically promiscuous.” If I find myself within a project asking questions in a particular field, then I say “Boy, I should read some philosophy writings on this—or—some economical study of this—”, then I go and read that material. Just as I don’t limit myself to only studying within legal studies—I have a wide range of interests that inform my work and give me new ideas. I would never call myself a philosopher, but other true philosophers have been good to me.

Out of the many projects you have worked on, what would you say that your favorite has been?

This is the kind of question I worry about, because when you go back to projects you've done or books that you've written, it's kind of a fraught experience. It's just this feeling of knowing more later and trying to be okay with your lack of knowledge then—it's sometimes sickening. As we get older, our knowledge develops and changes, so you always go back and think of the ways you could have made something better. There are clearly mistakes, especially in translation. My Hebrew is better now, for one, and I feel I should go back and change some of the more glaring errors. If experts notice them, they'll dismiss you as a clown. In all of my books there are sections which I wish I could go back and tweak, or make more nuanced because I have a deeper knowledge now—but there are also those chapters that do not make you feel that way. Out of all the books I've written, I would say that *The Mystery of Courage* is the one that I feel consistently good about, and actually, that is the one that most everyone else would not say is my best work.

In regards to your book *Eye for an Eye*, what inspired you to write a book about the history of getting even?

This book and the concept of "getting even" falls naturally with the revenge cultures I study. Iceland, for example, was based around the idea of reciprocity—which is not really much different from that of today. The people of Iceland were fascinatingly smart when it came to reciprocity, and it is interesting to see the way those ideals have held on. It's like with gifts. If we receive a gift, there is some expectation to give a gift in return—we feel compelled to. In this same way, if we receive a *bad* gift, like an insult or a murdered brother, we are still in some ways expected or compelled to give something back in return. The people of Iceland did not always pay everything back, they just needed to make sure that the other party *thought* that they would fight back. In the case that you did strike back, you didn't hit back immediately—you took your time and made them nervous wrecks and tormented them until you took your turn. There was a whole strategy to getting even back then which is fascinating. They were exceedingly smart—much smarter than with our culture of "positive thinking" and self-esteem.

How would you define a talionic culture, and how does it differ from our modern culture in regards to justice?

Well, I use 'talionic' as a loose and general term. People who don't have a strong central authority, like that the way Medieval Iceland functioned, are forced to make sure that they take their own protection into their own hands are in a sense, talionic. The more authority a nation has, the less talionic they will be. In modern day culture, we have to wait for the authorities to avenge for us—whereas these Icelanders had to take matters into their own hands. Just the same, they focused on every slight or wrong that was done to them, while in modern culture, every wrong is in no way accounted for. We are now expected to shrug things off like 'nickel and dime' because we cannot really build a case about it—but back then, they would have sought different ends for such things. Life is much about sharing the burdens; we inherently keep tallies and accounts of everyone. Take going out for drinks or for lunch and you take turns buying—we keep those accounts of who owes who, in the back of our mind even when we don't know we are. In that way, talionic and modern-day culture are not so different. In both cases we are keeping personal tabs on the other and have a sort of expectation of repayment.

Would you say that we have made progress since these talionic ideas? Which culture has it right?

I always get nervous about the word “progress.” I mean, obviously life is much safer in some ways now than it used to be, but there are also large pockets that are worse. You still did better if you were smart than if you weren’t; the best fighter, unless he also had brains, had a short life. Smart guys last longer, unless they scare easily. You did not need to be physically the toughest guy, but then you could not be a coward either. You couldn’t be cowardly at that time and if you were, then you better fake it. Back then, you had to be certain that you would stay cool and collected in a situation and figure out ways to show that you were not intimidated. If you acted too quickly or if you did not act at all, you sent out a sort of message of uncertainty or rashness to the other side. Now, we have more authority over us so that we do not have to be the ones to directly answer to wrongs against us. I would say that no one could go it alone back then either and last long. Clearly, it would be foolish to say that these others really have it *right*, because we can’t say we would want to live in a vengeful culture which had to depend on themselves for such things. It all comes down to different ideals and different histories. It’s a whole different game depending on those things.

In what ways have our ideas of value changed?

Back in the Medieval Icelandic territories, there were multiple ways of paying something back and they were somewhat smart and careful about exchange rates and value. Today, we are not all that good about judging value. If you look at our economy, you would see that we cannot judge value in a way that inspires much confidence: look at the debacle of 2008 and the still disquieting belief that we do not have to repay our debts, and can keep running up the bill. Society seems to provide two sorts of institutions that are immured and closed in—one is prison, and the other is universities. We send the dangerous fools to universities. Thank God we live in a democracy, where one vote of an apathetic voter can cancel out that of an intellectual.

You also mention that language is a way of measuring and balancing—in what ways do we still incorporate talionic ideals into our modern-day language? In what ways do we assess linguistic values in our idea of ‘getting even.’

We use these words all the time, every day. We take the very words that define justice—even, just—and apply them to add a certain *charge* to our conversations. The interesting thing about this is that when we add those words, it feels like a necessity, but they really add no meaning whatsoever to what we are actually saying. In some ways, it just alters the commitment to what we are saying. Using the terms ‘just’ or ‘even’ can obviously strengthen a statement, but it can also weaken it just the same. For example, “Just you wait...” sounds much more threatening than “I was just wondering”. We use these terms loosely and frequently to change the tone of what we are saying—despite them not serving any real meaning at all.

You seem to infer that despite revenge and “getting even”, there is always bound to be someone who feels as if they got “ripped off” in regards to the other—that there is still that loss that compensation is not fully able to repay—is this more prevalent now than it used to be? Do we feel as if we have less to show for our repayment by justice in modern cultures than those in talionic cultures did?

I am overstating when I say that there is *always* someone who feels ripped off while the oth-

er one walks away happily. In a lot of cases, we do feel things roughly got settled reasonably well. Really, you can never make both sides super happy—so instead we sometimes have to make both sides feel shafted. It's like with children, you never want to make one feel like the favorite—you want to treat them as equally as possible. Instead of seeking to give everyone what they want, you send them all away feeling the same, but slightly shafted. Better that none think they are the favorite than one.

Venturing away from the book we'd like to ask a few questions about your talk, "Kill the Messenger". In your talk, you discussed the role of the mediator from the very beginnings of history and traced that to the messenger who is sometimes the agent of bad news—which may lead us to kill the messenger. You gave multiple reasons for killing the messenger—what are a few of these reasons and how does killing the messenger align with your previous ideas of "getting even"?

We all have this idea of killing the messenger mostly because we hold the news-bearer as part of the causal chain that produced our pain, and it's natural to lash out at the immediate source of bad news. It is just one of those quirks of the social world that create dangerous scenarios but do not go away. This is an old problem for messengers, so they have a duty to cause the least offense while delivering their news. Doctors and politicians are good at this, and they like to use euphemisms to the point that people misunderstand them. Messages can now be delivered at a distance, which is much different from the past in which news was delivered in person. This allows us to hear and share news rather informally. Each form of messenger (e-mail, phone, etc.) has its own set of rules and expectations.

What projects are you working on currently, and do you know what you'd like to research in the future?

You know, I'm going to be 64 in two months, and it looks as if my career is on a downward slide. When you get older, you sometimes wonder if you are able to continue working at a pace and a level that justifies the salary you make. After I finish each book I go through a period of despair where I wonder if I'll be able to finish another one. Then after three years I come up with another idea and write another book. Sometimes you feel as if the well is running dry and that you are saying the same things in new ways or sometimes even less-effective ways. As I continue working, I will of course stay focused on the same things I have always focused on, the history, the subjects of honor, revenge, and negative emotion, etc. The book I am working on right now, "Losing It", is a book that really deals with the anxieties of diminishing skills and diminishing abilities. In essence, the project might be proof itself of that which it's describing. It will be historical and also somewhat personal. The biggest concern right now is the self-serving qualities of a project like this. Just the simple claim that you're "losing it" is a claim that you once had it. There is an old ritual that avengers used to take at the end of their careers called "taking to bed" and they would lament their insufficiencies as an avenger. At the same time they are lamenting, however, they are also asking for help. When do you know when to take to bed? And do I get back up if something else comes along or if someone tells me to get out of bed?

"My Body is a Pebble": Death Drive, Repression, and Freeing the Self in Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* >>> Stephanie Freas

*"Don't talk to me about the world needing cheerful stuff!
What the person out of Belsen — physical or psychological — wants is nobody saying the birdies still go tweet-tweet, but the full knowledge that somebody else has been there and knows the worst, just what it is like."*

-Sylvia Plath in a Letter to Aurelia Plath, 1962

In "The Arrival of the Bee Box," a poem in Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, the speaker finds herself questioning a box of bees she receives. The box, a foreign object, is filled with bees, working, fighting, and communicating in ways she cannot understand. Her attempts to comprehend the language are fruitless. The speaker is a foreigner herself to the community of bees, although inevitably, as a human, she has control over their lives. The speaker struggles between the fact that in their busy lives within the box, the bees might forget her, and that she has unswerving control of their lives in the same manner. Such a dichotomy of powerlessness and control begs the reader to question what the speaker is truly struggling with in this moment aside from the bee box. In finality, she ends the poem, and the issue, with "the box is only temporary" (line 36). Individually, this poem invites readers to ponder if there is a sense of alienation, of powerlessness, and fear even in a community, as Plath so artfully separates the speaker from the bee box.

Incorporated into *Ariel* as a whole, we find that the speaker in Plath's collection of poems grapples with individuality, a desire for death, and finding her place in a world she does not identify with. As readers delve into the plethora of lyrical yet blatantly honest confessions of rage, alienation, and self-awareness, they will eventually question the speaker herself: can we even begin to separate the speaker from Plath? Plath's life and own thoughts arise in these final poems of her life in such a way that the speaker and Plath merge as one singular voice¹. Theorists like Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, and Lee Edelman can address this voice, within the context of the poems, in a psychoanalytic manner. The study of psychoanalysis is generally attributed to the study of human behavior in relation to that person's emotional or psychological issues. Throughout *Ariel*, specifically in poems such as "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," "Edge," and "Tulips," the speaker battles with the death drive on numerous occasions; she also brings to surface issues that seem to have been repressed during her life. Finally, we see how the signifiers given to her by a dead father and husband may have been attributed to the speaker throughout her life, and how Plath's poetry reacts to such barriers.

Plath's Desire for the Purity Found Only in Death, or the Death Drive

The characteristics or human inclinations that led Freud to posit a death-drive in human beings are exemplified throughout *Ariel*². The poem "Tulips" especially presents an innate desire for peacefulness that can only be obtained in a state beyond life. The speaker reads, "I am sick of baggage--...I only wanted/ To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty" (lines 17 and 32-33). As she lies in the hospital, in and out of consciousness, the bright red color of the tulips by the window beckon her to life, which opposes her true desires. Rather, the speaker leans towards "passivity and death, [which] are not only preferable to life but morally superior to it" (Gentry 79).³ This poem warrants a psychoanalytic concern with the death drive—namely, in the ways the speaker struggles on the brink between life and death and wishes for death. In Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the psychoanalyst presents the theory of the death drive: that as humans, after birth, our central purpose in life is death. Once we cross the threshold into life, we wonder how existence operates before life and attempt to return to this state before infancy. Because of this drive, humans find pleasure in even unpleasurable things; they continually repeat actions that cause unpleasure, such as allowing ourselves to be hurt when we know that the feeling causes displeasure. Freud believes, "our consciousness communicates to us feelings from within not only of pleasure and unpleasure but also of a peculiar tension which in its turn can either be pleasurable or unpleasurable" (*Beyond* 77). Now, some may contend that Freud does not agree that pleasure and unpleasure are similar at some points. However, he later states later that our desire for pleasure "seems to actually serve the death instincts" (*Beyond* 77). We may agree then, that Freud's theory of the pleasure principle and its relation to the death drive can help readers to better grasp the speaker's own death drive throughout the collection.

In the final pages of Plath's *Ariel*, the poem "Edge" blatantly suggests that "the woman is perfected" in death (line 1). Not only is she perfected, but her corpse "wears the smile of accomplishment" (line 3)⁴. As the speaker describes the body adorned by her dead children, we come to see how she feels death to be freeing from the limits and weight of life. Death is even an "accomplishment," which merits the consideration that the process of leaving life is challenging, and daily burdens are difficult to give up. Moreover, this implies that death, more specifically, suicide, is not merely giving up, but rather something we strive towards but cannot always achieve. Death is a state of purity and perfection that life can never obtain for Plath (Gentry 70). Lee Edelman, in his text *No Future*, approaches the idea that not only homosexuals, but also all humans have an innate death drive in the ways that they indulge in sexual relations. They begin to indulge in sex for the act itself, not for the intended act of procreation. Rather, "(heterosexual) sex has 'become extraneous, a useless function'" because it does not aim for the future of the human race (Edelman 65). Therefore, humans have a death drive that ultimately wants to end their species and the future of their society. Because the speaker in "Edge" even has "each dead child" (line 9) surrounding her, one may assume that Plath fully supports the notions exalted by the death drive for Edelman. The speaker literally kills off her future and lies with dead remains⁵. She exhibits a blatant desire for death not only in herself, but also for her children and other humans, which solidifies the death drive.

In one of Plath's most famous poems, "Lady Lazarus," she praises the attempt to die in her multiple suicide attempts. To the speaker, "Dying/is an art.../I do it exceptionally well"

(lines 43-45). Her tone is quite blasé—almost indifferent to the fact that she has tried to end her life three times, and has never succeeded. With this, the speaker says that she dies quite well but in truth, she fails in her act of living. Is such a comment foreshadowing her future death, or could it be a figurative death that readers do not comprehend? Whatever the case may be, the speaker still exhibits a drive for death, especially in the most painful manner, as she argues that she does “it so it feels like hell” and repeats her suicide attempts throughout her life (line 46). From a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud would attribute this to the death drive, and the fact that Plath’s speaker finds the pleasure in the unpleasure, or pain—quality that begs to be likened to the death drive. Moreover, Freud suggests that we compulsively repeat what we know we should not. He argues, “the greater part of what is re-experienced under the compulsion to repeat must cause the ego unpleasure” (*Beyond* 21). Although this characteristic is generally associated with the psychoanalytic term repression, for our purposes the compulsion to repeat also works well as an inhabitant of the death drive, or the death instinct, for Freud. “Lady Lazarus” testifies that the compulsion to repeat is working also as desire for the inanimate state before life, just as it exhibits some understanding of the speaker’s struggle with repression, as will be discussed in section two. Here, some may question whether the speaker truly wants to die in “Lady Lazarus” since she continuously fails at her suicide attempts. We may respond in saying that Plath, synonymous with the speaker, truly succeeds at death in her eventual suicide.

Although Plath leans toward the psychoanalytic aspect of the death drive significantly in these three poems, there are hints towards an innate infantile drive throughout *Ariel*⁶. No matter which poem, Plath explicitly testifies to her loathing of the chains that bind her to her body, society, and other trivial aspects that would mean nothing in death. Death, for Plath, is more than freeing; it indicates accomplishment and independence she would never have in life. Equally riveting to this revelation, are the reasons for her honest desire for death. What we find is that Plath’s speaker reveals repressed information that only can be raised in her poetry. For Plath, the poetry is her way of working through the repressed thoughts, just as the poetry allows her to address the death drive.

Unveiling the Repressed in Plath: Experiencing Trauma and Working through It

In *Ariel*, there are a number of poems that reveal repression and trauma for Plath, caused by the men in her life. “Daddy” sings the song of rage and liberation from the chains of power from a dead father, an oppressive husband, and even a society of men who identify her merely as a woman, not as a writer, an individual, or a person. Yet, we see how very openly Plath explores repressed feelings against these oppressors in ways she would never do openly or to another person.

Plath opens “Daddy” with a narration: “black shoe/In which I have lived like a foot/ For thirty years, poor and white” (lines 2-4). Readers can see two obvious recipients of Plath’s voice: either her father’s or a general male over female oppression; both have left her poor and scared to do wrong. As we continue down the lines, we find that her father died when she was ten years old, yet the memory of her father has held her back from freedom for the rest of her life. What Plath evidences in “Daddy” is that there are multiple oppressors: her father’s memory, men towards her as a woman, and possibly the very role of her husband as a father figure for her adult life. She reveals, “I made a model of you...and I said I do, I do,” which is an obvious reference of tying the marital knot to her husband, Ted Hughes, connect-

ing father and husband (lines 64-67). Further tension between the “model” and the speaker follows in the next line, “So daddy, I’m finally through,” which implies that she is finished with all figurative “daddy’s” (line 68).

Here, the very narrative, the story, that Plath is very delicately dancing around in “Daddy,” demonstrates that there are feelings of repressed anxiety and negativity Plath’s speaker has probably not before realized or revealed. Through the revelation of repressed feelings to both the individual and to others, this poem participates in psychoanalytic critique. In a response to Jacques Lacan’s own psychoanalytic theories, Slavoj Žižek in his text *The Plague of Fantasies* states, “it is thus the very form of narrative which bears witness to some repressed antagonism” (Žižek 11). Although Žižek is addressing the narrative that arises in psychoanalysis between the analyser and analysand—similar to the psychologist and patient in therapy—we see that Plath’s poetry acts as a form of therapy itself. The poetry allows Plath to work through her traumatic past by sharing it with others.

Plath reveals to readers various metaphorical situations of trauma that seem to stand in for true events which have infiltrated a repression, only to be revealed in her writing, suicide attempts, and imminent death. We can see in lines like “chuffing me off like a Jew/ a Jew to Dauchau, Auschwitz, Belsen” that there are events she has experienced that can be likened to those horrific experiences of the Jewish population in German concentration camps (lines 32-33)⁷. Further, Plath repeats and expands the Holocaust dynamics between German and Jew within the poem to replicate her own fear of the “daddy” figure in her own father’s memory and in her husband’s actions⁸. These traumatic events are the very roots of her repressed feelings she grapples with now in her poem.

Here, some may argue that when someone represses something, he or she repeats the repressed rather than revealing or remembering it. One would respond by saying that eventually the repressed must be unveiled. Plath does not reveal her torment in full honesty; she uses the example of the Holocaust as a stand-in for her own trauma. This may be Plath’s way of dealing with the repressed. Her repression, which can take many forms, is explored through the tragedy of the Holocaust. Although she does not narrate in truth the experiences via nonfiction or prose, she narrates through metaphor the oppression and pain she has endured for the past thirty years. In essence, this is similar enough that an argument cannot truly be constructed against the fact that Plath is unearthing her repressed feelings caused by some traumatic experience. Freud, in his *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, informs readers of the power of repression. After dealing with a patient with hysterical symptoms in therapy, the therapist helps the patient find the root of her repressed impulses. Immediately afterwards, “she became healthy once more” (*Five Lectures* 23). Plath’s own unveiling gives her a new sense of health and hope.

It may come into question with Freud whether or not Plath is actually getting to the source her repression in “Daddy.” Readers believe Plath is working through her repression and hostility against the “daddy” figure in the poem, so we can consider that Plath is lifting the burden from herself. Further, Freud believes that the patient coming to him is one with hysterics; once the hysterical symptoms are lifted after the repression is exposed. We see such hysterical symptoms in “Daddy” with even the word choices throughout; she switches into German tongue in lines fifteen and twenty-seven and repeatedly uses the same words throughout the poem, for instance. If we consider this poem as a means for psychoanalytic therapy and repression-lifting for Plath, then we can believe her calm tone in the final line

"Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through" is a conclusion and a goodbye to both the "daddy" figures and the repressed rage she has held against them for years (line 80). With her unruffled tone, Plath says goodbye to male oppression and ends with promise for a new beginning for herself, which signals the end of a repressed self.

"Lady Lazarus," "Daddy," and Freeing the Self from the Male Oppressor

Throughout *Ariel*, readers encounter the mysterious "you" that Plath addresses in many poems and occasions. This "you" is often likened to either Plath's father or husband, although they are sometimes one in the same. More often than not, the role of her father acts as an inhibitor of Plath's own understanding of her identity and search for pleasure. The most overt reference we notice in *Ariel* is "Daddy," which is Plath's letter to her father and the father figure of her husband that she would never be able to voice to them personally. Another example of the father figure inclusion is "Lady Lazarus." Many scholars have identified Plath's "Herr Doktor/ So, so Herr Enemy" as her father figure, more than likely because the figure of the father for Plath is very strict and oppressive, much like a German leader to a Jewish citizen (lines 65-66). From this, readers recognize that Plath holds a fundamental hostility or ambivalence to her father for the ways he (or his memory) controls her. One cannot overlook the psychoanalytic perspective of these lines: Freud, in *Totem and Taboo*, believes that all humans have hostility towards the ones they love, namely parental figures. He illustrates our very ambivalence against our parents through a culture's ambivalence towards their rulers. We feel an underlying desire to obey their wishes, but the forced obedience causes our own hostility towards their ruling (*Totem* 51). Plath plays with obedience in comparing her father to a German authority figure, and she grapples with her hostility over the forced obedience⁹.

Because "Daddy" is loaded with a tone that we rarely see in poetry and approaches Plath's relationship with a dead father and a far from loyal husband, the psychoanalytic tones cannot be overlooked. In "Daddy," Plath takes on an almost infantile voice towards her father initially, then re' she dismantles the father figure's authority, because he has hurt her (Van Dyne 48). Readers see Plath as a child, a fighter, and an active avenger for the hurt she has endured from the father figure¹⁰. This hostility, Freud argues, must eventually be voiced; otherwise, it will be acted out in more unpleasant ways (*Taboo* 64). Further, this relates to Plath's approach to repression in "Daddy"; the speaker constantly remembers such painful events and acting out in writing towards the inflictor of pain. Therefore, the poem is Plath's means of dealing with trauma caused by the strict ruling of her husband, the father figure.

Another central figure of psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan, would find Plath's "Daddy" to be littered with proof of his psychoanalytic theories. According to Lacan, Plath is a neurotic figure. While all humans display some level of neurotic tendencies, Plath's demonstration of neurotic symptoms is excessive in comparison with others. It seems here that the line between the common neurotic and a developed neurotic is the quantity and intensity of symptoms. In her poetry, one symptom is Plath's hope to gain her lost enjoyment in death that she cannot find in life. Repeatedly, she admits to attempting suicide, even once in "Daddy," and yet never inhabits full *jouissance*, which is an extreme and fundamental level of pleasure. Full *jouissance* in "Daddy" would lead to her own death. As Lacan believes, neurotics can never reach full *jouissance*; such extreme feelings are too frightening for them and would lead to their dissolution. However, Plath strives to find her own identity in "Daddy," as we see her doing with the Jewish metaphor. In reference to psychoanalytic thought, finding

her own identity would allow us to believe that Plath is trying to separate herself from the father figure, from the “no!” and create her own identity, free of empty signifiers—woman, wife, daughter, for instance—that her father and husband have given her (Fink 55). Yet, as Bruce Fink illustrates, because we see a hint of the father’s language, Plath cannot ever truly free herself, from the signifiers given. Like Plath, our desire is only determined by the descriptions of ourselves that we have been told; these signifiers are empty and not innate but rather learned. So, because Plath constantly tries to free herself from the father, as we see in “Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through,” we can believe that Plath is rebelling against such signifiers and parental desire in her own death. This is essentially why death is freeing and pure for Plath; it allows her to have her own desires and identity that no other person dictates to her. Plath, as Lacan would suggest, wants a desire “that no longer cares what the Other wants or says” (Fink 206). In conclusion, Plath struggles throughout “Daddy” and even throughout *Ariel* with finding a unique identity, free from the identity her father and husband have created for her¹¹. Only when Plath dies will she have complete and utter freedom, and a purity that exceeds the chains in life.

In “Words,” Plath’s final poem in *Ariel*, the speaker allows readers to see life in a unique perspective; she says, “From the bottom of the pool, fixed stars/ Govern a life” (lines 19-20). Although Plath incorporates words like “axes,” “skull,” and “weedy,” to paint a melancholic picture and somber tone, such final lines invite some sort of hope—hope for another life, another time, where the reflection of a pool actually shows promise for eternity free from human issues that seem trivial in the grand scheme in life. The ways in which Sylvia Plath’s *Ariel* speaks to readers is riveting; she says the very words everyone thinks or feels but cannot or dares not voice, and approaches experiences with open eyes and mind. With her honesty and ability to convey even the most difficult feelings and unabashed aggression to those who tamper with her own desires and identity, any reader will find respect for the poet. Moreover, it seems necessary to know that Plath wrote the two most rage-filled poems within two weeks of one another, shortly before her death, and in the “shattering of her family” (Gentry 69). Such poems, “Tulips,” “Edge,” “Lady Lazarus,” and “Daddy,” exhibit some of psychoanalysis’ most significant concepts: the death drive, repression, and freeing oneself from the Other’s desires. Although Plath’s life inevitably ended in suicide soon after she wrote these poems, we can all believe that she only fulfilled her desires to free herself from repression, life’s torments, and the constant oppression from the men in her life.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 For more information on the conflicts founded between analyzing Plath's poetry as either a revelation of Plath's life or the poetry as separate from Plath, see Gill 124.
- 2 One finds the death drive in a number of poems other than "Tulips." In "Contusion," the speaker describes a bleeding wound with language of beauty: a dying body is "the colour of a pearl," and likened to a beautiful stone for instance (Plath 83). With such appreciation for the body in death and injury, readers may assume that Plath is attracted to the death drive; she sees even the most ugly decomposition as beautiful and attractive. We can assume that she herself desires death and the state before infancy for many reasons.
- 3 Gentry indicates that the tulips "become[s] in the poem a source of anxiety and danger" (Gentry 79). The most overt examples of life in the poem, flowers of a bright, vivid color, prove how hesitant the speaker is to return life.
- 4 Some might say that such a poem may be purposely placed by Plath as a symbol of desire for an end to the book and desire for the end to her life, which occurs soon after these final poems are written. Yet, it has been found out that Ted Hughes, Plath's husband, arranged the poems not chronologically, but in a manner to imply the desire for death. This information is useful when considering how these poems work for Plath's life and own desires in truth (Brennan 157).
- 5 For more on the ways that the death drive inhabits all humans, see Chapter Three of Edelman's *No Future*. He believes homosexuals, and all humans that practice any form of sex without a desire for reproduction and continuing the human race are *sinthomosexuals*. Plath's "Edge" does not exhibit how she may be a *sinthomosexual* in the fact that she does not touch on sexual intercourse for pure enjoyment, but she does enjoy the deaths of the woman's body and children in a way that suggests her attraction to death and ending life for not only the individual, but maybe even for society.
- 6 For more examples of the death drive in Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, see poems "Cut," "Contusion," "Lesbos," "The Munich Mannequins," among others throughout the book. Each presents Plath's desire to free herself from the binds of life.
- 7 Claire Brennan in *The Poetry of Sylvia Plath* argues that Plath incorporates the history of the Holocaust, especially the camps, as an act of identification for her. In essence, she becomes a Jew, a victim, and a part of the Holocaust camps (Brennan 72-74).
- 8 One important aspect to consider is how much of "daddy" is her father and how much is her husband in the poem. As she says, "if I've killed one man, I've killed two--" we can assume that Plath is killing off the memory of a father she "tried to die/And get back, back, back to" and is fantasizing about killing her own husband (Ins. (Ins 71 and 58-59, respectively). She compares her marriage of seven years to "the vampire who said he was you/ And drank my blood for...seven years" (Ins 72-74). Plath is exceedingly honest in her rage against a husband who has filled in for her father who left her as a child in the worst ways.
- 9 When Jo Gill responds to this poem, she implies "Lady Lazarus" is a poem of "rebirth" (Gill 59). Such a theory makes sense, as Plath's speaker rises from the ashes, a common experience of rebirth. Plath's rebirth can even be seen as her attempts to be reborn without the oppression of her father, giving her complete and utter freedom.
- 10 For more on Plath's role in "Daddy," see Gentry 78.
- 11 To see another example of Plath's grapple with the father figure and her hopes to escape him in death, read "Fever 103°," which addresses "not you, nor him.../ To Paradise" (lines 18-20).

China's Quest for Natural Resources: The Environmental Impact on Africa

>>> Will Ferrall

From November 3rd to 5th, 2006, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit (or FOCAC) was held in Beijing, China. During this summit, China promised Africa five billion dollars worth of loans and credit towards development and aid, and a plan was crafted that would make Africa China's single largest trading partner (with trade values totaling over 100 billion) by 2010 (Alden 2). Also during this summit, Zhang Shigang, China's deputy representative to the UNEP¹, addressed the growing international concerns over his country's impact on Africa's environment. In this speech, Shigang noted that "China, whose environment suffered considerably in its rapid economic development over the past decades, wishes Africa would learn from its lessons and is willing to share with Africa its recent experience in environment protection" (qtd. in Xinhua 1).

This was an interesting statement from China, which in its quest for natural resources had done much to negatively impact Africa's environment. Zhang Shigang's comments might have been mere government rhetoric, which China is well-versed in, or perhaps it was a true commitment to save Africa's environment. The former is probably closer to the truth. By examining China's recent developmental relationship with Africa, as well as the environmental implications of this relationship, one thing is clear. China's self-serving drive for natural resources is destabilizing Africa's environment.

China, like all sovereign nations, has long had an interest in securing enough natural resources to ensure its functional survival. Unfortunately, reports from China's Ministry of Land and Natural Resources have indicated that China's ability to domestically provide enough of these resources is diminishing. For example, the Ministry projects that by 2020 Chinese crude oil production will be able to meet only 34-40% of demand, and the shortage of coal will be 700 million tons (Manji 17-18). With 1.3 billion people to support, and millions more on the way, China has been forced to branch out from complete self-sufficiency. In order to do so, China has taken a path well tread-upon by European colonial powers, and has turned to Africa for its natural resource needs. Unlike these colonial powers, however, China allows government-controlled and private companies to do business with African nations, rather than taking control and administering the continent itself. Over the past twenty years, this Chinese business with Africa has grown substantially. There are currently over 800 Chinese companies operating in 35 African states (BBC 1).

Before continuing on, it might help to explain just how China has gained this foothold. In exchange for the natural resources it desires, China has contributed a significant amount of money to develop Africa. Generally, this development comes in the form of new oil pipelines or road-systems (which, of course, facilitate the movement of China's resources),

but it has also resulted in military weapons and hardware, sport complexes, and the occasional hospital or AIDs clinic. China has been able to provide so much money and developmental assistance due to its official policies on sovereignty and no-strings attached loans and grants. In terms of the former, China has a strict interpretation of state sovereignty; it believes that no state has the right to concern itself with another state's affairs. One Chinese diplomat, for example, noted that "non-intervention is our brand, like intervention" is the Western brand (qtd. in Alden 60). The Chinese just want to do business, and they will not let human rights abuses, environmental issues, or anything else stand in their way. A Chinese director of African studies in Beijing echoed this view when he said that China does not believe that human rights and the environment "should stand above sovereignty... [China has] a different view on this and African countries share our view" (qtd. in Meyersson 3). This view is not completely surprising, as the Chinese themselves are generally not characterized as advancing human rights or protecting the environment in their own country, let alone in Africa. China's insistence on non-intervention has also led to African leaders asking it for development loans, rather than Western institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Western institutions and nations that deal with Africa tend to apply stipulations to their monetary loans. The Chinese, with their shrewd self-serving interpretation of state sovereignty, do not.

There are many recent examples of African nations choosing to deal with China rather than the West. In 2006, oil-rich Angola was trying to secure a loan from the IMF. As is their practice, the IMF put stipulations on how their money was to be used, which one might say is rather reasonable. When Angola's government expressed dissatisfaction with the stipulations, China offered them the same amount of money as the IMF with no strings attached. Angola quickly went with China over the IMF, and China was granted increased access to Angolan oil (Meyersson 3). Similarly, in 2005 Sierra Leone accepted a large loan from the Chinese government. Sahr Johnny, Sierra Leone's ambassador to China, noted that

if a G8 country² wanted to rebuild a stadium [in Sierra Leone], we'd still be holding meetings! The Chinese just come and do it. They don't hold meetings about environmental impact assessment, human rights, bad governance and good governance. I'm not saying it's right, just that Chinese investment is succeeding because they don't set high benchmarks." Qtd. in China's 4

The fact that China doesn't set high benchmarks (or any benchmarks at all) with their loans and investments has generally been viewed as a positive development by African nations. The Chinese also view their position favorably. Giving African states loans without stipulations (and often without interest or a payback deadline) has given China almost unparalleled access to these countries' natural resources. Perhaps China 'just wants to help' these African nations, but one can probably assume that natural resources are a more likely motivation.

As was illustrated above, China's support of state sovereignty and the giving of stipulation-free loans have given China more access to African natural resources. The amount of access given often depends on an African state's leadership. States with dictators or weak governments are often the favorite targets for Chinese investment, as they offer China three important benefits. First of all, these dictatorships (such as Zimbabwe or Sudan) generally have many human rights abuses and governmental problems that prevent Western governments and businesses from dealing with them. As China has no qualms about human rights

abuses, and also has the capital to invest, they are generally the only country that will deal with these dictatorships, and are thus the only country to benefit from their natural resources. The second benefit is that the resources of Zimbabwe and Sudan, among others, have been nationalized by these countries' respective dictators. Since the resources are under complete state control, they can be given to whomever a dictator feels deserves them the most. For their generous support, China often receives a large share of these state-owned resources (Alden 61). The final and perhaps most important benefit is that the governments of dictators are generally not very concerned with environmental inspection and law. Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Somalia (another source of Chinese oil), for example, have failed to develop well-established environmental laws, and they also lack environment-upholding government organizations like America's EPA. This dramatic lack of oversight has essentially allowed Chinese companies to completely ignore the environmental costs of their endeavors. This, along with the two 'benefits' preceding, have led to many negative consequences for Africa's environment.

An excellent example of the dictator-model presented above is Sudan. The government of Sudan has recently been the focus of international condemnation for its conduct in the civil war against its Christian south, as well as its ongoing ethnic cleansing/genocidal efforts in Darfur. Due to these issues, Western governments refuse to have anything to do with Sudan (other than authoring the occasional sanction). Western businesses also steer clear of Darfur, as they are generally forbidden to do so by their respective governments. China, however, has chosen to ignore these ethical and human rights issues. Sudan happens to be a country rich in oil, and China has invested 15 billion dollars in the oil industry and related infrastructure projects (Alden 61). From such investment, China now receives 10% of its oil imports from Sudan. Sudan has benefitted too, of course. With so many Chinese billions, Sudan has been able to purchase sophisticated weaponry, as well as establish its own weapons-manufacturing firms (Ibid. 62-63). Such weaponry has been quite helpful to Sudan's counter-insurgency and counter-civilian efforts in Darfur.

The large-scale investment and development mentioned above has allowed China to secure needed natural resources from Africa. Unfortunately, this development and natural resource quest has had many negative effects on Africa's environment. China's drive for natural resources has generally centered on oil and gas exploration, mining for useful minerals, and cutting down timber (China's 3). All of these economic activities carry risks for Africa's environment.

China has four major, government supported, oil corporations operating in Africa (McGregor 1). These companies often search and drill for oil in areas untouched by Western companies, usually due to the fact that the countries they are operating in are pariah dictatorships that don't have well-developed environmental laws. Examples of these would be Sudan, Zimbabwe, and even Somalia, whose transitional government can barely control the capital, Mogadishu. In July 2007, before environmental or oil drilling laws had been completed, Chinese companies China National Offshore Oil Corporation and China International Oil and Gas had already signed on to drill for Somali oil (Ibid.). Luckily for China, the Chinese negotiators were assured that any future legislation, whether environmental or otherwise, would have no impact on oil exploration or drilling (Ibid.). When African countries happen to have stable, democratic leadership, Chinese oil companies often ignore environmental laws. In Gabon, for example, Sinopec oil decided to drill for oil in Loango National Park, despite the

fact that this was completely illegal. After filing a fake environmental impact brief to Gabon's government, Sinopec began dynamiting and cutting down protected forest in the National Park (French 1). In September 2006, Gabon's national park service realized that these illegal activities were killing rare plants and animals and threatening Loango's supposedly protected ecosystem, and Sinopec was quickly forced to stop (China's 3).

The African environment is impacted even more when oil companies go beyond the exploration stage and actually strike oil. As the Gabon example illustrates, African oil is generally not just under a lifeless desert. When an oil company finds oil in, say, a natural park, many things that could potentially harm the environment must be accomplished to secure this oil. Facilities must be built to drill for oil and house the workers³, which disrupts the existing natural ecosystem and any natural habitat that might be located in the area. When these are built, land must be cleared for oil refineries and pipelines, the latter of which often extend for hundreds of miles. And, since Chinese businesses tend to ignore local environmental laws and standards, drilling for oil often results in excessive air and water pollution close to the drilling zones and refinery plants.

Mining for coal and useful minerals has its own share of environmental concerns. There are many obvious issues that result from mining in general, including air and water pollution and ecosystem disruption due to the building of mining facilities, miners' quarters, and the mine itself. Surprisingly, however, one of the greatest threats to Africa's environment caused by Chinese mining is the building of hydroelectric dams. Because African mines are often located in remote regions, where electricity is scarce at best, Chinese companies often utilize the energy generated by dams to power their mines. Unfortunately, these dams often present many serious environmental issues.

There are numerous examples of hydroelectric dams set up for mining purposes damaging Africa's environment. The building of the Kongou Dam, which powers the Belinga iron ore mines in Gabon, has led to extensive flooding of the nearby Ivindo National Park (China's 3). Similarly, the Chinese mining company Sinohydro, with help from China's Exim bank, built the Bui Dam in Ghana, which has resulted in the flooding of a *quarter* of Bui National Park (Ibid.). Needless to say, such large-scale flooding is very destructive, as it drowns animal and plant life, destroys any habitats or ecosystems that existed before such flooding, and also leads to increased soil erosion.

In order to power a nearby mine in Sudan, a Chinese mining firm built the Merowe Dam. In violation of Sudan's Environmental Protection Act, this company refused to allow Sudan's Ministry of Environment to inspect the dam, or assess the environmental implications of its existence (Ibid. 4). In 2006, the UN Environmental Program found that the dam had led to the flooding of lands nearby, extensive riverbank erosion, the destruction of fish migration sites, and the disruption of endangered species' (such as the Nile Crocodile) habitats (Ibid.). Despite these concerns, the same Chinese firm will soon build another dam in Kaibar, in Northern Sudan.

The Kafue River Dam in Zambia, which provides power for several Chinese copper and cobalt mines, is one last Chinese project that has negatively impacted Africa's environment. Flooding caused by this dam has disrupted important wetlands, as well as two Zambian national parks. Supporting earlier examples of China's business policy in Africa, this dam was originally going to be built and financed by Western companies. When these Western businesses balked at the environmental risks of the dam, a Chinese firm immediately stepped in and was allowed

to take over. The Chinese company ignored the environmental risks completely, and even urged the Zambian government to abandon the environmental assessment process (Pasternack 1).

The last main natural resource sought by China is timber. Currently, China gets most of its timber from Liberia, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and Mozambique. Due to weak government environmental oversight and regulation (which is an obvious problem in most natural resource sectors in Africa), Chinese companies have long been involved in illegal logging activities, which often occur in national parks (Alden 87). The practices used by China in Mozambique are a good example of such activities. Unlike oil and mining companies, Chinese logging firms hire native Mozambicans to cut down trees. These small-scale lumberjacks are each given 'simple licenses' by Mozambique's government, which allows them to cut down a small number of trees (Lemos 64). Unfortunately, Chinese firms generally hire many hundreds of these Mozambique tree-cutters, who often concentrate their combined efforts in the same forest. The result of these activities (which occur in all African countries where China collects timber) has been widespread deforestation. Whole forests that have been subjected to this process, dubbed 'the Chinese takeaway', disappear in 5 to 10 years (Ibid. 65). This practice is technically illegal, but government overseers often ignore, or are actively involved with, this problem. Such deforestation has resulted in predictable environmental problems (destruction of a forest habitat, soil erosion issues). This destruction is especially troubling when it occurs in national parks, whose protected endangered flora and fauna generally die along with their habitats.

One exception to Africa's lackadaisical government enforcement occurred in Sierra Leone in 2008. In January of that year, Sierra Leone actually banned China from exporting timber from its forests. Chinese logging companies and their indigenous proxies were engaged in illegal tactics like those mentioned above, and were also ignoring environmental and sustainability laws. In response to these violations, Sierra Leone kicked these companies out of their country (China's 5). The African Union, which generally doesn't like to stand up to any institution that might offer it aid, even used this as an opportunity to scold China. It noted that China needed to "pay more attention to the protection of the environment in its investment practices", and must not ignore Africa's environmental laws (qtd. in Ibid.).

While this was sound advice from the African Union, China has decided to ignore it. Their reluctance is, perhaps, understandable when one considers the fact that China is just now realizing the implications of its own disastrous environmental policies. Breakneck industrialization has come at great cost to the environment and people of China, as the breathtaking smog and poisoned water-sources in Beijing and other major cities has clearly illustrated. Ironically, in order to rid themselves of pollution, China's government is now giving incentives to companies that pollute, if such companies decide to move their operations to *Africa*. Last September, for example, South Africa's Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka announced that her government was going to allow Chinese-polluters to move to South Africa. She noted that "China needs to send some of its polluting industries elsewhere because it is choking on them", and that South Africa will accept these industries, as they can "manage the emissions" (Higher 1). The fact that both China's collecting of natural resources and, potentially, the Chinese factories that process them will occur in Africa is dire news for Africa's environment.

One might wonder just what can be done to get China to change the way it does business in Africa. Well, one, all hope is not lost. There are many possible remedies to this dilemma, and not all of them hinge on China finally deciding to change its rather profitable ways.

For starters, Western states and institutions should change the way they do business in Africa. Many businesses, IGOs, and governments of the West continue to treat African nations in a neo-colonial fashion, which many African states do not appreciate. The many strings attached to development aid and other loans are often created without negotiation with the African state they're applied to, which can obviously become bothersome. Western states should consider abandoning those stipulations that are unnecessary, and should focus more on negotiating so that Africa feels it is more involved. This does not mean that those strings relating to human rights should be abandoned, of course; human rights should always be protected, whether or not this endangers a contract with Sudan. If Western companies limited stipulations and allowed for negotiation, then African states would probably be more receptive to them, and might think twice about going with China.

Western powers and institutions also tend to ignore Africa's requests for funding and aid. Those deals that are ignored are often fulfilled by the Chinese, who never seem to overlook an opportunity to gain natural resources and influence. There are many examples of this occurring. Ghana had appealed to get the aforementioned Bui Dam funded by the World Bank. When they were ignored, Ghana immediately turned to China, who quickly built the dam and bought control of the mines nearby (Bosshard 3). Similar occurrences happened with the Kafue Dam in Zambia, as well as with many projects in Sudan. If Western companies and institutions would pay more attention for Africa's calls for aid and loans, China would have fewer opportunities to get involved with Africa. Western companies, as they are generally constrained by both international and domestic law, would also be forced to respect Africa's environment, which China has obviously failed to do.

This West-changing model would hit snags in those African nations that do not respect human rights. The West would often rather put international sanctions on states like Zimbabwe or Sudan than give them money for roads and oil refineries (or weapons and soccer stadiums, which they often end up using the money for). More importantly, most Western businesses would not be able to work in these pariah-states, as doing so would violate their own domestic laws. How can China be persuaded to change in these states, where they basically face no fear of competition or government enforcement? It might be difficult, but China will probably grudgingly change its ways if enough international pressure is applied. One should remember that China does not just depend on Africa for its resources, it needs the entire world to supply its industrial rise. If the United States, China's biggest trading partner, decided to enact a trade-embargo until China respected Africa's environment, one might expect that China would change rather quickly.

Another way to solve these environmental issues is for African governments to enforce their own environmental laws. Granted, this is not possible in failed states like Somalia, but most African nations have at least the military means to make sure their environmental laws are being followed. It has already been shown that African states can exert influence over Chinese businesses operating in their territory (such as Sierra Leone kicking Chinese logging companies out of their nation). If more African states actually forced China to adhere to their environmental laws, with signed contracts and regular inspections, then China would have to either obey or leave. As Africa's natural resources are too necessary and profitable for China to lose, one would assume that they would respect environmental standards rather than lose out.

Even if the West and Africa miraculously abandoned 40 years of ingrained habit and accomplished the above recommendations, Africa's environment can still only truly be saved if China itself decided to change. Any change must, of course, start with China's government, and it easily can. While China tolerates elements of capitalism and private enterprise, it still incorporates much of the totalitarian spirit championed by Mao Zedong. If China wanted to make all of its companies immediately change their environmental policies, it could do so. In recent years, China's government actually has started to make recommendations to those Chinese businesses accused of polluting Africa. President Hu Jintao, for example, urged all Chinese companies to respect environmental laws and regulations (China's 6). In 2007, China went a step further and created environmental guidelines for businesses operating in Africa. These non-binding guidelines, created by China's State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) included strong incentives for companies to comply (Ibid. 7). One important incentive included securing loans from government banks; if companies in Africa adhered to environmental guidelines, they could expect to be approved for low-interest loans. The Green Credit Policy, as it is known, noted that "banks will be stricter about lending to companies that do not pass environmental assessments or fail to implement environment-protection regulations" (qtd. in Ibid.). In November 2007, 12 Chinese companies were denied loans for failing to comply with the Green Credit Policy; this was the first time loans were denied for environmental reasons. With this as a warning, Zijin Mining, China's leading gold producer in Africa, voluntarily closed five polluting mines to secure SEPA's approval (Ibid.). If China shows its companies that it's serious about enforcing environmental law overseas, these companies seem more likely to comply.

But China's government must go further than these rather limited reforms. All of its guidelines and recommendations are voluntary, and there have not been that many examples of companies actually adopting them. The obvious solution to this dilemma would be for the Chinese government to make environmental standards in Africa mandatory. This would not be difficult; China has the power to easily back up its enforcement, and the Chinese government certainly isn't squeamish about executing executives who don't comply. Unfortunately, China's government still contends that it doesn't have much control or influence over its domestic businesses, including those it essentially owns. If China's government continues with this denial, they might have trouble forcing businesses to comply with environmental regulations.

And, just for wishful thinking, there are some other obvious remedies that could be adopted by the Chinese government. China could allow NGOs (non-governmental organizations, such as Greenpeace) and an independent press to operate its territory. Both NGOs and an ever-watchful press-corps are very good at using publicity to shame Western companies that harm the environment. This might work in China too, if they were permitted to exist. Although this has been alluded to earlier, China could also create an EPA equivalent that has real power at home and jurisdiction over Chinese property overseas (i.e. in Africa). A real regulatory body with the power to shut non-compliers down would be quite helpful to the Chinese government. They would also provide the environmental enforcement in Africa that most African governments have thus far failed to muster.

If the Chinese government continues to only make non-binding recommendations and guidelines, then Chinese companies themselves will have to solve their own environ-

mental issues. As was illustrated above, some companies have accepted the government's environmental policies, but these one or two examples do not cover the more than 800 companies currently operating in Africa. Most Chinese companies seem fine with ignoring the environmental problems they cause. This is obviously problematic, although there might be a remedy. African governments, even if they lack the necessary mechanisms of enforcement, can identify those forces that are breaking their laws. When these Chinese companies are identified, the governments themselves generally have trouble dealing with them. They are benefiting so much from Chinese monetary aid and development, after all, and they could not possibly use violence to make China listen up. Not directly, anyway. In African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan and Zambia, employees of Chinese companies (especially those dealing with oil) have recently been attacked and even killed by criminal gangs and rebel groups (Ibid. 6). Although the government probably isn't involved (but who knows with countries like Sudan), the threat of violence might be a strong deterrent to breaking Africa's environmental laws.

Finally, China could always digress back into a Maoist Communist system. In those proud days of the Red Book and widespread famine, China tried its best to be completely self-sufficient and, except for nearby Asian countries, was essentially isolated from the rest of the world. If there was another Communist revolution in China, private enterprise and capitalism would cease to exist, and any Chinese businesses in Africa would disappear as well. This will most likely not happen, as limited-capitalism has proven far too profitable, but it would definitely end Chinese involvement in Africa.

When the Chinese signed FOCAC with their African allies, they noted that they had learned from their environmental mistakes, and wanted to make sure that such problems did not occur in Africa. Unfortunately, this realization was made far too late. Chinese businesses, in their zealous search for natural resources and high profits, had already severely disrupted Africa's environment. And they continue to do so. Aided by their government's shrewd, yet detrimental brand of developmental policy—as well as inept African governments with no environmental oversight—Chinese companies continue to expand their presence and pollution in Africa. There are signs, however, that China's negative practices might be changing. Environmental guidelines are being created by the government, and some companies are actually bowing to these non-binding recommendations. Just a few companies are not enough, however. For Africa's environment to truly be protected, all Chinese companies must respect the environment they operate in, before it's too late.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 United Nations Environment Program
- 2 G8 refers to 'Group of Eight'; the G8 includes industrialized, generally Western, democracies such as the UK, the United States, Germany and France.
- 3 Large Chinese businesses generally bring Chinese laborers to work in Africa because it's cheaper than hiring Africa workers. This has created a fair amount of controversy in African nations where Chinese companies are active, as some governments have wanted Chinese businesses to provide jobs in countries that often have problems with unemployment.

Soviet, Japanese, and American Relations with China, 1949-1972: China's Quest for Power through Foreign Policy

>>> Brianna Joslyn

China's foreign policy is one developed both in accordance with the ideologies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and as a consequence of its interactions with foreign entities. Probably the most significant entities during the early decades of the CCP's rise to power in relation to China's foreign interaction would be the Soviet Union, Japan, and the United States. When studying the trends of China's foreign policy decisions and tones, one might consider the question of what was the key force behind the development of China's foreign policy decisions during the early years of the regime of the CCP. This is a key question to consider when attempting to understand China as a powerful nation in the world today, as this time period is at the root of the current trend in Chinese foreign policies, as well as the CCP's influencing perspectives. Sino-American, Sino-Soviet, and Sino-Japanese relations are at the heart of most Chinese foreign interactions, and to best understand China's relationship with the influential powers of the time, one has to examine how China reacted to each of these entities. When observing China's interactions with the Soviet Union, the United States, and Japan from 1949 to 1972, the root of their conflicts lies in the struggle to gain and maintain power on the world stage, while attempting to appear with as much sovereignty as possible.

The origins of China's altercations with the Soviet Union, which ultimately led to the split of Sino-Soviet cooperation in the 1940s, were a gradual process. Perhaps the root of this growing conflict came from the differentiated communist ideals which the two nations possessed. Marxism-Leninism was becoming increasingly too theoretical and without enough of a base in pragmatism for China. The Maoist school of communism was one which could seem more realistic and sensible for the Chinese people, who were at the time experiencing what was often described as a "backward" economic system. ¹ China was striving to accomplish its goals for progress at a rate at which they could actually see specific forms of improvement. They viewed themselves as the most important country on the planet, and therefore had the goal of increasing their power as a nation, accompanied by increasing levels of nationalism. Naturally, while they still wanted to exude communist ideals, there was a fear that if they did not firmly establish themselves as an independently powerful nation, they would never be seen as a separate, authoritative nation from the Soviet Union, whose governmental and cultural system was flawed in the eyes of China.² Mao did not want to be considered in the same category as the Soviet Union, unless it was on a list of the most powerful nations in the world. He often had differing opinions on what was the best route to

obtain his ideological goals, as well as how best to strive for more power on the international stage. Marxist-Leninist theory relied on the existence of a large population of the working-class that did not lie in the rural peasants, and China's social and economic system was much more complex than that. This made it difficult to put any advice originating from experience from the Soviets to applicable use, because it often did not really fit the situation very well. This difference in the development of communist ideologies, due to differing circumstances, contributed to the growing mistrust of the Soviets by Mao and the CCP.³

Due to China's increasing attitudes of territorial entitlement, conflict with bordering countries was inevitable, especially with countries that were exceptionally imperialist, such as the Soviet Union. Border disputes were rampant in the 1960s along the border of the Soviet Union and China. This appeared to wipe out any sort of appreciation that China had left over for the Soviets after their financial involvement in the Manchurian disputes. Both the Soviet Union and China had interests in this particular area between their borders, and the geography of the region led the border being contested, so both nations tried to lay claim to Manchuria. China had previously acknowledged the Soviet state to be the leader of the revolutionary communist movement, and after the effects of the struggle for control of Manchuria, for it to be considered part of the Chinese mainland, China's readiness to accept Soviet advice was on the downturn. In addition, China then briefly owed interest on the financial loans given to them by the Soviets, and they were displeased at the prospect of having to relinquish any aspect of their sovereignty. ⁴This also contributed to the Chinese attitude toward the Soviet power as much as it created additional financial blocks which led to the Soviets themselves feeling like they had China under their control. An alternative argument could be that the Soviets were mainly motivated by their interest in maintaining amicable relations with their neighbor and fellow communistic society. However, this is most likely not what the Chinese government would be thinking in any case, since they consistently have taken on a much more realistic and pragmatic approach to their foreign relations than to assume that any other nation really has China's best interests at heart, and probably is concentrating more on their own affairs. After the Manchurian issue was mostly settled, China saw the Soviets as taking action to infringe on Chinese borders, and thus took issue with them.⁵

The 1950s brought on new ideas for both the Soviets and the Chinese on how they should conduct their political strategy. This consequently had a resulting effect on their relations with one another. Mao had plans to move China more swiftly and directly to a communist state, feeling that an equal playing field for the peasants versus the financial power of the city would be the most beneficial for China at that point in time, which led to the Great Leap Forward. While this was greatly influenced by the Soviet model and an, albeit brief, friendship with the Soviets, the rest of China, aside from Mao, was not so ready to accept the Soviet Union as having an influence on Chinese ideologies. However, with the change of Soviet power leadership from Stalin to Khrushchev, Mao's readily available cooperation disintegrated. Khrushchev's ideas and policies were not the same as Stalin's, leading to an alteration in the tone of the communistic influence of the Soviet Union, and made it more all-inclusive. The previous, more Marxist-Leninist ideals were slightly easier to relate to for Mao, and Khrushchev wanted to include more capitalistic acceptance in his ideologies, which did not really coincide with Mao's tendency to believe whole heartedly in the ideals of general equality for the peasantry. Whether it originated with the shift in Soviet leadership,

or with the overall increasing levels of Mao support in the country, the 1950s brought about a turn for less cooperative relations between China and the Soviet Union.⁶

When one country fears the growing threat of another increasingly militaristic and nearby power, the topic of how to develop a preventative strategy against the other is one that is undoubtedly elevated in the minds of the government. The Soviets had previously promised China that they would assist them in the development of their nuclear weapons. Following the Great Leap Forward, however, the Soviet government was concerned that China would consider themselves to be one of the most powerful, and therefore most important, players on the international stage. China, being of a rather self-centric nature, had the potential to utilize their newfound weapon technology to attempt to enforce their influential hold on other world powers. Thus, the Soviet government never kept their promise, further irritating the Chinese government. The Soviets had also not taken China's side in the Sino-Indian war, and China did not see this as an act of friendliness. The manner in which the Soviets saw to distance themselves from potentially becoming involved in any activities which might contribute to elevating China's position as a world power, did not serve them well in their relations with China. China took their frequent snubs as offensive, which led to attempts to slander the Soviet Union, in an effort to negatively affect their political standing as well. When both nations ended up denouncing each other publicly, diplomatic strife must have been the expectation. ⁷

Mao eventually realized that, due to the ongoing altercation with the Soviet Union, China was at a particularly vulnerable place without the support of a super power to the north, aiding their decisions against other bordering opponents who did not want to conform to or be under the control of mainland China. This was not a quest China considered to be taken lightly, as control over their bordering nations was seen as an essential component to strengthening their level of power in the eyes of the world. Thus, their foreign policies with Soviet Union were set to consider them as adversaries in this goal of regional control, as a piece of their attempts to gain and maintain power, and confrontation arose. ⁸

China's conflicted concerns with whom or what will further their venture for a more powerful standing were prevalent in their simultaneous frequent interactions with the Japanese as well. China wanted to give off the appearance of absolute sovereignty, but also had an occasionally struggling economy. Their occasional reliance on countries that were their opponents was not a burden that China was particularly happy to bear. Following the split from ties of friendship with the Soviet Union, China stood against them and formulated new policies to counteract them, and consequently opened itself to the Japanese and American sphere. This was an overall infrequent occurrence, but it was somewhat periodic in history. This resulting openness with these countries in the 1970s was somewhat of a reverse from the nationalist and isolationist tendencies China had previously relied on when dealing with these countries who so frequently disagreed with them. ⁹

China had previously utilized opposition of Japan as a unification tool for bringing the people of China to accept the current leadership as a valid one. In modern times, this most likely stemmed from the event of Japan actually invading China and trying to capture Chinese lands as Japanese ones during the 1930s. This was something that was still high in the Chinese consciousness a few decades later. The Chinese did not want to give Japan any sort of sign that they might be acquiescing to being inferior. National integrity relied on the additional validation from other countries that all of China's territories were legitimately

Chinese. When Japan infiltrated their territories, this was an act which was taken personally, and thus their foreign policies towards Japan were affected, which is why, when the Chinese took it upon themselves to reclaim Manchuria, the vigor to take back what they saw as rightfully theirs was strengthened by the fact that Manchuria was occupied by Japanese forces. Armed conflict between Japan and China had, therefore, happened not long before they banded together against the Soviet entity, albeit for differing reasons, and was the reason why the relationship was so tentative. 10

The frequent fluctuation in foreign relations between China and Japan continued throughout the twentieth century, but China continued to see Japan as a potential threat to their quest for power and sovereignty. This was increased due to Japan's close ties with the United States and the existence of United States military forces being so nearby. The closer the United States and Japan became, the more fearful China became for their own self-interests and security; and the more afraid China became, the more China saw both Japan and United States as countries with which not to be aligned. 11At the heart of China's modern issue with Japan was the lack of Japanese recognition for Beijing to be considered the true center of legitimate Chinese government, as opposed to Taipei, which is the location in Taiwan that Japan chose to support. This increasingly became a factor in their foreign relations with one another, as it undermined mainland Chinese authority, which was not accepted by the Chinese government, thus complicating their relationship, and putting a strain on China's foreign affairs. However, after breaking with their ties with the Soviet Union, China had to face the fact that they were vulnerable, in both a militaristic and economic way. Because of this, China could not completely disregard Japan's legitimacy, because their cooperation was necessary for Chinese trade to continue to increase their revenues and overall security. 12

As they had experienced with Japan, China found much to be annoyed with in their Sino-American relations. Their relations with China were also equally complex as Japan's. China often has claimed that their qualm against the United States is the United States' propensity to conduct their foreign relations in an imperialistic manner. Imperialism is seen as a threat to China because of the source of their sense of power relying in maintaining territorial control. The United States is a powerfully successful country, which had origins in separating away from their mother country of Britain, and developed on their own from there. China continues to struggle to maintain their hold on all lands and nations which they deem as belonging to them, and the United States' sense of entitlement seems, from Chinese perspectives, to be refuting that type of outlook, and thus a sense of mistrust builds towards the United States' government foreign policy decisions. 13

During this time period, if Japanese relations were affected by China's need to boost their hold on what they had power and control over, the United States was affected as well, since they were tied with Japan politically and militarily. The United States had often seen Japan as the force that was being abused by Chinese communist ideals. However, China was not terribly concerned with rectifying these concerns, as it helped to propel China's goal of presenting a powerful, militaristic front that could be seen as mighty, as well as, at least during Maoist periods, being an advocator for equality of the lower classes. The United States has frequently chosen to participate in the affairs of foreign countries that they either feel affect their interests, or are oppressing the freedoms of the citizens of that country. This type of interference is one that would not be appreciated by China, which has continually strove to be seen as a sovereign nation. China cannot be sovereign if another country has taken it

upon itself to assist the countries surrounding it, compromising their authoritative nature and commandeering methods of maintaining control and power.¹⁴

Fighting on opposite sides of the Korean War did not help the power struggle and relations between the United States and China. China would not be able to be on the same side as the United States on any major issue until it would be forced to be following the Chinese split from friendly relations and influence of the Soviet Union, and that was really only because one requires support and alliances, no matter how tentative, when attempting to go against a world power in such a manner. While China was still aligned with the Soviets during the Korean War, it seemed to be a communist versus not-communist argument. It was during this time that China really strove to demonstrate to the United States, as well as the rest of the world, that they were indeed a powerful and legitimate entity and governing force. However, this altercation only increased the United States' defense of territories, such as Taiwan, because they saw China as such an aggressor and someone to protect the Republic of China from, particularly due to the Chinese displays of militaristic forcefulness, and additionally since the area of Manchuria was now significantly less occupied by controlling Japanese forces that could maintain any sort of hold on the region.¹⁵

The struggle for Taiwan is one that is particularly crucial between the United States and the People's Republic of China. The United States chose to conduct friendly interactions and demonstrate support for Taiwan, and recognize them as a legitimate form of government. This is a source of confrontation and conflict between China and other countries in the world as well, because they consider recognition of the legitimacy of Taiwan to be a lack of recognition of the legitimacy of China's mainland, which is a disregard of their power and control. If this is a particularly contentious issue with other countries of the world, it is an even larger issue when it is the United States, since their disregard of the People's Republic is particularly offensive, due to their threat and their involvement with Japan, a longtime fluctuating relationship. The United States' military forces are foreboding in Japan, but even more so in China's surrounding territories, especially in the case of Taiwan.¹⁶

The international advancement of the People's Republic of China was further blocked due to the actions taken by the United States to prevent the People's Republic (mainland China) from taking control of the seat in the United Nations, which was held by the Republic of China (Taiwan) at the time. This was a crucial gesture that clearly demonstrated the lack of wanting to acknowledge the validation of the People's Republic of China as a world power. The United States would not want China to feel like they had been officially recognized by the United Nations because China would then feel like their seemingly oppressive actions were condoned as well. Official recognition by the United Nations could encourage them to continue to function under their current ideologies. This action was detrimental to the Sino-American relationship because the foreign policies that China would then choose to enact in regards to the United States would be based on a feeling of their power being spurned and not properly acknowledged. The United States did not want the influence of the communist People's Republic to be exacted in one of the most distinct forums of international affairs, and thus affairs between the United States and the People's Republic were even more contentious than usual during the 1960s.¹⁷

Diplomatic relations were not reassumed until 1969, when the United States had grown tired of their trade markets being restricted due to the resulting unfriendly toned interactions with the People's Republic of China, after both countries had publicly displayed

their true opinions of each other. Due to their lack of capabilities to interact amicably, much of their trade interactions suffered, and many had to be mediated by a relatively uninterested third party. Attempts were initiated by the United States to develop peaceful relations with the People's Republic of China, following examples that had been set by many of the United States' major western allies, mainly during the years of 1969 until after Nixon's visit to China in 1972. Due to a few steady instances of Sino-American cooperation during these times, such as that by athletic teams, in addition to the contractual agreements being contemplated between the two countries, relations between the People's Republic and the United States took on a gradually less hostile tone. 18

Any trust between the People's Republic of China and the United States had undoubtedly some aspect of the United States' acknowledging China's validity as a world player with a certain amount of power. This had been, at least on China's end, the largest component in their distrust and dislike of the United States during the 1960s, since the United States was preventing them from reaching what China saw as its full international potential. The United States had not wanted China to reach its full international potential, since they saw that as a malignantly powerful force that would be determinant to their interests and ideologies. The United States saw that China was not going to be the first to acquiesce, particularly due to the general Chinese stubbornness that refused to make friendly diplomatic dealings with a foreign entity that had caused them to have to defend their control over what they saw as rightfully theirs, and also due to Chinese views of self-centricity. The appearance of entitlement, power, and control, especially on the world stage, was of the utmost importance to China during these few decades.¹⁹

The interactions of these four major, international power players, China, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States, are integral subjects to examine if one truly is striving for a deeper understanding of all the conflict and cultural shifting that occurred during the years 1949 to 1972. These are key years in the span of Chinese foreign relations, and by observing China's interactions with these important foreign entities, it is possible to understand their mindset towards the overall, continual interactions that China will have in the future, as these years also set the tone for modern Chinese diplomacy. These confrontations that China had during this time period with Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States were ones that demonstrated how, under this formed idea of a communist ideology, China would react when their ideas of self-importance and self-reliance were infringed upon. China's actions and reactions were rooted in their desire to be considered a powerful, controlling entity in the world, as well as a sovereign one, and thus their relations with the major contenders of the time were maneuvered as such. Most countries try to base their foreign policies on what will be in their best interest, and China held the opinion that their best interests were to be as largely unified and powerful as possible. This might cause one to wonder about how diplomatic relations will continue in a world that requires an increasing amount of international cooperation to survive, and eyes will inevitably remain on China to see how they will handle the situation.

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Creative Integrity Despite Oppression: Soviet Realism and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5* >>> Ruthann Elder

Many Americans take for granted the freedom of speech protected by our Constitution. It is very common to see in music today, outward protest of the government and its actions. Many would have difficulty imagining a world where that freedom was not guaranteed. However, many important pieces of music grew out of the oppression of speech. Dmitri Shostakovich composed during the height of the Cold War and Soviet power. The Soviet government placed strict limitations on the speech of its people. When it came to music, the Soviets developed a standard called Soviet Realism, which all composers were expected to follow. Two important pieces Shostakovich composed during this time were his opera *Lady Macbeth*, which premiered in 1934, and *Symphony No. 5*, which premiered in 1937. He and his colleagues treaded on thin ice when composing music that outwardly criticized or contradicted the Soviet Union's ideology. Shostakovich himself got into trouble this way and at one time expected the secret police to show up at his door to arrest him. Shostakovich's life as a composer was a constant struggle between meeting the standard for Soviet Realism and maintaining his own creativity. In *Symphony No. 5*, Shostakovich achieved his first successful blend of his personal creativity and Soviet Realism.

Shostakovich grew up in a very tumultuous time in Russian politics. He was born in 1906 in St. Petersburg, later called Petrograd, and then Leningrad.¹ Early in Shostakovich's life the government underwent much turmoil. In 1917, the Romanov monarchy fell and in 1918, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party took over the new government and dissolved the Constituent Assembly. Opposition to this new Soviet government led to a civil war from 1918 to 1921.² Shostakovich's family, however, had the revolutionary background to meet the requirements of Soviet class ideology. His mother had joined the Bolshevik party after the 1905 uprising and his paternal grandfather had been exiled to Siberia for his involvement with the Polish uprising.³ There is not much to suggest that Shostakovich was not a model Soviet citizen at this point.

In 1928, Stalin and the Soviet Central Committee began showing more interest in Soviet music. The government had its own ideas of what Soviet art should be and the leaders saw only chaos.⁴ The Soviet philosophy of art was as follows:

Every artist...has the right to create freely according to his ideal, independently of everything. However, we are communists and we must not stand with folded hands and let chaos develop as it pleases. We must systematically guide this process and form its result.⁵

This "systematic" guidance became known as Soviet Realism.

Soviet Realism strove to capture the reality of the Soviet people in music. It portrayed Communist truth, party spirit, and nationality as an expression of the interests of the proletariat. However, this was difficult to judge in music and became somewhat subjective.⁶ The Soviets disliked Western influences and too much dependency on traditional forms. Anything too intellectual or in anyway beyond the grasp of the common person was not welcome. The Soviets felt that artists should depict the strength and accomplishments of the state. This ended up being more heroic than realistic.⁷ Works of Beethoven were often labeled as models for Soviet Realism by Soviet aestheticians, as Beethoven's music included themes relating to humanity and nature and served as an example which Soviet composers were expected to follow.⁸ Shostakovich struggled for years to successfully blend Soviet Realism into his art without sacrificing his own creativity. His first attempt at mixing Soviet Realism with the symphony was his *Symphony No. 3*; however, the work was not successful in the eyes of Shostakovich himself.⁹

In 1936, the first of Stalin's "great purges" began. Anyone suspected of being an enemy of the Soviet party was arrested. They were forced into abject confessions and humiliation before they were eventually executed. An estimated 7 million people were arrested between 1936 and 1939. People of all walks of life, not just artists, were affected by the purge.¹⁰

During this time Shostakovich fell under attack because his opera *Lady Macbeth* fell outside the realm of Soviet Realism according to the Soviets. In the middle of a performance of *Lady Macbeth* in 1935 a group of government officials, including Stalin, reportedly walked out after the third act because of their distaste for the opera. Soon after that, the *Pravda*, a periodical that served as the mouthpiece of the Soviet party published a critical article about *Lady Macbeth*.¹¹ The article, titled "Muddle instead of Music," accused *Lady Macbeth* of being "leftist," "formalist," and "musical chaos." The author of the article, not named in the periodical but suspected by many to be Stalin himself, felt that the story of *Lady Macbeth* was given a significance it did not deserve and that the setting was blatantly vulgar and violent without taste.¹² This took Shostakovich by surprise as *Lady Macbeth* had been intended to praise Russian womanhood and had also enjoyed much success since its premiere two years earlier.¹³ Soon after, his ballet *The Limpid Stream* was criticized and other forms of criticism in addition to the *Pravda* article followed, such as anonymous hate mail, newspaper ridicule, abandonment by his friends and colleagues, and even censure by the Leningrad Composers Union.¹⁴ The mounting tension forced Shostakovich to withdraw from public life and suppress his *Symphony No. 4* just before its premiere. Because of the political pressure the constant criticism placed on him, Shostakovich withdrew from the public eye for two years and was rarely seen publicly performing.¹⁵

During this time, many friend and colleagues of Shostakovich fell under the same persecution by the Soviet government. Many of them were arrested, questioned, tortured, and possibly even executed. Among them were his brother-in-law, a physicist; his mother-in-law, an astronomer and friend; his uncle, a Bolshevik; Adrian Piotrovsky, the librettist of *The Limpid Stream*; and Tukhachevsky, chairman of the arts committee and a close friend of Shostakovich.¹⁶ Such was the climate that framed the composition and premiere of his *Symphony No. 5*—a composition that may very well have saved his life by redeeming his reputation with the Soviets.

Symphony No. 5 enjoyed immediate success at its premiere in 1937 and it has been said that the audience gave a 40 minute ovation at its conclusion.¹⁷ Its success would put him

in the top echelon of composers in Russia and soon make him a national hero as well.¹⁸ The symphony was subtitled by a journalist as “A Soviet Artist’s Creative Reply to Just Criticism,” and was never contested by Shostakovich; suggesting that he had learned his lesson and was offering a sort of truce to the Soviets.¹⁹ However, Shostakovich did not waiver as far from his musical beliefs as the yielding subtitle suggests. The shift was more likely the result of maturation, rather than change.²⁰ Shostakovich did not change his composition style but rather found a way to express his ideas within the guidelines of Soviet Realism. Another reason for the work’s quick acceptance could be the political changes that had occurred since the condemnation of *Lady Macbeth*. The Soviets were experiencing a limited cultural thaw, allowing for more flexibility in the expression of ideas, and a new constitution was being planned.²¹ *Symphony No. 5* was possibly seen as a musical representation of the people’s struggles thus far. They had lived under an oppressive government that controlled every aspect of their lives and finally it seemed that they would get their freedom back.

Perhaps the success of the *Symphony No. 5* was due to Shostakovich finally achieving a blend of his personal creativity with Soviet Realism. The theme of the symphony, as Shostakovich describes it, is “the formation of personality. It is precisely man with all of his experiences whom I saw in the center of the conception of the composition.”²² This was an obvious reflection of Soviet Realism, the association with the common man and his everyday life struggles. However, the subjective slant of the theme is not a part of Soviet Realism. Personal expression is not included in the criterion of Soviet Realism and this aroused many controversial discussions among Soviet critics.²³ It seemed to fit with Soviet Realism at the same time that it did not seem to fit, thus Shostakovich expressed his own creative idea but worded it to sound like Soviet Realism.

Depending on which critic is consulted, Shostakovich may or may not have written a “Soviet” symphony. The Soviet’s did not want tragedy or formalism in art and encouraged folk music and nationalistic ideas. They wanted music that the masses could understand and music that would boost morale, not draw attention to more tragic subjects. However, *Symphony No. 5* is tragic in nature, the forms of the last two movements are very unclear and it contains no folk tunes or nationalistic ideas. The only real difference between it and Shostakovich’s previous works is the cohesiveness of the presentation which blended in with Soviet Realism.²⁴ Something about *Symphony No. 5* had to reflect Soviet Realism enough to satisfy the Soviets.

Symphony No. 5 has parallels to Beethoven’s fifth symphony, which also helped it find favor. It consists of four movements and moves from minor to major, from struggle to victory, throughout the work. This connects the symphony to the form of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*, which moves through the same themes and was hailed as the model for Soviet Realism.²⁵ The first movement gives strong evidence for Soviet Realism even though the movement is highly tragic in mood throughout. It uses a very clear sonata form²⁶ and is in D minor but the extensive use of the E-flat gives it a modal sound, found frequently in Russian folk music. This modal sound can be heard clearly in the first theme of the exposition found at rehearsal figure 1 in the first violin, and gives a distinct Russian sound to a traditionally Western genre, casting the theme in a nationalistic light. This same theme is later given a completely different character in the development²⁷. Shostakovich uses it as a dark and ominous march in rehearsal figure 27. James Bakst, author of *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, suggests that this could represent the antagonist of the man’s life alluded to by Shostakovich in his description of the symphony.²⁸

Employing a technique often used by Beethoven, Shostakovich treats his recapitulation²⁹ almost as another development. The themes are drawn out and expanded upon even further but within the key of D minor. Though the use of sonata form is fairly complex it is still clearly apparent. The Soviets discouraged music that was too intellectual and here it seems that Shostakovich found a way to use sonata form in a sophisticated way without taking it beyond the capacity of the masses to understand keeping it firmly in line with Soviet Realism.

The second movement is not labeled by Shostakovich as a scherzo,³⁰ but it can easily be analyzed as such. It is the shortest and by far the most lighthearted movement of *Symphony No. 5* and definitely has the appeal demanded by Soviet Realism. The form, however, pushed the limits of Soviet Realism acceptability. It is almost easier to follow the development of two themes rather than the typical ABA form of a traditional scherzo. The first is an innocent theme, found at rehearsal figure 57, played by the flute; and the second a bold and pompous theme, found at rehearsal figure 54, played by the horns. The movement can still be analyzed in ABA form with the B section beginning at rehearsal figure 57 and the A section returning at figure 65. The return of the A section, however, is not an exact duplication of the first statement and the pompous theme found in the A section can also be found in the B section blurring, the distinction between the two. Disguising the form as much as Shostakovich has in this movement is not accepted by Soviet Realism but the dialogue between the two themes is easy to follow and even comical at times. This movement has the gratifying and lighthearted feel that the Soviets expected. Once again Shostakovich has combined an intellectual interpretation of form with the mass appeal that Soviet Realism requires.

The third movement, Largo, is the most troublesome movement of *Symphony No. 5* to align with Soviet Realism. Shostakovich does not use a traditional form for this movement, but rather develops three themes and uses a fourth as an emotional stabilizer. The three themes are meditative but capable of reaching intense emotions. This movement can be viewed as the "formation of personality" mentioned in Shostakovich's description of the symphony mentioned earlier³¹. It is the inward reflection of the tragedy and struggle of the first two movements. The fourth theme only appears twice in the movement, but is very significant each time. The first time it appears is at rehearsal figure 79 as a flute and harp duet. The flute carries the melody, which resembles the first theme of the exposition in the first movement, while the harp supplies the harmonic and rhythmic support. It is a very serene and calming melody that balances the intensity of the other three themes.

The second time that the fourth theme appears is the more significant of the two appearances. It comes at rehearsal figure 94, just before the end of the movement. The movement reaches an emotional peak and Shostakovich uses this theme to bring the intensity down. Here the fourth theme is in the second violin part. The rest of the strings enter slowly and the movement calms down further. The final harp solo ends the movement in a calm and introspective state. This movement can be seen as contrary to Soviet Realism because of its inwardly reflective nature. Personal expression was not part of Soviet Realism. The Largo leaves the listener in a somber mood and the form is not easy to follow. It is clear that the mood of this movement was meant to be mournful in nature. It has been suggested that it is a memorial to Tukhachevsky, a friend of Shostakovich who defended him during the attacks on *Lady Macbeth*, who was arrested and executed during the creation of this symphony.³² The aspect of mourning heard in this movement would have resonated with most

of the listeners at the time, as many people in the Soviet Union had lost a loved one and experienced grief during Stalin's purges. The Soviet government would not have appreciated Shostakovich bringing this aspect of peoples' lives to the forefront. The government wanted music that lifted the spirit and boosted confidence rather than remind them of recent tragedy. It is unclear exactly why the Soviets were willing to overlook the Largo's disregard for Soviet Realism but one possibility is the triumphant finale of the symphony.

The finale movement begins abruptly, disrupting the quiet reflective mood of the third movement. The brass instruments, silent during the previous movement, are given the main theme, a kind of fanfare heralding the victory over the conflict of the previous movements found at rehearsal figure 97. This seems to parallel Shostakovich's personal struggles as well, as if he is announcing to the world that he has achieved victory over Soviet Realism. The main theme is passed through many voices and worked into a frenzy until rehearsal figure 110 where Shostakovich begins a calmer section.

During this slow section the music becomes more reflective, but not in a tragic way—an accepting resignation seems to flow from the music. Here, Shostakovich self-quotes a piece he had previously composed which remained unpublished at the premiere of *Symphony No. 5*. At rehearsal figure 120 the first violins play an accompaniment that resembles the accompaniment for the final quatrain of Shostakovich's setting of Alexander Pushkin's poem *Rebirth*.³³ The text for the final quatrain of *Rebirth* is "So do delusions vanish from my wearied soul and visions arise within it of pure primeval days."³⁴ Since this work was yet unpublished, the meaning of this passage in *Symphony No. 5* would have been lost on the audience. However, it does seem that Shostakovich was trying to make a statement about "the man's" struggles from his description, possibly that victory over struggles comes with enlightenment. In the same quote that he describes the theme, Shostakovich goes on to say "the finale answers all questions which have been proposed in other movements."³⁵ In keeping with this description the text of Pushkin's poem can be interpreted several ways in terms of the *Symphony No. 5*. A possible question that it answers could be whether the victory was worth the struggle, a point which could be debated endlessly. To this author it seems that Shostakovich left this subjectively for the listener to determine. This extremely subjective slant would not have sat well with the Soviets and it was a bold gesture to include the *Rebirth* quote, even though it was yet unpublished. However, since *Rebirth* was unpublished the Soviets would not have been able to make this connection and so it was overlooked, thus yielding the acceptance of *Symphony No. 5* as a Soviet Realist piece.

The music of the *Rebirth* quote is immediately followed by the main theme from the beginning of the movement and the finale begins its final drive to the conclusion of the symphony. The horns, along with the rest of the brass instruments, return at rehearsal figure 129 and begin a harmonic drive towards D major. The melody is passed between the brass instruments and is supported harmonically by the strings and woodwinds playing constant eighth notes. The movement ends solidly in the key of D major on an empowered tonic D. The feeling of elation over victory is strongly conveyed here, leaving the listener in an optimistic and confident state of mind—one of the most important requirements of Soviet Realism.

At its premiere, *Symphony No. 5* was said to have received a 40-minute ovation from a crowd moved to tears.³⁶ Shostakovich's redemption was evident on that night. Finally, he had found a way to fit his personal creativity into the mold that the Soviet government had prescribed for him. The symphony itself is autobiographical of Shostakovich's struggles with

the Soviet government and Soviet Realism. His struggles with the Soviet's expectations for art, his subsequent alienation by his government and his redemption are all present.

This pathway of struggle is what made the *Symphony No. 5* so successful and the emotion of the work is such that it can relate to any listener's life and feelings. The Soviet officials could see it as glorifying the struggles between communism and the rest of the world; but the average citizen of the Soviet Union could also see themselves in this music. Their everyday struggles and the terror of the great purges were fresh in their minds during its premiere. *Symphony No. 5* expressed what the people could not say, not just because words could not properly express it, but because freedom of speech was not a luxury of which the people of the Soviet Union could boast. Shostakovich had unintentionally voiced their dilemma along with his own in *Symphony No. 5*.

Under the strict rule of the Soviet Union and the pressure to live up to Soviet Realism one might expect that much of what Soviet composers wrote was not at their creative best. Shostakovich struggled for years to keep his creative integrity while walking the thin line of acceptability with Soviet Realism. His opera *Lady Macbeth*, and both *Symphony No. 3* and *Symphony No. 4* are all examples of his failed attempts to incorporate Soviet Realism into his compositions. In the process of his incorporation efforts, his career and reputation nearly eroded. *Symphony No. 5* was a victory for Shostakovich because it exemplified his best creative efforts yet satisfied the Soviet Realism ideologies, and, more importantly, made him a national hero to the Soviet people.

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- 1 Stephen. Jackson. *Dmitri Shostakovich: An Essential Guide to His Life and Works*. (London: Pavilion Books Limited, 1997), 26.
- 2 Elizabeth Wilson. *Dmitri Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 17
- 3 Elizabeth Wilson. *Dmitri Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34
- 4 Ibid, 23.

5 James Bakst. *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962), 275.

6 Ibid, 285.

7 Blokker, 23.

8 Bakst, 288.

9 Blokker, 23.

10 Wilson, 120.

11 Ibid, 109.

12 Blokker, 24

13 Bakst, 285.

14 Jackson, 46.

15 Ibid, 47.

16 Wilson, 121.

17 Jackson, 50.

18 Blokker, 28.

19 Jackson, 49.

20 Blokker, 65.

21 Seroff, Victor. *Dmitri Shostakovich: The Life and Background of a Soviet Composer*. (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1943), 232.

22 Bakst, 315.

23 Bakst, 315.

24 Blokker, 65.

25 Bakst, 288.

26 A type of compositional technique, sometimes known as binary form, it is often used for the first movement of a symphony or other type of composition. The basis of the form is the relationship between two keys and implies the composition will be organized into three sections, the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation. "Sonata Form." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., edited by Michael Kennedy. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e9597> (accessed January 7, 2010).

27 The second section of sonata form in which the composer uses the themes of the opening section, or exposition, in such a way as to make new passages and often used to change keys. "Development." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., edited by Michael Kennedy. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e2914> (accessed February 24, 2010).

28 Bakst, 315.

29 The third and final section of a movement in sonata form. The original material from the opening of the movement is restated in the original key. "Recapitulation." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23012> (accessed February 26, 2010).

30 This literally means jest or joke. The scherzo is generally used as the 2nd or 3rd movement of a larger work such as a symphony. Beethoven is the most notable developer of the scherzo often incorporating a rough humor with marked rhythms in a ¾ time. "Scherzo." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., edited by Michael Kennedy. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e9054> (accessed January 9, 2010).

31 Bakst, 315.

32 Richard Taruskin,. "Public lies and unspeakable truth interpreting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony." *Shostakovich Studies*. David Fanning, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42.

33 Ibid, 43.

34 Ibid, 45.

35 Bakst, 316.

36 Jackson, 50.

Uncovering the Politics of Hierarchy in Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*

>>> Vicki Mullins

(The essay that follows is an abbreviated version of the original work, which I shortened to meet the established length requirements.)

Arundhati Roy's first and only novel to date, *The God of Small Things*, was an international bestseller and the recipient of Britain's prestigious Booker Prize in 1997, the year of its publication. Since the release of the novel, critics all over the world have written about its significance, message, historical (in)accuracy, and even about its author.¹ Many regard the book as possibly one of the best novels to come out of India, while others dismiss it as inconsequential.² Roy purposely incorporates many details of India's political and social arenas, revealing a web of manipulation and oppression that has inhibited the progress of the country she loves. Each issue raised in Roy's novel is intensely political, and she declares it no less political than any of her essays.³ The reality into which she invites the reader is one of forsaken citizens, the prevailing status of Untouchable, and the greed of political figures.

Many critics argue Roy ministers to Western ideals because her novel is, as they claim, anti-communist.⁴ Others allege *The God of Small Things* is simply a story about love, caste, and sexuality in India.⁵ Such reductive analyses do not account for the importance of witnessing and trauma within the novel, as Roy illustrates *how* her characters are haunted by the opportunistic oppression that exists in India. The purpose many critics fail to recognize is Roy's intent to uncover the pervasive and destructive nature of oppressive forces in India, to show how they function, and to expose the way they condemn Velutha to death. Velutha is not just a man, but the manifestation of a possible future India; Velutha is the God of Small Things.

Perhaps the most important and fundamental theme in *The God of Small Things* is classification. Hierarchy, after all, creates and underscores preexisting separation and categorization as it seeks to oppress. Catherine Pessoa-Miquel maintains that Roy focuses on the universality of human nature and the tendency humans have to classify everything (39). Navarro-Tejero places the oppressors within the novel into three categories: "Family, State, and Religion" (99). Although these groupings encompass each power structure in the novel, the partitions are not always clear; in reality, they overlap, blur, and co-conspire to extend their own authority. Navarro-Tejero also makes it clear that self-aggrandizing people have corrupted many of these forces, and she argues that hypocrisy within the systems is the major reason for their failings (99).

The God of Small Things reveals many different layers within each manipulative political and social hierarchy. Roy uncovers how the duplicities of coercive hierarchies undercut India's advancement and work against the welfare of its citizens through her plot, her representation of history, and her delineation of Velutha's character. In essence, Roy

writes *The God of Small Things* to reveal India's historically destructive sociopolitical baggage, which has endured from pre-colonial times and continues into the present in the form of the caste system and patriarchal domination. Not only are *these* ideologies despotic, but they are also the supposed force of reform: communism. Roy incorporates history within the novel as something that oppresses the lives of the characters, upholds the aforementioned hierarchies, and is itself oppressed by the shroud of tourism as India commodifies itself in an increasingly globalized economy. Roy uncovers the effects of these hierarchies on India through Velutha's death; more importantly, she embodies the change India needs through his life, communicating her hope for change in India's future.

Caste and the Plotted Lives of Dalits

The caste system in India is central in the novel, and Roy clearly opposes it by depicting its detrimental effects on not only India itself, but most importantly on its people.⁶ Under the construction of a new constitution in 1950, India attempted to abolish the status of Untouchable. Still recognized today, however, the derogatory status persists as socially institutionalized racism upheld by the citizenry. In one of her essays Roy argues, "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the 'cultural insult.' . . . Intellectually and emotionally, we have just begun to grapple with communal and caste politics that threaten to tear our society apart" ("Ladies" 12). Velutha and his family are at the center of the caste issues, which is best illustrated within the context of Velutha's murder. Velutha, one of the most central characters in the novel, is Untouchable; despite this, he is a constant playmate of the twins—from whose perspectives the story is largely told—and the secret lover of their Touchable mother, Ammu. Roy also links caste and patriarchy to reveal the subjugation of women in India, and these factors situate the caste system as one of the most important dynamics of the novel.⁷

Though Roy takes an obvious stance against the caste system, she does not approach the subject by arguing that caste is simple or merely prejudicial. Rather, she exposes the caste system as a historically hypocritical institution that works to divide India from the inside out as it holds the entire country back from modernity (Dirks 61). Many of the characters in the book not only lean on but also revel in the caste system's hierarchy as a way of separating "us" from "them." The novel shows how the lives of Ammu and her children, the twins Estha and Rahel, are forever changed by the corporeal transgression of caste boundaries, and by the juncture of caste with communism.

Though Velutha's entire family is Untouchable, Roy makes sharp distinctions between each member; Velutha's father Vellya Paapen has lived his entire life under the title Paravan, and "willingly accepts, even colludes in, his own oppression" (Needham 379). For the most part, Velutha respects caste boundaries, yet refuses to be identified by caste limitations as his father embraces them. Referred to as the Ipe family nemesis, Velutha is a threat to the family because he "lacked hesitation" and had "an unwarranted assurance" (*Small Things* 73). Roy reveals the threat of vocal Untouchables to the Touchable characters in her description of Velutha's paralytic brother: "Unlike Velutha, Kuttappen was a good, safe Paravan. He could neither read nor write" (*Small Things* 175). A Paravan who cannot read or write is a "safe Paravan" because illiteracy greatly diminishes opportunities to organize for resistance against unjust social regulations. Roy uses this reference to Kuttappen in contrast to Velutha as a method of foreshadowing Velutha's eventual fate; the remark also links to Baby

Kochamma, the twins' great-aunt, labeling Velutha the missile that would destroy the family's name. Velutha represents everything that could jeopardize their upper-caste lifestyle, and his resistance of sociopolitical identification and caste traditions leads to his betrayal and murder.

The caste system reaches into all aspects of life for the characters in *The God of Small Things*. For example, the involvement of the local police in Velutha's arrest and death is not their everyday call of duty. Baby Kochamma does not waste the opportunity to save her family name from scandal by framing Velutha as a child abductor. Inspector Mathew, hearing Velutha is a Paravan, "understood perfectly. He had a Touchable wife, two Touchable daughters—whole Touchable generations waiting in their Touchable wombs . . ." (*Small Things* 245). By her repeated use of the word "Touchable," Roy emphasizes the significance of the separation between caste members and Untouchables; Inspector Mathew knew well enough that the same *level* of person, a "filthy coolie" (*Small Things* 244) could have touched one of his family members, and he knew what he had to do. To extend the reader's understanding of the policemen's mentality, Roy states,

They were not arresting a man, *they were exorcising fear* . . . that morning in the Heart of Darkness the posse of Touchable Policemen acted with *economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria*. They didn't tear out his hair or burn him alive. They didn't hack off his genitals and stuff them in his mouth. They didn't rape him. Or behead him. After all they were not battling an epidemic. *They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak.* (*Small Things* 293, my emphasis)

In this passage, Roy illustrates how Untouchables are dehumanized to the point that the police in the novel, the public servants, *efficiently* handle Velutha, and liken Paravans to a dangerous viral infection.

Patriarchy and Women's Subjugation

The role of women under the caste system in *The God of Small Things* reflects the collusion of caste with patriarchal regulations. Uma Chakravarti illustrates the bonds between caste and gender, stating, "Women are regarded as gateways—literally points of entrance into the caste system. The lower caste males whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity has to be institutionally prevented from having sexual access to women of higher castes so women must be carefully guarded" (579). This dynamic within *The God of Small Things* explains the Ipe family's reactions to Ammu's affair with Velutha, although it does not *justify* their actions. Susan Stanford Friedman also comments on Roy's integration of gender and caste, and argues that the violence against both is "tacitly sanctioned, or ignored by the state" (117). Feminist critics argue that the novel is mostly about how women are represented.⁸ Although gender inequality is predominant in the novel, it is just another complex hierarchy working in tandem with other hierarchies in a male-dominated power struggle. Needham states, "*Small Things* is an argument for transformation . . . [of the] discriminatory effects of social and political arrangements authorized by patriarchal ideology" (382) as she criticizes patriarchal hierarchies within Roy's novel. The transformation Roy advocates does not occur within the novel, yet she actively resists oppressive patriarchy in the construction of her characters—both male and female, as well as through the progression of her plot.

Chacko, the twins' uncle, exhibits patriarchal oppression and promotes gender inequality in *The God of Small Things*. As a younger adult, Chacko intervenes in a domestic

quarrel between his parents, Pappachi and Mammachi, and he protects his mother. Chacko's defense of his mother is a rare display of consideration, as he generally favors female oppression elsewhere. Chacko supports it everywhere else. Chacko claims control over his mother's pickle factory, constantly reminds Ammu of her status as an object of his possession, and in further solidifying his dominance over Ammu, he frequently tells her that she has no "locusts stand I," as from the twins' perspectives; the true phrase is the Latin *locus standi*, or legal standing. Chacko is really telling Ammu she has no right apart from the will of the family, apart from his will. Velutha, however, does not engage in the patriarchal behavior typical of the other male characters. Needham argues that "his refusal to be interpellated as a Paravan . . . seems to enable his subversion of patriarchy's definitions of a hetero-normative masculinity and sexuality" (379), thus claiming Velutha as Roy's primary exception to the overriding patriarchy within the novel. Needham further explains that the relationship between Velutha and Ammu was a reciprocal one, which Roy contrasts with Ammu's marriage, Mammachi's marriage, and Chacko's phallocentric escapades with lower caste factory workers (386).

Ammu, who works against the socially prescribed placement of women, embodies a blatant struggle against patriarchal domination, while other female characters embrace their lowered status. When the alcoholic and abusive Baba—the twins' biological father—attempts to coax Ammu into becoming his boss's bedmate in exchange for his continued employment, Ammu knocks him unconscious, leaves him, and returns to live with her mother. Roy clearly uses Ammu to protest the acceptance of male domination and women's subservience in Indian society, especially in contrast to Comrade Pillai's wife, Kalyani: "Comrade Pillai took off his shirt, rolled it into a ball and wiped his armpits with it. When he finished, Kalyani took it from him and held it as though it was a gift. A bouquet of flowers" (*Small Things* 258).

Between the two extremes of Ammu and Kalyani, Roy inserts Baby Kochamma and Mammachi. These two women believe they are in control, yet yield to men throughout their lives: they neither revel in their subservience nor resist it. Baby Kochamma especially works the system to her advantage, acting strong or helpless and vulnerable when it best suits her. In either position, she feels she is in control. Mammachi also moves between independence and subservience. In a position unusual for most women, Mammachi runs her own successful pickle factory, which her husband resents. However, when she returns home from work every day, Pappachi beats her; she accepts these beatings as routine, and she never tries to stop him or protect herself. Mammachi treats Chacko and Ammu differently, as well; specifically in regards to their sexuality. Chacko, despite his Marxist sentiments, sexually exploits the female, lower caste workers in his mother's factory. Mammachi allows these activities, as long as the women who come in and out of her house use a back door, which is made especially to facilitate the relieving of Chacko's "Men's Needs." Yet when Mammachi finds out about Ammu's sexual relationship with Velutha, Mammachi is furious, and makes no allowances for love or for "Women's Needs." Mammachi's actions reflect her adherence to and reverence for patriarchal dominance within the novel and her support of Chacko's patriarchal control results in Ammu's exile and death. The patriarchy and gender inequality within *The God of Small Things* is evident through the actions of the male characters as well as those of the female characters. By showing how patriarchy condemns women in the text, Roy criticizes the subservient position of women in Indian society.

Misplaced Loyalties: Communism and Marxism

The hierarchies within Roy's novel show a constant battle within India for supremacy on several levels. Within each hierarchy, varying degrees of hypocrisy exist, and the self-importance of particular characters throughout the book perpetuates the hierarchies. The presence of communism in the novel is one of the most obvious forms of hierarchy Roy includes, and she depicts its adherents, especially the leaders in Kerala, in such a way that it has landed her in court for defamation. Not only did the family of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Running Dog, Soviet Stooge" (*Small Things* 66), fail to find humor or accuracy in Roy's novel, but many critics have more than suggested that *The God of Small Things* is an attack on communism itself.⁹ Aijaz Ahmad argues that Roy preoccupies herself with "the anti-communism of the novel's political ideology" (112). Although much of the text within *The God of Small Things* seems to point to such a claim of anti-communism, it must be taken into account that Roy herself states that neither she nor the book are anti-communist.¹⁰ In a different extreme, there are some who argue that the novel has nothing to do with politics, and that Roy should have abstained from inserting political references entirely.¹¹ In argument to these claims, Roy states that her novel is very political. Aside from Roy's own assertions, her portrayal of communism, as well as various narrative asides, forces politics into the limelight of her novel. Roy's representation of politics may not be factual, but her portrayal of hypocrisy and oppression within political systems is exacting. In reality, Roy uses communism to reveal the hypocritical choices and actions of characters in the novel, and to show how it collaborates with other hierarchies. Through the novel, Roy depicts a vicious cycle in India of which everyone is a part; this cycle perseveres and advances in the name of national and cultural amelioration only to turn around and attack itself in other ways, handicapping the entire country and its citizens. Communism in *The God of Small Things* is just another medium through which people work to further their own selfish interests, often in the pursuit of political power and social influence.

Roy describes communism in Kerala as a "reformist movement," despite the fact that it really does nothing to improve the lives of its non-caste followers:

The real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. *The Marxists worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to.* (*Small Things* 64, my emphasis)

Adding support to the argument that the communism in Kerala works against the equality it claims to desire, Friedman states that the area has one of "the worst records in India for land reform directed at the Dalits . . . whose needs the Communist Party has largely ignored as a way of maintaining its support from the lower castes, many of whom resent the demands of the Dalits" (117). This reality is clearly shown throughout *The God of Small Things* in the actions of Comrade Pillai and in Chacko. Roy also uses Chacko's supposed Marxist sympathies in contrast to his being a foreman, more or less, in a factory employing menial workers—many of whom also are followers of communism; already Chacko seems an unlikely supporter of Marxism.

Though a supposed force of reform, communism in *The God of Small Things* pervades all other forms of oppression, further exemplifying their interconnectedness and ability to affect and dominate the lives of Indians. The book does not show communism to be

an inherently negative system, but Roy identifies the hypocrisy of people in high places and shows how those people use communism as a political mantra to spur a revolution intended only to benefit those who already have the advantage.

Communism, combined with the caste system, proves to be a deadly liaison for Velutha. Thomas Bonnici argues that, though Velutha is a dedicated member of the Party, Pillai decides he would be more politically successful without him, because of the resentment that other Touchables harbor against Velutha (6). Forsaking any possible ideological integrity, Pillai kowtows to the social limits established by caste, consequently supporting the inequality he claims to repudiate. Roy states, "Even Chacko. . .knew that the fervent, high-pitched speeches about Rights of Untouchables ('Caste in Class, comrades') delivered by Comrade Pillai...were pharisaic" (*Small Things* 266); though he was aware of the hypocrisy in the system, Chacko chooses to continue in his collaboration with Comrade Pillai, which leads to the death of Velutha.

Roy reveals the effects of calculated hypocrisy within communism in her depiction of Comrade Pillai, the leader of the local CPI(M). Pillai outwardly represents all that is Marxist to other characters in the book. Inwardly, Pillai uses Chacko, a fellow Comrade, as a pawn in his plot to achieve personal political glory. Roy reveals the inner thoughts of Comrade Pillai by discussing his speech:

Comrade K. N. M. Pillai never came out openly against Chacko. Whenever he referred to him in his speeches he was careful to strip him of any human attributes and present him as an abstract functionary in some larger scheme. A theoretical construct. A pawn in the monstrous bourgeois plot to subvert the revolution. He never referred to him by name, but always as "the Management." As though Chacko was many people. Apart from it being tactically the right thing to do, this disjunction between the man and his job helped Comrade Pillai to keep his conscience clear about his own private business dealings with Chacko...He told himself that Chacko-the-client and Chacko-the-Management were two different people. Quite separate of course from Chacko-the-Comrade. (*Small Things* 115)

Pillai takes every chance to further his own image and standing as a supposed revolutionary; in this case, he uses Chacko's position as the manager of Paradise Pickles and Preserves to create a collective fervor. Further illustrating the capacity of Pillai to undercut his own system, Roy shows how another member of the Party makes Pillai much too uncomfortable; as a Dalit, Velutha is a snag in Pillai's dreams of glorious revolution. Communism in *The God of Small Things* turns on itself through the actions of Chacko and Comrade Pillai, as Roy condemns the institution's hypocrisy within the novel.

History as a Variable Construct and The Price of Commodification

Roy positions history in *The God of Small Things* both as something that is itself oppressed and, at the same time, acts as an oppressor. Needham comments on the pervasiveness of history in the novel, as she states, "[the novel] presents history . . . as a dominating, oppressive force that saturates virtually all social and cultural space, including familial, intimate, and affective relationships. The novel's sense of history [obliterates] those who do not live in accordance with its values and dictates" (372). To explain counter-history within *The God of Small Things*, Prasenjit Maiti states, "there is a history present in Roy's text and there

is yet another history someplace else, and these are mutually exclusive....Official history is informed by a certain complicity and tends to record only a particular version of events" (2382). History lacks a concrete identity, and is a variable construct depending on the point of view from which it originates. *The God of Small Things* reveals how people adopt their own version of history in order to further or meet their own sociopolitical agendas.

Tourism within the novel exemplifies a constructed, or rather *reconstructed*, history, as Roy argues that tourism is India's attempt to cover up both its disturbing past and the issues that undermine its present and future. Boehmer also argues for the substantiality of the placement of tourism in *The God of Small Things*, especially in relation to postcolonial theory, and argues, "[The] abbreviated Kathakali performances are held for tourists . . . in a world where both colonial and anti-colonial structures are converted into commodities, into a 'toy history'" (182). The Kathakali dances¹² are only one aspect of tourism introduced in Roy's novel. The site of Velutha and Ammu's sexual transgression is called the History House, but 23 years later, after both have died, it is renamed the Heritage Hotel:

The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses—ancestral homes—that the hotel chain had bought from the old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. Toy histories for rich tourists to play in. . . . [T]he old houses had been arranged around the History House in attitudes of deference. 'Heritage', the hotel was called. . . . So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat. (*Small Things* 120)

This passage illustrates the way in which history was painted over to depict a prettier alternative, one that could be marketed and sold to tourists. In his essay, Peter Mortensen establishes that "'Heritage' suppresses history by covering up the murder [of Velutha]" (194), in effect, arguing that the development of tourism is an attempt to cloak the ugly truths held by the past in the novel. Roy illustrates the glitzy tourism in terms of ruination and apocalypse, as the Heritage Hotel erects a wall to separate itself from the encroaching bog, though the smell remains. The river, which runs past the hotel, smells "of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans" (*Small Things* 14). Mortensen contends that, "With such imagery of massive environmental decay, Roy mercilessly debunks exoticist myths about India's lush landscape and Indians' native veneration for nature: in this unromantic India, children 'defecate directly onto the squelchy, sucking mud of the exposed riverbed'" (188). The landscape is set in contrast to the tourist attractions, which Marta Dvorak calls an "artificial transformation," and states that the Heritage Hotel, "already an *exemplum* of hybridity, but in reverse . . . in which, for 'Regional Flavour', the 'Hotel People' attired in 'colorful ethnic clothes' displayed the original knick-knacks with 'edifying placards which said *Traditional Kerala Umbrella* and *Traditional Bridal Dowry Box*' is Roy's attempt to "castigate the neocolonial commodification of native Indian culture" (49). Dipesh Chakrabarty dubs this "the nightmare of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates" (344). Roy deliberately uncovers how India traded its history for commodification,¹³ which, ironically, is an objective traditionally condemned by Marxism.

The irony of India's tourism as portrayed by Roy is its allegorical quality. The Heritage Hotel appears to be Roy's commentary on India's treatment of Dalits. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma comment on the smell of Vellya Paapen and Velutha, and as upper caste members they would have been "walled off" from socializing with Untouchables. According

to Roy, nothing could be done about the smell of the bog; thus, the rich tourists were forced to get used to the smell. Similarly, India can put up walls against Dalits, but it cannot make them disappear. The wall does not change the fact that there is a bog outside the hotel.

The Manifestation of Change, the God of Small Things

Roy raises the question of who counts in Indian culture through her portrayal of her tragic hero, Velutha, whose central role in *The God of Small Things* points to Roy's stance against the caste system. Issues of kinship, camaraderie, and social solidarity are criticized by the manner in which Roy portrays Untouchables. In the context of Velutha's arrest, Roy sheds light on the thoughts of the police officers: "If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, and connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature—had been severed long ago" (*Small Things* 293). Jose Saldivar argues, "We cannot claim a political identification . . . until we have reconstituted our small collective identities and reexamine who counts in our cultures and societies" (362). Saldivar also states that kinship itself is "a set of practices . . . that are, as Roy suggests, controlled, performed, ritualized, and monopolized by those in power" (361). The kinship of which Saldivar speaks is not just the relationship between family, friends, or lovers, but also includes the kinship among fellow citizens of India, between the country itself and the singular citizen, as well. Although Roy uncovers many different forms of hierarchy within the novel, Velutha's death as a crux, underscores the static state of India and the caste system it substantiates. The circumstances leading up to his capture and death bring together the different hierarchies to demonstrate the interaction and cooperation of the power structures within the novel, revealing how they alter individual lives forever.

Velutha is the God of Small Things because he represents everything that exists beyond the borders of various power structures. Velutha ignores the Love Laws, which decide who should be loved and how, and chooses to love Ammu and her children, even though, as an Untouchable, he is trespassing caste boundaries. Commenting on border crossing, Friedman argues that Velutha is able to actually step out of his caste status, and says, "Velutha breaks the boundaries of untouchability by running the factory, overseeing lower-caste workers resentful of his uncasted authority," and by "serving as a surrogate father to the twins" (120).

Velutha is also the God of Loss. This title links to his being the God of Small Things, because it is the Small Things¹⁴ that are being lost. The word "loss" does not indicate accidental misplacement. Instead, Roy uses the term to signify the things that are more or less stolen by events that transpire. For example, when Estha is forced to accuse Velutha of abduction, Roy writes, "Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt" (*Small Things* 303). The reader understands that Estha's indulgent, carefree, and imaginative days as a child are over, forced out by the reality that he has betrayed Velutha, whom he loves. Silence sliding in gives the reader a point of reference for marking the solidification of Estha's introversion.

In order for the reader to understand how Velutha represents the change India needs, Roy explains the difference between Big and Small Things by frequent repetition of ideas, imagery, and comparisons. As a recurring theme in the novel, Roy pits the Big against the Small, in both human and non-human forms; the Big establishments in the novel—including the caste system, patriarchy, communism, and history—oppress people and work against the progress of India. The Small Things exist beyond the stratifications set up by hier-

archies, things that cannot be ordered or classified. “Big” in *The God of Small Things* takes on many different forms of existence. The word refers to not only the socially established forms of oppression, but ultimately means anything that exerts more force or influence over something else, anything conversely regarded as Small and unimportant. Chapter three makes an even bigger distinction between Big and Small, as it is titled, “Big Man the Laltain, Small Man the Mombatti.” *Laltain* means “kerosene lantern,” or just “lantern” as Roy puts it, whereas *Mombatti* means “candle,” or as Roy states, “Tallow-stick” (*Small Things* 85). Roy points out the sustainability of a flame in a lantern as opposed to a candle by putting the two side by side. Prasad clarifies this comparison, and states,

The Laltain is wellfed and well-protected. It can bravely face the blowing wind. But on the other hand, the mombatti has no glass, no protection, no support. It can easily be blown out by the surge of wind. But the advantage of the mombatti is somewhat stubborn to burn other’s light. Thus, through this fine connotations, the author has successfully tried her best to arouse our sense of pity. And catharsis for the Mombatties—the down trodden and have-nots, the dalit and the deserted, the marginalized and the defenceless. [*sic*](195-6)

Placing “Big Man” and “Small Man” beside laltain and mombatti, Roy distinguishes between powerful men who can endure hardship and the small, singular person who may not survive the power struggles within India.

Roy allots only bits and pieces of Velutha’s life to the reader prior to his affair with Ammu. The novel reveals that he grows up alongside Ammu, and as a child is aware of the restrictions set up by the caste system. Velutha is mindful of caste stratification, yet does not cower like his father. His active participation in the communist party shows his unwillingness to accept the state of society; it is in his participation within the communist party where he stands against the Big, and stands up for the Small. What Velutha does not realize is his inability to escape the system without fully rejecting the system. The most obvious and sometimes controversial display of Velutha’s rebellion is his relationship with Ammu. One lawyer in India even accused Roy of obscenity against Hinduism because of the inter-caste sexual relationship within her novel.¹⁵ Roy constructs this particular event with detail, allowing the reader to understand Velutha’s mindset at the time of his and Ammu’s transgression. He is neither naïve nor reckless when he inwardly debates the choice before him. Though his logic tells him to maintain caste distance, “biology” forced his sexual desire over his reason. Of the things Velutha knows he will consequentially lose, he never considers his life.

Velutha’s brutal death shocks and repulses the reader, as Roy points out the injustice in the treatment of Untouchables. Despite his horrific death, Roy pins hope to Velutha’s willingness and determination to choose for himself and to stand up against discriminatory sociopolitical structures, especially challenging the norms of patriarchy and caste. Roy’s repetition of the phrase, “Things can change in a day” (32, 156, 183, 192, 321) suggests she advocates such change. Just as her political essays communicate her advocacy for change, so also does her novel.

A Call for Change

The hierarchies that exist within *The God of Small Things* oppose equality and promote struggle in a terrifyingly circular way. The caste system, patriarchal dominance,

communism, and history work separately as well as in conjunction with one another, mutually edifying one another, and ousting equality within the novel. In Roy's address to the Dalit Sahitya Akademi at Kozhikode, she said, "I know that you share the anger and outrage which lies at the heart of *The God of Small Things*. It is an anger that the 'modern' metropolitan world, the Other India (the one in which I now live), tends to overlook, because for them it is something distant, something unreal, something exotic" ("I Give You My Book"). Roy explicitly conveys her frustration regarding caste stratification, specifically the status of Untouchables, through her depiction of Velutha's violent death and her portrayal of the collusions of hypocritical power structures that bring it about.

Despite Velutha's death, the novel leaves readers with the clear vision that one life, no matter what caste, *can* make a difference: just one voice can be heard. Roy communicates neither defeat nor concession, especially regarding the treatment of Dalits. The novel may not be historically "accurate," and may offend particular readers or audiences, but the message is clear: India cannot ignore its discriminatory practices or its citizens. It cannot cover them up with tourism, or sweep them under the rug with nuclear testing. It cannot flood them out. India will not behave.¹⁶

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Though many critics argue that Roy's writing style is Rushdie-esque and therefore unoriginal, Rushdie himself criticizes Roy in his statement, "The trouble with Arundhati is that she insists that India is an ordinary place," to which Roy replies, "I don't want Brownie points because I'm from India" (Pesso-Miquel 39-40). Also see Dvorak for thoughts on Roy's globalized exoticism (77).
- 2 See Pesso-Miquel's essay for more on Roy's "pandering to western tastes" (23). The essay also mentions critic Aparna Dharwadkar, who argues that Roy "is no better than writers whom he has branded as 'diasporic'" (23). Former Booker Prize judge Carmen Callil also criticizes *The God of Small Things* as "execrable," and calls her novel a "safe" choice; see Tickell's essay, "*The God of Small Things*: Arundhati Roy's Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism" (71).
- 3 Roy's essay, "The Ladies Have Feelings, So...Shall We Leave It to the Experts?" argues against critics who labeled her a "writer-activist" because, after writing her novel, she wrote three political essays. Her argument is that her novel is just as political, and therefore the critics' reasoning is baseless (11).
- 4 Aijaz Ahmad's essay, "Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically*," argues that Roy's "ideological oppositions to Communism itself is not in itself surprising; it is very much a sign of the times, in the sense that hostility toward the Communist movement is now fairly common among radical sections of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia, in India and abroad" (112).
- 5 Needham discusses critics' focusing on the erotic dimension of Ammu and Velutha's relationship as the site of their "individualized rebellion" (384). Ahmad also argues that "The intermeshing of caste and sexuality is indeed the ideological centre of the book," and that the novel relies heavily on themes of European fiction (113).
- 6 A footnote in Navarro-Tejero's essay explains the caste system. It explains that there are 3,000 castes and 25,000 subcastes in India, which fall under four basic varnas: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (laborers). Outside of the caste system are the Dalits (previously known as Untouchables). No source was given for this information (109).
- 7 The subsection titled "Patriarchy and Women's Subjugation" explores this idea and details the connection later in the essay.

8 As an example of such a critic, N. D. R. Chandra argues that the novel is “above all” about women and the “[delineation] between men and women” (151).

9 Maiti states that the late E. M. S. Namboodiripad’s daughter was “irked” by Roy’s representation of her father (2382).

10 See Roy’s address to the Dalit Sahitya Akademi, “I Give You My Book in Memory of Velutha,” as translated in English and published by Frontline: India’s National Magazine.

11 K. Ratna Shiela Mani and M. V. S. Kotesware Rao discredit Roy’s injection of politics into her novel by stating that the novel “does not appear to be a political novel. The main theme of the novel has nothing to do with either presenting or evaluating political events of a particular period. . . . One feels that the writer could easily have avoided reference to politics without damaging the main theme of the novel” (166). In summation, they state, “The result is unconvincing, subjective, and in impolite language” (168).

12 The kathakali is a traditional Hindu dance-drama, which Roy counts among the “Regional Flavors” in her criticism of the commodification of India’s history and culture (*Small Things* 218).

13 Tickell argues that Roy’s inclusion of the kathakali represents the politics of cultural commodification, stating that Roy is aware “of the involuntary, assimilative demand which global capital makes in its encounter with local postcolonial cultures” (83).

14 “Small Things” is capitalized throughout the essay to keep with the style set forth by Roy in her novel. Its significance within the novel lies in the story being revealed largely through the twins’ perspectives. Roy makes seemingly common words and phrases are proper to convey how the twins understood those things, whether correctly or incorrectly, to be of great importance or meaning.

15 See Roy’s interview with Reena Jana, which discusses the charges of obscenity leveled against her after the release of her novel.

16 “India Will Not Behave” is the title of one of Roy’s essays. The content of my last paragraph contains key issues that Roy raises in various essays, specifically issues relating to the treatment of Dalits and low caste Indians.

Ethnocentrism and Prejudice in Politics: Deconstructing the Myth of the Shi'a Crescent >>> Kirsten Peninger

Shi'ism is a much maligned sect of Islam, characterized by a history of oppression, suffering, and persecution. Traditionally viewed by Sunni Muslims as heretical, Shi'a Islam has, in the past, practiced *taqqiya* (religious dissimulation) and embraced quietism in order to survive. Shi'a Muslims have sometimes been regarded as the "forgotten Muslims."¹ In the past 30 years, however, Shi'a Muslims have gained public attention, beginning with the 1979 Iranian Revolution, continuing with coverage of the actions of Hizbullah in Lebanon and, recently, through talk of the threat of a "Shi'a Crescent."

First used in 2004 by King Abdullah of Jordan², the term "Shi'a Crescent" refers to an alliance between Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and other countries with significant Shi'a populations. The idea of a Shi'a Crescent is referenced as a threat in nearly all the literature it appears in. The phrase has captured the media's attention; indeed, it is hard to go a month without seeing the Shi'a Crescent referenced in a popular news source. In the article I have chosen to review, "Shi'a crescent pierces heart of Arab world," the Shi'a Crescent is referred to as a "militant alliance."³ The article, reporting on the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon, references the events as a "crystallization of an anti-Western alliance" that connects the aforementioned countries and their Shi'a citizens. The article goes on to state that the conflict between Hizbullah and Israel is seen as an attempt by Iran to "project itself into the heart of the Arab world."⁴

It is not the only article that uses negative imagery to describe this so-called Shi'a Crescent and Shi'a empowerment in general. In an article about the United States Democratic primaries of 2008, the author writes about the rise of "fundamentalists and Shi'a followers," linking Shi'a Muslims with the negatively associated term fundamentalist.⁵ One article that talks about President Ahmadinejad's election as Iranian president and Iran's subsequent nuclear ambitions adds that "Arab leaders warned darkly of a rising 'Shi'a Crescent.'"⁶

This line of thought does not end at newspapers, however. The fear of a Shi'a Crescent has penetrated the foreign policy of the United States, leading to a number of symposiums and conferences about how to handle the threat. Furthermore, a number of Sunni-dominated states, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, view the Shi'a Crescent as an impending reality.⁷ This impacts not only their foreign policy, but their domestic policy as well.

From an anthropological perspective, the evidence for a Shi'a Crescent as defined above is nearly baseless. Additionally, the labeling of a Shi'a Crescent as a threat reveals an ethnocentric bias against Shi'a Islam that has festered for centuries. In this paper, I seek to dismantle the very idea of a Shi'a Crescent while demonstrating how it arose from a place of prejudice. I will also propose my own theory on what the world is currently seeing in Shi'a communities in the Middle East.

To understand the current situation of Shi'ism in the Middle East, one must understand the genesis of Shi'a and the collective memory of its followers. The origins of the Shi'a-Sunni split occurred shortly after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Arguments arose as to who his successor should be. The group of Muslims who would eventually be known as Sunnis wanted to follow the tribal traditions of having a council select an esteemed elder to guide the community. The group who would become Shi'a believed that 'Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad, should be successor, and that succession should follow the bloodline.⁸ Initially, the Sunnis, who had larger numbers, won the argument, and Abu Bakr was selected to lead the community. After Abu Bakr, there came Umar and Uthman. Finally, in 656 CE, after the first three caliphates, came 'Ali. 'Ali did not lead the community for long, however. In 661 CE, nearly five years after he began his leadership, he was assassinated by extremists who blamed him for a war within the community.⁹ While this was a devastating blow to the Shi'a (whose name, Shi'at 'Ali, means "partisans of 'Ali"), it was not nearly as crushing as the defeat at Karbala.

After 'Ali's death, his son Hasan became the new Caliph. He was soon forced to hand over his leadership to Mu'awiyah in order to keep the peace and protect the Shi'a community. He did promise to give the leadership back to Hasan after his death, however. Mu'awiyah then poisoned Hasan in 669 CE and passed the leadership to his own son, Yazid, thus declaring his intention to never allow the Shi'a community to live peacefully.¹⁰ Mu'awiyah executed the most prominent Shi'ites, and forced many others to turn their backs on 'Ali and his family. Declaring oneself a partisan of 'Ali was to put a target on one's back.

Despite the risk of life involved, many Shi'a stood firm with the bloodline of 'Ali, who were now called Imams. They spoke loudly against the persecution they suffered, and continually denied the Caliph's reign. Their outspokenness made them a political liability, and the tensions between the two communities culminated in 680 CE, with the Battle of Karbala.

Called upon by the residents of Kufa for help, the third Imam and grandson of 'Ali, Husayn, went with seventy-two of his family members and friends to meet them. Caliph Yazid intercepted their party at Karbala. Husayn and his men managed to ward off their attackers for six days before Yazid's army cut off their access to water. Desperate, Husayn led his party into an open battle, where he and all of the men were killed. The women and children were captured and held hostage. Among these were Zaynab, Husayn's sister, and Husayn's only remaining son, 'Ali. During captivity, Zaynab protected 'Ali from execution, ensuring his survival to become the fourth Imam, and thus ensuring the continuation of Shi'ism.¹¹

Given their history of defeat and oppression, it is unsurprising that Shi'a theology has a strong focus on suffering, martyrdom, and injustice. Despite this focus (or perhaps because of it) Shi'a Muslims have been largely apolitical.¹² Survival has been the agenda for Shi'a Muslims for centuries, and regardless of changes in the Middle East, survival remains the number one issue.

Their survival is not a guarantee. Shi'a Muslims, while constituting roughly 70% of the Persian Gulf population,¹³ only hold a true majority in four states: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq. It should be noted that in Bahrain they hold no real political power and suffer from sociopolitical inequalities.¹⁴ In Iraq, they endured years of executions and other violence under the Ba'athist regime.¹⁵ In countries where Shi'ism is not the majority, but a significant minority, they by and large have very few political rights, and make up a large percentage of the poor population.¹⁶ Clearly, being the majority does not guarantee security.

Presently, where Shi'a Muslims are making strides in gaining political rights, they are encountering resistance not just from the ruling Sunni elite, but from extremist militant groups (including the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-e Islami, and al-Qaeda) that view Shi'ism as a perversion of true Islam and seek to eradicate them.¹⁷

These realities play a large role in how Shi'ites exercise their political influence, if they have any to begin with. With survival being the driving factor in Shi'a politics, it is hard to imagine that they are looking beyond survival into all out rule over the Middle East. As Fuller puts it, "the Shi'a have no political agenda for the future other than to protect the welfare and interests of the Shi'i community."¹⁸

Hizbullah, for instance, is frequently cited as a terrorist organization that seeks to install a Shi'a theocracy in Lebanon.¹⁹ They generally draw this conclusion from Hizbullah's Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World.²⁰ However, closer reading of this letter shows that Hizbullah advocates for the Lebanese to be able to determine their own fate in political matters. It should be recalled that this letter was published in 1985, when the old confessional system (which favored the Maronite Lebanese over the Sunni and Shi'a Lebanese, who in fact constituted the majority) was still in place. Currently, Hizbullah has stated that since the majority of Lebanon does not desire an Islamic republic, they are not advocating for one.²¹

In Iran, many of the political decisions are based purely on pragmatism and survival. As the only Shi'a republic, surrounded by Sunni governments that are either overtly or covertly hostile to it, Iran has had to consider its survival first and foremost. Iran did not, for instance, aid the Shi'a uprising in Iraq in 1991, nor did they expand their interests in Azerbaijan after the fall of the Soviet Union.²² In each instance, antagonizing the ruling power would have proved detrimental for the entirety of Iran and so, despite their shared Shi'a identity, Iran did nothing other than strongly condemn Saddam Hussein's actions in Iraq and engage in mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Even their development of nuclear power could be seen as a survival method. Surrounded by hostile forces in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world, Iran has been seeking to utilize all of its resources to secure its national security.²³

Another problem with the concept of a Shi'a Crescent again comes directly from Shi'a theology. As previously noted, the Shi'a story is one of suffering, oppression, and injustice. The importance of the Karbala Paradigm (as the Battle of Karbala is sometimes called) is that it emphasizes the need for resistance to tyrannical forces. Husayn and Zaynab serve as models for this resistance. As one of Deeb's interlocutors said, "People should have this spirit of revolution against oppression because time repeats itself, history repeats itself, and in every age there is injustice."²⁴ Suffering and survival are what the Shi'a must endure; resistance and revolution are what the Shi'a must do. Resistance in Shi'a communities takes on many forms, but no matter what, there must be something to resist. Were the Shi'a to become the dominant power in the Middle East, as the idea of a Shi'a Crescent seems to indicate, they would lose (or at least obscure) one of the most important aspects of their religion and culture.

This concept of resistance is fundamental to Hizbullah in particular. Hizbullah formed officially in 1985, with the publication of its Open Letter, but had been in existence in one way or another since 1982, shortly after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It came into existence for the express purpose of resisting foreign occupation.²⁵ Hizbullah engaged in

military actions against Israel throughout the 1990s, and were condemned as terrorists by Israel and the West, though it should be noted that Hizbullah has avoided attacking civilians and have limited its operations to military targets only.²⁶ Hezbollah's current military operations against Israel are justified by the fact that Israel occupies an area called the Shebaa Farms in the Golan Heights, a highly contested stretch of land that is either Lebanese or Israeli, depending on the map.²⁷

Furthermore, Hizbullah has been a face of resistance against the Lebanese government itself. Because the Lebanese government has widely ignored the needs of the Shi'a population, Hizbullah has provided alternative agencies for anyone, not just Shi'a Muslims, to use. Hizbullah maintains three hospitals, twelve health centers, and a variety of other health services. It provides schools that serve approximately 14,000 students, and also provides scholarships to low-income students and operates a lending library for students. They also maintain their own infrastructure.²⁸ For the people involved in these efforts, this is another form of resistance. As one interlocutor put it,

The Lebanese government doesn't work on the social level[...] The regulations of the state govern me, but what if the state is not perfect, or it has problems? Do I allow it to stop me from performing my human duty? [...]

These duties belong to the party, in addition to the political work.²⁹

Hizbullah has also pursued appointment to government positions while simultaneously attempting to maintain a distance for the government, in order to accomplish two things: give Shi'a Muslims a voice in the official government while still criticizing aspects they find problematic, and spare the entirety of Lebanon the consequences of their actions against Israel.³⁰ By pursuing more power in the official Lebanese government, they would eliminate their entire *raison d'être*. The concept of a Shi'a Crescent that includes Lebanon, then, falls apart upon analysis.

Another aspect of Shi'a religiosity that prevents the formation of a Shi'a Crescent as currently imagined is the institution of the *marja'taqlid*. The *marja'taqlid*, or source of emulation, is the chief legal expert and spiritual model for all Shi'a.³¹ They also collect and distribute the religious taxes, *khums* and *zakat*. Shi'a Muslims are allowed to choose whom they follow, or emulate, as a religious leader. For instance, some of the *marjis* various Lebanese choose to emulate include Grand Ayatollah Fadlallah, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, and Grand Ayatollah Khu'i.³² Further complicating matters, certain organizations may choose to emulate a particular *marja* while the individuals within the organization emulate another.³³

All *marja'taqlid* have different religious laws and precedents in place, creating a diversity of opinion and practice within the Shi'a community. Certain *marjis* are more liberal, and this is reflected in their *fatwas* (legal rulings), while others are more conservative. This diversity of legal opinion disrupts a Shi'a monolith, and further disrupts the concept of Iran leading a Shi'a Crescent. Many *marja* reject the idea of *wilayat al-faqih*, an institution that Khomeini created to justify the role of the Supreme Leader in Iran politics.³⁴ By rejecting the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*, they reject the entire premise of the Iranian government, negating the idea of Iran leading a Shi'a Crescent.

Another argument for the formation of a Shi'a Crescent is that, because Shi'a Muslims constitute a significant portion of the population in several countries, they are colluding together and providing one another with various forms of support in order to secure their

political rule. Shi'a Muslims are not, however, a monolith. There are many other factors that contribute to their political, economic, and social decisions.

This is especially true in the case of Iraq. A number of experts feared that the removal of Saddam Hussein from power would increase Iran's influence in the country. They appear to have forgotten modern history when drawing their conclusions, however, as Iran and Iraq were opponents in a war from 1980-1988. Religious identity did not unite people during the war; nationalism took precedence over religion.³⁵ This viewpoint is still prevalent. In 2007, a survey was taken where 67 percent of the Iraqi people felt that Iran was a negative force in their country.³⁶

This distrust of Iran has led to a number of complications for aspiring Shi'a leaders in Iraq. Saddam Hussein's reign of terror claimed 30,000 Shi'a lives in 1991 alone, causing many prominent Shi'a politicians and clerics to flee to Iran in order to preserve their lives.³⁷ When these politicians returned in 2003, they were viewed negatively as a mercenary force or proxy organization of Iran.³⁸ The Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or SCIRI, an organization that is led by and made up of former exiles, was viewed by the United States as the main Shi'a representative in Iraq. However, further exploration shows that they represent approximately two percent of the population.³⁹ Ties to Iran are viewed as a disadvantage in Iraq, further disrupting the idea of a Shi'a Crescent.

It should also be noted that Iraq chose to reject the formation of an Islamic state similar to Iran's. Shi'a clerics in Iraq pushed for a representative national assembly that protected the rights of all people in Iraq, regardless of sect or religion.⁴⁰ Even Muqtada al-Sadr, who is viewed by the West as an obstructionist to the formation of a new Iraqi government, is quoted as saying, "Beware of letting sectarianism play a role in the elections. I want to elect only a noble Iraqi, neither a Shi'i nor a Sunni, but an Iraqi who will guard my religion and honor and my independence and unity."⁴¹ If anything, the new government in Iraq resembles the confessional system present in Lebanon, not the Islamic Republic modeled by Iran.⁴²

Iran's politics, as well, complicate the idea of a Shi'a Crescent, because Iran does not have a consensus within its government. There are many different political parties in Iran, which are divided between conservative and reform theopolitical ideologies.⁴³ The Assembly of Experts, an eighty-six member elected body of clerics that appoints the supreme leader and monitors their performance, is led by reformist 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani.⁴⁴ The president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a conservative. Various other political bodies are split between reformist and conservative factions. This split has led to a very delicate and hotly contested balance in Iran, with the added pressure of a disgruntled citizenry.⁴⁵ With the disputed results from the 2009 presidential elections, this balance was further disrupted by large civil protests, to the point where there is a question about a new Iranian Revolution in the future.⁴⁶ There were also rumors about dissent within the Assembly of Experts, and that they were preparing to remove Supreme Leader Khomeini from power.⁴⁷ With so much domestic strife, it is hard to imagine Iran being able to extend itself much further in terms of regional and international politics. Leading a Shi'a Crescent is beyond Iran's capabilities at this time.

As should be clearly obvious by this point, the idea of a Shi'a Crescent is a myth constructed on a poor understanding of Shi'a Islam and the political realities of Shi'a-dominated states in the Middle East. Ideas similar to the threat of a "Shi'a Crescent" have been brought up before by conservative Sunni Arab governments in order to sow fear and create ethno-religious divides among Muslims in the Middle East.⁴⁸ Turning the idea of a Shi'a Crescent

into a threat also allows Sunni governments to ignore or crack down on Shi'a demands for sociopolitical rights.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it increases Western fear and distrust of Iran, which has traditionally been forced to endure very little support from the world, as witnessed in the Iran-Iraq war where nearly the entire world was on Iraq's side while Iran stood alone.⁵⁰ All of these factors show that the Sunni-Shi'a split that originated at the Prophet's death has never been resolved, and that ethnocentrism and prejudice still dictate matters of domestic and foreign policy.

Despite this, it cannot be denied that *something* is happening within Shi'a communities in the Middle East. With the fall of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent rise of the Shi'a majority in Iraq, and Hizbullah's growing political presence in Lebanon, the Shi'a are certainly receiving more attention than they have previously. I do not believe that we are seeing the formation of a Shi'a Crescent; I believe we are witnessing Shi'a empowerment in larger numbers than previously witnessed.

The Shi'a, despite their largely quietist stance, have nearly always demanded some form of sociopolitical rights. It is, as explained earlier, a major facet of their religion to both understand oppression and resist it simultaneously. In Lebanon, Shi'a empowerment truly began in the 1970s with Musa al-Sadr's "Movement of the Deprived", from which Hizbullah eventually developed.⁵¹ Opposition and resistance to unjust governments have a long history among Shi'a communities in Iraq, ranging from the 1918 revolts against the British government to the 1991 revolts against the Ba'athist regime.⁵² The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a majority movement, and the government that followed was created through an electoral process.⁵³ Further demands for rights from Shi'a populations should be expected as a natural part of the continuum of Shi'a Islam.

In the past, Shi'a communities have experienced vicious backlash, however, and I believe this is happening once more. As previously commented upon, there are a number of extremist militant groups appearing that are devoted to preventing Shi'a Muslims making real political gains. Much of the violence happening in Iraq can be attributed to militant groups lashing out against Shi'a Muslims and Shi'a Muslims retaliating in turn. In the past, the violence against Shi'a communities has led to periods of political quietude, and acceptance of the oppression endured.⁵⁴ I do not believe that will be the case this time. Shi'a Muslims in the Middle East have been slowly increasing their demands for political representation since the 1970s. For the most part, this has been a slow process, and I believe it will continue to be one. There will most likely be no widespread Shi'a revolt; in the places where revolt would be most likely, such as Lebanon, groups that represent Shi'a interests have chosen pragmatic and conciliatory methods as opposed to fermenting revolution.⁵⁵

The fabric of the Middle East is changing, of that there can be no doubt. But it will not change overnight. Sunni-led governments still hold most of the political power in the Gulf region. The power that they hold is not easily taken away. Furthermore, even in countries that have a significant Shi'a population, there is no evidence suggesting that they seek to take over the entire region. Shi'a politics have been largely quietist, not revolutionary, and for the most part remain that way. There is no Shi'a Crescent. The West is witnessing a push for political and economic justice from Shi'a communities in the Gulf region, of which there have been some increase. The past thirty years has brought about slow change for Shi'a Muslims, but despite their gains in the political sphere, they still remain largely poor and underrepresented.

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A Plagued Nation: A Psychoanalytic and Thematic Exploration of Charles Burns' *Black Hole* >>> Ashley Butler

"It was like being in a cocoon...A soft insulated green world....until all of the weird shit started coming down....If we were smart we would have turned around and come back...but we were dumb...young and dumb" (Burns 12-14). So captures the overall feeling of Charles Burns' graphic novel, *Black Hole*, in which the audience encounters a series of alternating adolescent narrators as they slowly distance themselves from the comfortable world with which they were once familiar through sex and drugs. In their blind and naïve experimentation, they find themselves spiraling toward a disillusioned, confusing world of disease and murder among their peers. Burns quickly exposes the reader to a 'bug' that is being passed through sexual intercourse among the adolescents, which is, according to Abby West, a "reinterpretation of the Reagan-era AIDS epidemic" (2005). For anyone who is sexually active with another who has it, the 'bug' is contracted and passed along, spreading so quickly that the plagued teenagers begin to form their own community out in the woods. The bug manifests differently in everyone, making it uglier and more noticeable on some than others. Some can hide it from their peers, while it is so apparently disgusting on others that everyone knows instantly. For example, Rob, one of the narrators, can hide his mutation to a certain extent, which manifested on his neck as a second mouth.¹ Chris, another narrator, knows that she slept with an infected person (Rob), yet she does not know in what way it has manifested until she strips down to go swimming and all of her friends see the long gaping hole that goes down the length of her back.²

Throughout the book, the audience sees common adolescent experiences from the 1970s. The groups of people that hang out with one another, the experiments with drugs and alcohol, the parties, the ease and carelessness that accompanied sexual relations—all of these things make up the plot of the book. What sets the teens in this book apart from those in other adolescent stories is that there are visual repercussions that come as a result of their actions. Their own personal actions literally become a part of them that is visual to the outsider—casting them out instantly as plagued.

Black Hole serves as a text that is both uncomfortable and uncanny. It is a text that, through its grotesque artwork and eerie storyline, invokes an emotional response from almost any reader—despite the fact that we have not personally encountered a severe, sexually-transmitted, physical mutation in the middle of adolescence. Readers tend to be drawn to the text on a level that is not completely known or understood, which is interesting since the text is so dark and disgustingly drawn. The 1970s held much controversy and confusion in itself because, as Margaret Mead explains, it was "a period, new in history, in which the young [were] taking on new authority in their prefigurative apprehension of the still unknown future" (13). Clearly, adolescents during this time were *not* ready to take on

any sort of authority; however, the reader can also clearly see the rebellion and experimentation throughout the entirety of the book. With this book, Burns makes a statement that directly targets adolescent life and sexuality in the 1970s, but he goes much further than just that—he develops a book that entwines a variety of psychoanalytic elements—from the title of the book itself, to the imagery and sections throughout it—in order to show the truthful and darker sides of growing up with judgment, labels, and being rendered a public spectacle.

In order to further the reader's understanding of how the visual imagery, the psychoanalytic elements, and the time period combine to create a social commentary on the way society handled this population; I will first explore the visual space within the text and how it interacts with the reader on an unconscious level. By examining the heavy sexual imagery, it will become clear how Burns communicates his sexually, socially, and politically charged message within the book. I will then examine the image (and title) of the black hole itself and its representation of the unexplainable and inescapable reality that is presented to the adolescents in the text. After examining the way the teenagers interact and deal with their new reality, I will examine the means and repercussions of avoidance through substance abuse and the ways in which the adolescents attempt to escape the reality with which they are faced. By exploring the adolescent behaviors in the book, the reader is quite able to see the extreme avoidance as a way to actually inch them toward the disease. In conclusion, I will return to the way Burns provokes the reader on an unconscious level and how the applicable psychoanalytic framework works to exemplify the aforementioned socio-historical themes within the text.

A Note on the Visual Space and its Demand on the Unconscious

From the very beginning of the text, the reader can see that it is obviously drawn as a very dark and unnerving piece. Most everything about the way it is drawn sets itself up to be purposefully unsettling. The high-contrast black and white artwork adds to the dark undertones throughout the text, and Burns' characters are drawn in a way that is also dark and uneasy. Those who do not have, or show little physical manifestation of 'the bug', are eerily similar to one another, to the point where it is sometimes difficult to decipher between characters. This can be seen in Figure 3, as there is a split panel that combines half of Chris' face and half of Rob's face—resulting in the two becoming so similar it is difficult to decipher a difference (49). And those characters who are highly mutated (See Figure 4) by the bug are grotesque and disgusting (19). The way that Burns depicted the 'bug,' by being an external mutation, is obviously one of the most crucial parts of why this story is both engaging and difficult to read at the same time—they are forcibly shunned from society not only because of their appearance, but also because of the reason behind why they look as they do. Burns' characters are strangely similar, but also marked and labeled by their actions in a visible way. Because of this visible exaggeration, we get a different level of understanding than in other texts about adolescence—that of the label, the societal shame that has been cast on them, and even the unease that they share among each other as they are sorting through their new reality.

Also darkly drawn is the setting itself throughout the book. A large majority of the book's scenes take place in the woods, and the high-contrast black and white presents the woods in a similar tone to the characters that live and visit there. Burns portrays the woods very differently from other places throughout the book. More often than not, the hallucinogenic trips, the dreams, the flashbacks, and the overall confusion of their adolescent situa-

tion houses itself in the woods. Obviously, the plagued teenagers also inhabit the woods—removing themselves from society and subjecting themselves to the darkness and confusion. The trees and foliage are also extremely dark, with white outlines for branches and leaves, adding to the total eerie darkness of the book as a whole.³

The most prevalent visual aspect of *Black Hole* is most definitely the genital imagery that subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) envelops the text. This imagery is something that adds a different element to the unsettling nature of the text. At the beginning of nearly every chapter in the book⁴, there is an elongated gash or opening that is always representative of the vagina, and the bug itself often manifests as a gash or a mouth of some sort. Throughout the chapters, there are also many objects that are placed or contorted in ways that represent male genitalia, and it is difficult to find a page in which one of these images is not represented.⁵ The equality in distribution of both vaginal and phallic imagery really showcases the way in which the adolescents felt, at the same time, so many different emotions. Their personal states were anything but static—they were settled, yet uncomfortable; they were aggressive, yet passive; and they also felt a sense of completeness within their group, yet completely suspended and fragmented individually at the same time. Inclusion of such highly visible genital imagery then becomes a visual cue for the completely convoluted way each of the characters felt throughout the text and this constant reminder of the sexual nature of the adolescent world is something that gives a sense of constancy to the disconcerting tone that the text tries to uphold.

Because *Black Hole* relies so heavily on the dark, genital imagery, this is one of the most pivotal reasons why it is a graphic text rather than a work of prose fiction. If this story was written in prose, the audience would not be constantly reminded of the grotesque mutations, the imagery that arouses the reader and underlines the key ideals of the book, and the uncanny effects⁶ of being drawn to the text but not being entirely sure of how or why. Essentially, *Black Hole*'s visual element demands that the reader be both cognizant of the plot and story, but also active on an unconscious level that most works of prose do not offer. That this text is visual in the dark, engaging way that it is, readers are able to emotionally respond to the text—despite the fact that it is hard to name the feeling that we take from it. As readers, we are active on an unconscious level only because we are demanded to be, by the visual illustration that accompanies the words throughout the text. The vaginal and phallic images are so familiar to us that we often over-look the importance of them, but are strangely drawn into the text on an active level because of them. Just as the characters are surrounded by the sexual charge around them, so becomes the reader as a result of the provided imagery. Being aroused and active on an unconscious level is something that sets this book apart from many others—even from other graphic texts—which is why it is so successful in what it tries to accomplish. Essentially, it is because this text is in the graphic format that it animates our unconscious processes in such a haunting way—and we are left without knowing quite what to do with it at the end.

The Black Hole Presents a Multi-Layered Parallel within Adolescence

While reading this book, the title itself sort of slips away a little, resulting in it being easy to overlook the fact that the term 'black hole' is rarely directly mentioned within the text itself.⁷ The general idea of the black hole is a gaping space in the universe that is unexplainable, uncharted, and impossible to escape from. Essentially, it is a large mass

of nothingness that is able to swallow anything around it entirely—making avoidance and escape impossible. This idea of a black hole is clearly the perfect description of the ‘bug’ that is being passed from partner to partner in the text. The bug, depending on the person it infects, generally manifests as an opening in the skin that is impossible to escape from—after one contracts it, there is no way of getting rid of it and everyone becomes aware of it.

No one is entirely sure what a black hole (in the universal sense) actually is, and of what it consists. In this way, it also appears to be quite similar to the ‘bug’ because no one really knows how the bug is going to manifest if they contract it. The bug manifests differently in every person, which parallels the typical theme that resonates through fiction on adolescence: that despite the fact that everyone has to go through it, there are no two stories of adolescence that are exactly the same. Time and time again in stories of adolescence, we see this same theme being explored. In *Black Hole*, Burns chooses a different way of exploring this theme, however, because of the disgust and ugliness that is tied to adolescence within it. The recreational drugs and alcohol use, the experiments with sex—all of these are typical coming-of-age happenings, yet the teens were targeted and explored within their own adolescent culture.

As with the unclear and unpredictable nature of the ‘black hole’, another thing that remains unclear throughout the text is the reason why the bug only spreads within the adolescent population and does not infect adults. It seems feasible that Burns is making a commentary on the spectacle of adolescence—the promiscuity, the curiosity, the overall carelessness that sometimes accompanies being an adolescent in the 1970s. During this time, sex was experimented with often and carelessly; and the adolescents who were exploring their sexuality were openly condemned for their actions. According to Mead, the older generations in the 1970s “[could] not conceive of any other future for the children than their own past lives. The past of adults is the future of each new generation; their lives provide the ground plan” (13-14). The disgusting appearance of the mutation, teaming with the way they contracted it, makes it entirely shameful to society in part *because* the older generations see the dramatic transformation in terms of the “ground plan” they provided for the plagued generation. This is an obvious reason explaining why Burns would have chosen to depict his characters as disgustingly mutated creatures, to show the way they felt on the inside in a visible and jarring way on the outside. The fact that the bug manifests differently in everyone also stems from this same idea because those who were viewed as more rebellious, became even more grotesque on the outside, while those who were fairly quiet and reserved were not nearly as affected on the outside.

What has just been presented is not the only list of potential reasons behind Burns’ choice of title for the text, however. In *Looking Awry*, Lacanian theorist Slavoj Žižek uses the term “black hole” in his exploration of psychoanalytic concepts, resulting in an even more interesting perspective. For Žižek, the “black hole” serves as something that breaks down our symbolic order, or that state in which we apply language and meaning to our world and our experiences. When the symbolic breaks down, the Real—the immediate and raw sensory experience—rushes in. This results in what we know as reality—the balance between the Real and the Symbolic. Žižek writes that, “reality obtains its consistency only by means of the “black hole” in its center, i.e. by the exclusion of the real, by the change of status of the real into that of the central lack” (*Looking Awry* 19). Sometimes the Real can be quite traumatic and hideous, which makes perfect sense in terms of this text. The teens in the

book, who contract this hideous mutation and live in the woods, present society with a grim reality. In this way, the teens present the real and grotesque view of what was going on at that time, bringing down the symbolic order and letting the Real come to the surface—they themselves are the “black hole” of society which presents reality in full. They are reduced to unexplained, incomprehensible, and completely grotesque creatures that society is no longer willing to stare in the face. Reality works in exactly this same way: through the denial and avoidance of reality. This is perhaps why the mutations are presented as so harshly visual in the text, urging a strong reaction from the reader and the general upset of the normative society at the time. In this way, Burns is able to recreate the “moral panic that brought AIDS to the attention of the so-called general public in periodic waves of hysteria” (Padgug, as cited in Peiss & Simmons 1989). Burns is showing these grotesque mutations in a way that society *cannot* avoid looking at and being aware of—he is consciously showing the way that society was forced to remember what was going on at this time.

The members of society that surrounded the adolescents were not the only ones who tried to escape the “black hole”, however. The teens themselves also tried to get away from it in whatever way they could. By experimenting with drugs and alcohol, by skipping class, having sex—all of these were ways in which they attempted to escape the reality of their adolescence. The constant denial of reality, however, only brings one closer to the problems which are being avoided. In this way, the experiences that the teens partake in have a paradoxical effect on their actual well-being. Though they are attempting to distance themselves from their problems and situations, they are allowing themselves to get closer and closer to that which is causing the problem in the first place. Without much mention of the “black hole” throughout the text, it still becomes a central theme as a result of the manifestation of the bug, the inexplicable nature of the whole thing, and the grim reality that society as a whole is faced with and then immediately tries to escape from.

Adolescent Avoidance and the Necessity of the Windowpane

Drugs are a hugely prevalent part of *Black Hole*, because they serve as the number one way that these plagued adolescents try to avoid their own personal realities. According to Bruce Fink, a fundamental Lacanian ideal is that avoidance comes from “a deeply rooted wish *not to know* any[thing]” and that “once patients are on the verge of realizing exactly what it is they have done or are doing to sabotage their lives, they very often resist going any further...(7). Through this framework, it becomes clear why the adolescents in *Black Hole* are so fixated on distancing themselves from that which is so immanent to them and is becoming so increasingly personal: they do not want to *accept* the fact that they are surrounded by the filth and disease of their own generation. While reading the book, it is easy to just begin operating under the assumption that all of the characters are on some sort of drug without Burns even directly addressing it as the book progresses toward its end. Through the entire text, the teens experiment with different drugs⁸ and alcohol in order to get on the other side of the fact that they are plagued—or are, at very least, surrounded by the plague on all sides.

One of the drugs of choice, and one of the only drugs that is directly given a name in this text is “Windowpane”, which is a form of acid that was highly popular in the 1970s⁹. Burns goes out of his way in order to make the presence of Windowpane known to the reader. In fact, there is an entire chapter that is designated by the title, “Windowpane.” In this chapter, Keith has an acid trip during which he finds himself in the darkness of the

woods. In the initial stages of his acid trip, he gets out of the car and begins: 'we pulled up to Jill's and the first wave hit me. I stepped out into a different world. The sun was down but the sky was still a deep, dark blue...the first stars were coming out' (150). This part of his trip showcases the element of a new world that makes Keith forget all about the filth and disgust of his teenage situation. As his trip progresses, however, he becomes debilitated by his personal reaction to the acid—he leaves Jill's house and ends up in the woods. While on his walk to the woods he thinks to himself: 'I came to an area with a whole bunch of little stores...window after window filled with the most ungodly shit imaginable. None of it made any sense to me. I had to get away...it seemed like the woods would be better...they were more natural. Natural things would make more sense'. Here, Keith is striving for something more natural and real than the world around him—thus he desires to *break away* from his symbolic world altogether. As he gets closer to the real that he is looking for, he is more traumatized because of the overloaded sensory experience of it. This is exactly why we have the symbolic order in the first place, to balance out the real and provide us with what we know as reality. As Žižek writes in *Looking Awry*, "the barrier separating the real from reality is therefore the very condition of a minimum of "normalcy": "madness" (psychosis) sets in when this barrier is torn down, when the real overflows reality...or when it is itself included in reality" (20). This could be why Keith's acid trip is very representative of a psychotic break. Keith continues:

I found the dirt road that wound down to Revenna Park...I'd walked on it a million times but it was different now...It was alive, moving under my feet. A thick membrane...a skin. I was on the back of some terrible living thing...I looked up into its eye...dead, empty...a flat hole staring down at me...It was after me, trying to find a new way in...it wanted to fuck with my head, trick me with the light and sounds...but I was deep in the woods now...it wanted to show me horrible things...things too sad and ugly to live with. (159-164).

This is a perfect illustration of the breakdown that takes place within the symbolic order as a result of the black hole and the intrusion of the Real. Here, we see Keith's attempt to get on the other side of the grim reality of his situation, but while he's doing it, he is faced with the Real in its most immediate and sensory form through his acid trip. The symbolic is something that he begins to lose grasp of while he is tripping, and the Real of the natural world becomes a sort of comfort to him temporarily. After he realizes the disgusting "terrible living thing" under his feet, he looks up to see the dead, empty, flat hole staring back at him. This empty and flat hole is something that Keith quite obviously identifies as that which is after him and wanting to show him "horrible things...to sad any ugly to live with,"—he is actually claiming that reality has a mind of its own. The hole that he comes face to face with gives consistency to his reality—the attempt to escape, but the paradoxical and ironic return to that which he is trying to escape from.

Obviously this is only one example through the text when drugs or alcohol are relied upon to take the adolescents out of their situations within society. The text is littered with examples of this attempted escape—but it almost always brings them back to the very things they are trying to get away from in the first place. The more the teens try to get away from their grim reality, the more they are forced back into the muck of it in full force, which is something that they all seem to struggle with. Drugs—and in this case, Windowpane—are used as a barrier between themselves and the reality around them.

The windowpane as barrier is also an element of this text that begs for a psychoana-

lytic interpretation. Žižek also uses the example of a windowpane in his exploration of the fantasy space and the difference between reality and the Real. He uses the example of being inside a car, and having the windowpane serve as a buffer between that which is going on *outside* the car, as opposed to what one experiences while *inside* the car. Being separated in this way does give us a distorted view of ourselves in relationship to the outside world. Žižek writes that, “our uneasiness consists in the sudden experience of how close really is what the windowpane, serving as a kind of protective screen, kept at a safe distance” (*Looking Awry* 15). Here we can see an obvious parallel between Žižek’s example and the illustration that Burns lays out for the reader. Keith takes the hit of acid (uses the windowpane) in order to separate himself from reality (or, what is going on outside the car). In the end, however, he is stunned by how extremely proximate that reality—how unavoidable the sickness—really is. It seems unnecessary to even mention, then, that the whole scene of Keith taking the hit of windowpane even *takes place* within the confines of a car while he and his friends are on their way to a party.¹⁰ The parallel in terms of the concept of the windowpane is undeniable here.

Clearly, the windowpane serves as a necessity, and then paradoxically, a downfall for the adolescents in *Black Hole*. Each and every one of the teens uses the drugs and alcohol as a buffer or source of protection between themselves and their grim reality, yet it so often inches them toward that which they are most trying to avoid. Without the windowpane, the teens are forced to encounter the traumatic nature of the shockingly and disgustingly real situation, so it seems natural that they might try to shield themselves by way of drugs and alcohol. Essentially, the characters in the book are trying to disavow their condition entirely by setting up a barrier between them and that condition; but in this way, they are then brought back to the initial condition of reality.

The Adolescent Display of Surplus Enjoyment & the Desire for the Symptom

As has already been mentioned, a very important and visible facet of this text is the symptom. The audience sees the symptoms of the sexual mutation, and also sees the symptoms of the adolescent population in general through this text. Žižek explains that “Lacan’s thesis [is] that the ‘world’ as such, ‘reality’, is always a symptom” (*Looking Awry* 45). If reality is a symptom, and therefore the two are equated, it then makes perfect sense that the adolescents in *Black Hole* are avoiding the *symptom* and reality concurrently.¹¹ While they are avoiding reality and yet nearing it at the same time, the same must be true for the symptom itself. As they try everything in their power to escape from the disease that seeks them out, they are, in actuality, actively seeking it.

The teens are quite obviously conscious of the fact that the world that they know and understand (their symbolic world), is being broken down and also brought closer to reality (the symptom). Because of this break down, and the contraction of the disease, we see the young people become psychologically impaired by the fact that they are identified and labeled as a result of the bug and its stigmas. Burns uses Chris as the perfect illustration of this. Even though we do not often see Chris’ mutation itself, she begins to internalize the realization that she is one of the plagued, and she then begins to govern herself accordingly. Chris tries to hide her sickness at first, but then succumbs to the idea that everyone knows—so she runs away from home and begins a life away from society and in the woods with the other plagued adolescents.

This is the case for most all of the adolescents that have contracted the ‘bug’ in the text. The teens give up the lives that they are used to and move into the woods to live among one another. In this way, they willingly put a halt to their growth and evolution from adolescence to adulthood. The typical growth that takes place in adolescence is put to a stop and the teens pull themselves out of it entirely in order to not quite get on the other side of it. On the base level, it would seem that the teens would try everything in their power to avoid contracting the bug and becoming plagued with its disease—however, this desire to avoid is never completely actualized in the end. For Žižek, this is completely explainable in that we often do not really wish to attain the object of our desire, which in this case, is the desire to avoid the bug. According to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, when we actually get close to that which we desire most, we begin to have anxiety as we near the loss of that very desire. Žižek writes, “the realization of desire does not consist in its being “fulfilled,” “fully satisfied,” it coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement” (7). He later states that “desire “takes off” when “something” (its object cause) embodies, gives positive existence to its “nothing,” to its void” (12). In this, though the teens are actively avoiding the symptom because they *desire* to venture into adulthood without contracting the bug, at the same time, the symptom is that which provides a void (or black hole) and thus provides them with their reality. As soon as the void, or the black hole, is filled, reality loses its consistency and becomes unbalanced.

Essentially, it seems that the symptom provides the adolescents with a “way out” of the transition into adulthood. By taking themselves out of society and living amongst themselves, they are able to live by their own rules and they are never really *expected* to live up to anything. This could be one reason why Keith has sex with Eliza despite the fact that he *knows* she has the bug.¹² Also illustrative of the previous point, is that they go as far as doing heavy drugs prior to their sexual encounter—thus while escaping themselves, they are brought together and closer to his contraction of the bug. This returns us to the reasoning for sex, drugs, and alcohol playing such a large part of the book: the teens actively seek out these experiences to the point where they even lose touch with reality.

It is ideal that Burns sets up his text and characters in this way, because it is the perfect illustration of another psychoanalytic concept—that of ‘surplus enjoyment’. In the text, the audience sees a group of adolescents who are very instinctual and desiring creatures who indulge their desires in every way possible as often as they can. It is clear through the visible drug use and the immensely sexual nature of the text that Burns wants this indulgence to be undeniably present. Because of this, the teens show an exaggerated enjoyment of their freedoms, despite the paradoxical role that we have seen those “freedoms” take. Here lies, according to Žižek, the intersection of Marxist and Lacanian theory. Combining the Marxist idea of ‘surplus value’¹³ and the Lacanian term, ‘jouissance,’¹⁴ we arrive at the result of surplus enjoyment. Žižek writes that “surplus enjoyment has the same paradoxical power to convert things (pleasure objects) into their opposite, to render disgusting what is usually considered a most pleasant “normal” sexual experience, to render inexplicably attractive what is usually considered a loathsome act” (12-13). This statement almost completely sums up what Burns seems to be striving for in his text: to take a typical teenage population who is trying to muddle through the transitions of adolescence and rendering them completely disgusting creatures. The characters have seemingly normal sexual encounters that result in a very visible and grotesque mutation that the entire world can see, understand, and mark

them by. This also goes as far as to put a finger on the pulse of why this text, and also its dark imagery, is “inexplicably attractive” despite its monstrous and repugnant visual repercussions.

Further in Žižek’s discussion of the surplus enjoyment, he draws a parallel from the paradoxical power of rendering something to its opposite and the yearning to return to a more natural state. He writes, “Such a reversal engenders, of course, a nostalgic yearning for the “natural” state in which things were only what they were, in which we perceived them straightforwardly, in which our gaze had not yet been distorted” (13). On a psychoanalytic level, this yields our constant desire to return to the state before the symbolic order gave meaning (words) to our experiences and names the void or the black hole in the first place. But on a more thematic level, it is a beautiful illustration of how an adolescent who is being forced into adulthood just wants to return to the point when the pressures and expectations were not present—when they were not faced with the labels of a sickness, and when they were not rendered a public spectacle for merely existing and experimenting.

A Return to the Unconscious and That Which is Unspoken

With this text, Burns creates something that readers are drawn to on an emotional and mostly unconscious level; and react to despite the non-knowledge or inexplicable nature that accompanies a reading of it. *Black Hole* differs from nearly every other piece of fiction prose or graphic text because it demands our unconscious to remain active and also requires us to enter into a world which we might not be able to put words or meaning to. So often a text focuses on the things of which the reader should be conscious; yet, the importance of the unconscious is often not forced to become active. It is undeniable that Burns would have never been able to reach the level of conscious and unconscious interaction without both the visual and written content that he supplies for the reader—however, though the text has both visual and written aspects, there is still an element at play which is inexpressible. This is because, according to Žižek, “the unconscious must...be conceived as a positive entity that retains its consistency only on the basis of a certain nonknowledge—its positive ontological condition is that something must remain nonsymbolized, that something must not be put into words” (*Looking Awry* 44). That which is not put into words or images, throughout this text, becomes a central element to the story that Burns succeeds in telling. As the symptom itself is that which “exists only insofar as the subject ignores some fundamental truth about himself...Reality itself is nothing but an embodiment of a certain blockage in the process of symbolization. For reality to exist, something must be left unspoken” (*Looking Awry* 44-45).

As Žižek states, reality requires this unspoken element, which is precisely why the reader is so drawn to this text in the first place. From the very beginning of the text, the reader almost immediately knows that there is something larger at play within the story that is not able to be sorted through properly; that is, symbolically or verbally. Though we are given characters and understanding of most everything, there is something uncanny in the way that information is presented—drawing us to the very images and situations that are principally discomfiting.¹⁵ If we were to charter this unspoken element within the text, it would lose its very meaning because we would be so hinged on providing it a name or symbol. The reality, which requires the black hole or void, also requires the non-knowledge that comes directly from the Real. We are able to *know* because of the symbolic, and the non-knowledge embeds itself within the Real. Thus, a balance between the two is imminent

in creating a reality which requires us to, at times, block the process of symbolization and to allow something to exist on a non-symbolized level.

Burns forces his audience to read in a new way, which mirrors the way that the adolescents in his book are forced to grapple with their overwhelming reality. We, as the audience, are led through this text by the unspoken elements that give meaning to reality. In the same way, the adolescents within the text are trying to come to terms with that which they do not understand about their own reality. The teenagers become so focused on the mutation and sickness itself, that their typical adolescent confusion becomes exaggerated. Burns shows that their lack of knowledge is actually their downfall because through experimentation with drugs, they attempt to escape that reality but are then left to face the Real as a result—something that is extremely traumatic and ends with a break down of the symbolic order¹⁶. Because they reject the importance of that non-knowledge, they force themselves into a world void of balance and understanding. Essentially, the adolescents themselves become a societal spectacle which is *assigned* a label, *marked* by a visual mutation, and *known* as filthy and disgusting.

Concluding Thoughts

The illustration that Burns constructs, of adolescence in the 1970s, is drawn in an exaggerated way, is littered with sexual imagery and is dark and unnerving in content. Because of this, we are able to interact on an unconscious level while at the same time, following a story with themes of which we are completely cognizant and aware. There is a void within all of these adolescents that the audience knows and understands, but cannot completely name. The sexual mutation that passes from one person to another begins to close that void and thus propels the teens into a reality that is ugly and confusing—one which they try everything to escape from. In this attempted escape, the adolescents turn to drugs, alcohol, and sex; yet by experimenting with those very things, they are plunged deeper into their devastating reality and brought increasingly closer to the sickness that they are trying so desperately to avoid. In avoiding their reality (that is, the symptom) in such a way, they fall to it just the same and thus inhabit the black hole in society—the void that their outside society begins to disregard and even *detest*.¹⁷

This disavowal that the adolescents face from society brings a level of confusion that they actively try to get past, but further themselves from in the seeking. Obviously, the adolescents in *Black Hole* want to return to a time when their multi-level experimentation was just a part of their freedoms and evolution as people. These characters, as with any group of teenagers, want to slip through into adulthood as painlessly as possible—yet in this text they are visibly marked and made into a public exhibition of confusion in its purest form. In this way, Burns becomes very deeply involved with the themes that most authors just begin to touch on in their texts on adolescence. To say that this is a piece merely about adolescence in the 1970s would be only partly true at best. Burns' exploration and illustration of the many facets within the adolescent experience exemplifies how all of the different elements work together to reach the confusion and hideousness that often comes with adolescence. This is what brings such a dark, yet intriguing, insight into the confusing and paradoxical elements of adolescence and draws us actively in to what would be an otherwise outside view of the coming-of-age individual.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Refer to Figure 1, which is located on page 102 of the book.
- 2 Refer to Figure 2, which is located on page 60 of the book.
- 3 See Figure 5 for an example of the way the foliage and woods are drawn and also for another example of the mutation itself. Figure 5 is located on pages 63 & 65 of the text.
- 4 See Figures 6-9 for examples of this.
- 5 We can see in Figure 10, as Chris and Rob are beginning to have sex for the first time, there is an erect memorial stone directly past Chris' face. This is just one such example of phallic imagery throughout the backgrounds of various panels.
- 6 Freud identifies the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220) and that "this class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny; and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it carried some *other* effect...if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why linguistic usage has extended into its opposite, for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (241). Here, Freud is openly toying with the idea that the language we apply to an experience is not what makes it uncanny—it is the familiarity of something that has since been repressed that makes it this way.
- 7 One instance where the black hole is mentioned directly is in the initial pages of the book when Keith is dissecting the frog. See pages 4-7.
- 8 In Figure 11, we see just one example of this experimentation with drugs in order to forget what is going on around them.
- 9 Windowpane was a common name for LSD that was a small square of an LSD/gelatin "matrix" which was a very concentrated and potent dosage of LSD. It was first founded in London in mid 1970. Other names included "clear lights and window glass" (Laing 47).
- 10 This scene can be seen in Figure 12.
- 11 The symptom and reality are intimately tied together. In *Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek writes that "a human subject can acquire and maintain a distance towards (symbolically mediated) reality only through the process of 'primordial repression': what we experience as 'reality' constitutes itself through the foreclosure of some traumatic X which remains the impossible-real kernel around which

symbolization turns (95). What Žižek is saying here is that we keep reality at a distance through the repression of the symptom—yet we are still tied to the symptom because we fixate on it and rely on it to gauge our own conditions.

12 Refer to pages 213-218 for this scene.

13 Surplus-value was a key discovery for Karl Marx. In *Capital, Volume I*, Marx explores his theory of the surplus-value and identifies it as a paradoxical and adverse relationship between production and worth or value. For more information on surplus-value, consult *Capital, Volume I*.

14 Lacan's idea of jouissance is intimately tied with the paradoxical satisfaction that is sometimes the result of dissatisfaction. Lacanian theorist Bruce Fink, writes, "Most people deny getting pleasure or satisfaction from their symptoms, but the outside observer can usually see that they enjoy their symptoms...The term "jouissance" nicely captures the notion of getting off by any means necessary however clean or dirty" (9).

15 This parallels an exploration of *The Birds* in that there is an overwhelming element that overshadows the narrative itself. The mutation, Žižek would suggest, would be the equivalent of the birds, because the mutation is not really so much a symbol for something, as much as it plays "a direct part in the story as something inexplicable, as something outside the rational chain of events, as a *lawless* impossible real...[whose] massive presence completely overshadows the...drama: the drama—literally—*loses its significance*" (105). It would seem fitting, then, that Burns would use the element of the mutation to be as shocking and disgusting as it is in order to overshadow the typicality of the adolescent story.

16 A visual example of an encounter with the Real in *Black Hole* can be seen in Figures 13-15, which takes place during Keith's acid trip which was referred to earlier. Here, we see Keith encounter an overwhelmingly traumatic view of his immediate world.

17 A good example of this is when Dave goes to Kentucky Fried Chicken to get something to eat, and he is threatened and treated as a creature rather than a person. He is singled out and portrayed as a monster—and then he comes to a breaking point in which he assumes that role. Refer to pages 285-288.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

The Nazi Ideology of German

Womanhood >>> Eryn Kane

On September 8, 1934 in Nuremberg, Germany, Adolf Hitler gave a speech in which he stated:

If one says that man's world is the State, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, one might be tempted to say that the world of woman is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, her house. But where would the greater world be if there were no one to care for the small world? How could the greater world survive if there were none to make the cares of the smaller world the content of their lives?¹

Statements and questions of this nature, propagated and proclaimed by high ranking officials within the Nazi party, created and supported the Nazi ideology of womanhood within German society. The ideology of womanhood was conceptualized by Adolf Hitler and other male party members to support the party, its policies, and the State, as he and the Nazis rose to power within Germany during the early twentieth-century. The desirability of motherhood for all German women became the foundation of the Nazi conception of womanhood and family was seen as the germ cell of the nation, class, or 'volk'.² The Nazi conception of womanhood established a belief that women were to be segregated and confined to the domestic realm of home and family, functioning only as mothers, and therefore inhibiting female development within German society.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party rose to power within Germany during the 1930s. Prior and essential to the succession of the Nazi party, the nation experienced a severe economic depression as a result of Germany's involvement and defeat in World War I. The German population, suffering and ready for a change, turned to a new leader. In his campaign for power, Hitler asserted that Jews, as an 'inferior' race, were responsible for Germany's troublesome situation. Hitler and the Nazi party convinced Germans that an 'Aryan' or racially pure society would fix the problems of the nation's recent economic downturn and create a successful future for Germany. Whether convinced or just seeking new leadership, the German population accepted Adolf Hitler as 'Führer' or the leader of Germany and the Nazi party was placed in control of the nation's government. Hitler and high ranking male Nazi leaders began to create plans of action for securing a successful and racially pure German State, in which the Nazi womanhood ideology was essential.

In the conceptualization of the Nazi womanhood ideology, Hitler and other male party members most likely borrowed many of their beliefs from the True Womanhood or Domesticity ideology. The True Womanhood or Domesticity ideology appeared in both Europe and the United States during the Victorian era of the nineteenth-century and laid the groundwork for twentieth-century ideals. The ideology divided society into two separate

spheres, the public and the private.³ The public sphere, reserved only for men, was composed of the world of politics and business. In comparison to men, women were confined to the private sphere, consisting of home and family. Since women were restrained within the home, the True Womanhood ideology placed motherhood at the center of their lives.⁴ Therefore women were believed to be 'maternally selfless' and domestic chores within the household were to be seen not as work, but as natural.⁵ Hitler and members of the Nazi leadership expanded upon and manipulated the True Womanhood ideology to advance party policies designed to further their interpretation of the future German State. In the conceptualization of their ideology, male Nazi party members sought to arrest female development based upon personal biases and one-dimensional stereotypes of the feminine sex.⁶ For example, historian Leila J. Rupp concludes that, "Hitler based his well-known opposition to the political participation of women and his low estimation of women's abilities on the concept of sexual polarity, the existence of separate spheres for the two sexes."⁷

When the Nazis came to power they were faced with a declining birth rate as a result of war and economic depression. Aware that the foundation of an 'Aryan' society relied upon the procreation of racially pure German children, the Nazi party focused their efforts on a population increase and blamed the population decrease on the women's movement.⁸ The Nazis argued that the women's movement of the late nineteenth-century within Germany was part of an international conspiracy to subvert the German family and thus destroy the German race.⁹ Nazis claimed that the movement was encouraging German women to assert their economic independence and to neglect their proper task of producing children.¹⁰ To discourage the women's movement and place the female sex back into their rightful realm of home and family, Nazis discouraged women from working within German industries. To convince women to return to the private sphere, Hitler stated, "If today a female jurist accomplished ever so much and next door there lives a mother with five, six, seven children, who are all healthy and well- brought- up, then I would like to say: from the standpoint of eternal value of our people the woman who has given back our people life for the future has accomplished more and does more."¹¹

To begin the creation of an 'Aryan society', Nazis placed motherhood as the most important role for women within Germany. For Nazis, "the purity of blood, the numerical power, the rigor of the race, were ideological goals of such high priority that all women's activities other than breeding were relegated in party rhetoric to secondary significance."¹² Obsessed with the advancement of a racially pure society and the devastation of inferior races, the Nazi world view defined women primarily as mothers. Women were divided within German society either as 'Aryan' mothers or 'inferior' mothers. 'Aryan' mothers were encouraged, through propaganda, programs, and benefits, to have as many children as possible. 'Inferior' mothers, such as Jewish, gypsy, handicapped or other 'degenerate' mothers and potential mothers, were discouraged or prevented from having children and were to be rigidly separated from the favored majority of the population.¹³ 'Inferior' women were prevented from becoming mothers through the denial of their marriage to anyone of 'Aryan' blood and the sterilization of both 'inferior' men and 'inferior' women, occurred throughout Nazi Germany as well.

The Nazi leaders urged 'Aryan' women, within their separate sphere of the home, to bear numerous children in response to the call for a vigorously growing racially pure population.¹⁴ Nazis urged women to bear children not only to purify society; they viewed 'Aryan'

families primarily as reproductive units to furnish future soldiers for the German Reich.¹⁵ In his speech in Nuremberg on September 8, 1934, Hitler stated, "Every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people."¹⁶ To support this battle in a positive and non-threatening manner the Nazi party established organizations to encourage 'Aryan' reproduction. For example, in 1932 the Women's National Socialist Organization of Frauenschaft was established in the devotion of teaching 'Aryan' women proper domestic skills. Hitler stated, "the program...has in truth but one single point, and that point is The Child- that tiny creature which must be born and should grow strong, for in the child alone the whole life struggle gains its meaning...It is a glorious sight, this golden youth of ours: we know that it is the Germany of the future when we shall be no more. What we create and construct, that youth will maintain."¹⁷ Although not successful, the organization was meant to produce a new type of militant female, ideologically sound and suited to guide the feminine half of society.¹⁸

Another organization established to protect the 'Aryan' race was the Reich Mother's Service. The Reich Mother's Service organized classes for pregnant women to educate them in child care and domestic science.¹⁹ To recognize 'Aryan' mothers who bore numerous children, the 'Honors Cross' award was established within German society. Each year, on August 12th, the birthday of Hitler's mother, the nation was expected to effuse sentiments surrounding the German mother with the handing out of the 'Honors Cross'.²⁰ The 'Honors Cross' of the German mother came in three classes- gold, for more than eight children, silver, for more than six, and bronze for five.²¹

In accordance with the True Womanhood ideology, 'Aryan' mothers were expected to maintain an ideal household, supported by their husbands, in which the needs of both spouse and children were fulfilled without question. Nazi Germany considered the ideal woman to be confined to *kinder, kurche, and kirche* (children, kitchen, and church),²² and the 'Aryan' mother was expected to be strong and beautiful. The ideal German woman was exemplified in the officially promoted character of Magda Goebbels, a figure created within the Nazi propaganda department. Magda was blonde, tall, and attractive: the essential ideal of 'Aryan' beauty. According to the propaganda chief of the Nazi party, "the mission of women is to be both beautiful and to bring children into the world. This is not at all as rude and un-modern as it sounds. The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches the egg for him. In exchange, the mate takes care of gathering the food, and stands guards and wards off the enemy."²³ Along with beauty and strength, 'Aryan' mothers were expected to educate their children about traditional German customs and feed them traditional German meals.

Although many German women followed the instructions of Hitler and the Nazi party, returning to the domestic realm of home and family, some did not. Some German women believed these ideals to be demanding and undignified, as did single women who had no opportunity to produce children. Frustrated with the lack of complete participation on the part of 'Aryan' women, especially single women, to restore the master German race, Hitler and the Nazi party implemented extreme measures to "plant the German seed throughout Europe."²⁴ These measures included the denial of female access to equal opportunities in both politics and business, the criminalization of abortion, clamping down on homosexuality, and the discouragement of prostitution.²⁵ In the late 1930s 'breeding camps' were established where selected, unmarried, 'racially valuable' German women were sent for the purpose of

being impregnated by equally 'valuable' men.²⁶ For the women who did become pregnant as a result of the camps, the option was provided to await childbirth in special maternity homes for unmarried mothers.²⁷

Before Nazis encouraged abortion for the 'hereditarily ill' and racially unfit in May of 1933, the penalties for any person who performed an abortion upon a healthy 'Aryan' without adequate medical grounds faced a jail sentence of two years.²⁸ The Nazi party also passed laws to encourage reproduction among 'Aryan' men and women. Implemented in 1938, the Marriage Laws accepted refusal to conceive, abortion, and irretrievable marital breakdown reflected in a three year separation as grounds for a divorce.²⁹ This amendment was designed to enable either partner, whether husband or wife, to contract further relationships which would produce children for the 'national community'.³⁰

In the study of the role of women in Nazi Germany, Charu Gupta argues that the "oppression of women in Nazi Germany in fact furnishes the most extreme case of anti-feminism in the twentieth-century."³¹ The Nazi ideology of womanhood established a belief that women should be segregated and confined to the domestic realm of home and family, functioning only as mothers, therefore inhibiting female development within German society. Hitler and the Nazi party's obsession with the purification of the German state and the creation of an 'Aryan' race, in reality, placed women within an unrecognized position of power in Nazi Germany. Although extracting women from the work place confined them to the nineteenth-century ideals of home and family, the entrustment of their sex to the success of the future German State placed women within a position of importance and power. Despite their importance to the future of the Nazi German state, measures and laws implemented by the party prevented any chance for women to recognize this foible. Instead, the confinement of women to the role of mother ended all female development within German society during the early twentieth-century.

Frightening to any observer of German history during this era is the ability of a political party to successfully implement such extreme measures within a society. Why would so many free thinking, intelligent, worldly, and modern women allow a government to have control over their actions as well as their bodies? What did Hitler and the Nazi party possess that made their propaganda believable and their ideals desirable? If women during the early twentieth-century were willing to forget all the previous achievements they had attained within politics and business and return to the confines of home and family; who is to say that this will not happen again?

In his collection of essays, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi attempts to answer "whether [or not] it is possible to understand the Germans."³² Although Levi struggles to understand the German population in relation to their allowance of and participation within the Holocaust, his conclusions may be able to answer why so many German women followed the Nazi ideology of womanhood. Levi concludes that, "[the Germans] were, for the greater part, diligent followers and functionaries, some fanatically convinced of the Nazi doctrine, many indifferent, or fearful of punishment...or too obedient."³³ Levi argues that the Germans learned these doctrines from the miseducation that they had been subjected to, provided for, and imposed upon by schools created in accordance with the wishes of Hitler and his collaborators.³⁴ For women, the anti-feminist rhetoric found within the Nazi ideology of womanhood was taught in programs such as the Women's National Socialist Organization. Levi claims that Germans, whether male or female, accepted

and exemplified these doctrines “out of mental laziness, myopic calculation, stupidity, and national pride of the ‘beautiful words’ of Corporal Hitler.”³⁵ Therefore Germans “followed Hitler as long as luck and the lack of scruples favored him [and in doing so] they were swept away by his ruin, affected by deaths, misery, and remorse.”³⁶ By understanding how Hitler and the Nazi party implemented their doctrines within German society, future generations can learn from the mistakes of the past and ensure that they are never made again. Women of all nationalities and societies can study this period of anti-feminism within German history to prevent any future attacks on their development.

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- 32 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 175.
- 33 Ibid., 202.
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A Critique of Lafont's Response to the Cognitive Dishonesty Objection >>> Larsa Ramsini

§1: Introduction

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders...will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10 New International Version).

Many Christians with a strong faith in what they view as the word of God use passages from the Bible, such as this one, as justification for a ban on same-sex marriage in the United States. In the U.S., a liberal democracy with a plurality of both religious and non-religious beliefs, these individuals have the right to believe and practice whatever they choose, so long as these beliefs and practices do not infringe on the rights of others. It also seems that they have the right to justify their beliefs for or against a certain coercive law, like a ban on same-sex marriage, with whatever reasons they view as compelling. However, providing justification from the Bible—which not everyone believes is the word of God—also amounts to not treating one's fellow citizens as equals, since this person is not providing justification that the non-Christian can reasonably accept. There is a conflict between allowing this person the freedom to provide reasons that adhere to his/her own beliefs, just as the non-Christian is able to do, and providing the non-Christian the freedom to not be forced to adhere to a coercive law that is justified solely by religious reasons. This is the conflict that John Rawls attempts to resolve by restricting the use of certain justification that can be provided in the public sphere in a liberal democracy.

The question Rawls attempts to answer is to what extent, if any, justification from a particular religious, moral, or philosophical perspective that not everyone shares, should be used in the political process in a liberal democracy like the U.S., a country that has stipulated both the constitutional right to freedom of religion and the lack of an establishment of religion within the government itself. According to Rawls, each citizen has a duty to provide reasons for or against a political view that "all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational" (Rawls, 1993, pp. 217-18). He argues that coercive laws must be sufficiently justified by claims that everyone can reasonably accept.¹ This account of public reason leads some to object that those citizens who are unable to provide justification for their own political views that everyone can reasonably accept will be obligated to offer or accept reasons for or against a coercive law that are not their own, if they are to fulfill their civic duty as described by Rawls. For example, if Frank, a conservative Christian, wishes to adhere to Rawls' account of civic duty, he may need to either give or accept arguments given by others for a ban on same-sex marriage rather than providing his own. Christina Lafont responds to this objection by requiring citizens to respond only to those objections that come from reasons that everyone

can reasonably accept, to show that one's views are indeed consistent with what everyone views as reasonable, instead of providing additional support for one's view independent of such an objection. So, Frank would only be required to respond to objections to his religious justification by showing that his views are consistent with everyone else's reasonable views on marriage. He would not need to provide further support other than his original argument from the Bible. While Lafont's account is an advance over Rawls', enabling non-secularists to provide non-public reasons in political debate, it does not adequately respond to the objection that some are still obligated to accept reasons that are not their own. When citizens are incapable of responding to a public objection, they are still obligated to be cognitively dishonest if they wish to fulfill their civic duty. However, though Lafont fails to provide an account that does not require anyone to be cognitively dishonest, this should not be a problem if she is able to justify why a more ideal liberal democracy is created under this normative account of reason, despite the fact that some may be obligated to be cognitively dishonest.

§2: Rawls' Account of the Public Use of Reason

According to Rawls, there are two components of a liberal and democratic state that are necessary to ensure its legitimacy: 1) "the equal political participation of all citizens," and 2) "the epistemic dimension that grounds the presumption of rationally acceptable outcomes" (Habermas, p. 5). These two conditions mean that citizens must view each other as equal members of a democratic state and that they all owe each other rational reasons for supporting or opposing legislation. In a pluralistic state, we can expect that at least some citizens will justify their political views on the basis of non-public reasons. When I say "non-public justification" or "non-public reasons," I mean reasons that are provided for or against a coercive law that cannot be reasonably accepted by all citizens of a liberal democracy. These reasons can either be religious in nature, or simply views that come from a particular ethical or philosophical perspective; these types of views are also known as "comprehensive beliefs." "Public reasons" or "public justification" are reasons given for or against the enactment of a coercive law that all citizens of a liberal democracy can reasonably accept.² If coercive laws are justified by purely non-public reasons, this could be interpreted as forcing one's views on others, because those who do not agree with the non-public reasons that ground this coercive law will still be legally required to adhere to it. Since we have a constitutional right to freedom of religion, this right would be violated in this case, because the secularists would be forced to adhere, indirectly by way of the coercive law enacted, to the non-public reasons of another with which they do not agree. When I say secularists, I mean those who offer only public reason, as opposed to non-secularists, which I will define as those who offer non-public reason. This is different from the common distinction between the terms secularist and non-secularists, which is normally equated with non-religious and religious. Since Rawls' public reason does not include any comprehensive beliefs, not just religious beliefs, it is important to note that my use of the term "secularist" focuses on the use of public justification, and not just non-religious justification.

This presents a potential conflict: on the one hand, we think citizens should be able to offer their own reasons for or against the laws that may be enacted in their country, even though others may not view these reasons as viable; on the other hand, we want to maintain the freedom of each person to not be forced into adhering to a law that is grounded solely by non-public reasons with which they do not agree. This is a conflict between Rawls' two

conditions for a legitimate democracy: first, each citizen has a right to participate equally in the political process, and second, coercive laws must be grounded in reasons that everyone can reasonably accept. Rawls claims to offer a solution to this conflict by arguing that,

reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support (Rawls, 1997, p. 783-4).

So, in an ideal³ liberal democracy, we need to ensure that secularists are not morally obligated to accept reasons that come from a non-public perspective (a perspective of someone in a debate that involves non-public reasons, versus a “public perspective” that involves only public reasons), since this would go against Rawls’ second condition for a legitimate democracy. To ensure this does not happen, it is therefore the duty of the citizens of a liberal democracy, like the United States, to pass a coercive piece of legislation only if it can be sufficiently justified with public reasons. If a citizen wishes to provide non-public justification for or against a piece of legislation, he/she must also be able to provide public justification for this same view. If Frank wants to give biblical justification for a ban on same-sex marriage, he must also provide additional reasons for this same view that everyone can accept. For Rawls, this obligation to provide public reasons in support of a political view is a *moral* obligation of citizens and not a *legal* obligation (Rawls, 1993, p. 217).⁴ This account of the public use of reason is a normative one and not a descriptive one. He argues not that citizens actually *do* provide public reasons for their political beliefs, but that they *should* be doing so in an ideal liberal democracy.

§3: The Cognitive Dishonesty Objection

As Nicholas Wolterstorff points out, for some citizens, “their religion is not, for them, about *something other* than their social and political existence” (Audi and Wolterstorff, 1997, p. 105). If he is right, then these citizens will simply be unable to divorce their non-public perspective from their political convictions, and in cases when their non-public reasons and public reasons conflict, they will be unable to provide public justification for supporting or opposing particular legislation. In focusing on his second condition of a legitimate democratic state, Rawls appears to ignore the first condition, which is that all citizens should be given the opportunity to participate equally in the political process. His account ensures that his second condition is fulfilled, that the reasons grounding a coercive law must be reasonably acceptable; but in doing so he strips away the political participation of those citizens who are unable to offer public reasons for their political views. On Rawls’ account, if citizens want their reasons to be heard and counted in the final decision, it is expected that they will come up with public reasons for justifying the beliefs that they hold. In cases when they are unable to do so, they are obligated to either renounce these reasons as legitimate for grounding such a coercive law or to offer reasons that they do not actually take as reasons for action. These two options would prevent the non-secularists from practicing their religion in the way they believe it must be practiced, or to maintain their own cognitive stance; and this would go against their right to freedom of religion or to the freedom to believe and express their own reasons for action.⁵ If they are unable to think of public justification for

their beliefs, then they are forced, according to Wolterstorff and Weithman⁶, to be cognitively dishonest, to provide or accept reasons that are not their own, because they are only offered one of two options: either provide public reasons that are not their own, if they want to provide reasons that actually count in the political process; or accept that their non-public justification is insufficient as grounds for a coercive law in a liberal democracy, which is counter to their actual belief. I will term this objection of Wolterstorff and Weithman “the Cognitive Dishonesty Objection,” (CD) since they claim that some non-secularists are forced to be cognitively dishonest when unable to provide public justification for their political views.

§4: Lafont’s Attempt to Avoid CD

Christina Lafont recognizes that Rawls’ account is open to CD, to the objection that some citizens will be required to be cognitively dishonest by providing or accepting public reasons that are not their own for their support or opposition to a coercive law.⁷ In “Religion and the public sphere,” (2009) she attempts to respond to CD by providing her own account, distinct from Rawls’, for the public use of reason in liberal democracies. She recognizes that Rawls’ requirement that all citizens must provide public reasons in addition to any non-public reasons they offer in a political debate is too restrictive. According to Lafont,

a proper account of the ethics of citizenship must recognize *the right of all democratic citizens to take their own cognitive stance in public deliberation*. This is the most compelling element of the cognitive objection, since leaving any politically active citizens no other option but to be disingenuous is certainly an undue cognitive burden (2009, p. 141).

To ensure that no citizen is forced to be cognitively dishonest in performing his/her civic duties, Lafont argues that citizens of a liberal democracy are only obligated to respond, in public terms, to objections to their view that are posed from a public perspective (2009, p. 142). Consider, for example, the opening passage from 1 Corinthians. Frank could view this passage as adequate justification for a law banning same-sex marriage. However, according to Lafont, when faced with an objection from the public perspective, namely that such a law would violate the presumption of equal treatment of all citizens, Frank has a duty to provide a reasonable defense. Moreover, this defense cannot, for Lafont, be just a repetition of the biblical passage or a claim that biblical passages should be valued more than the claim of equal treatment of all citizens. Instead, Frank must respond to the objection from the public perspective in terms that all citizens of a liberal democracy can reasonably accept: he/she must offer public reasons that explain why a ban on same-sex marriage is consistent with the public view that all citizens should be treated as equal (Lafont, 2009, p. 142). It is important to clarify that on Rawls’ account, citizens also have this obligation (Rawls, 1993, p. 218). What is new with Lafont’s revised account is that non-secularists are not required to provide public reasons independent of any objections to their view from the public perspective, and it does not require accepting the assumption that coercive laws must be sufficiently justified by public reasons⁸ (Lafont, 2009, p. 148). For Lafont, Frank does not need to provide any public justification for his view on same-sex marriage, other than to respond to objections from the public perspective.

According to Rawls and Lafont, the reason a response to a public objection must be provided by the non-secularist is because when a conflict exists between public and non-public reasons, public reasons have priority. In a liberal democracy, we are obligated to pro-

vide reasons that we can expect reasonable people to reasonably accept; if a view is inconsistent with a public reason, then we cannot expect everyone to reasonably accept this view. If the non-secularist is unable to respond to such an objection, if he/she is unable to show that his/her argument is consistent with the “democratic commitment to treat all citizens as free and equal,” then Lafont argues that this is the time when he/she must give up this justification for enacting such a law (2009, p. 149). This is not to say that Frank is not permitted to counter the public reasons that are used in objecting to him. This non-secularist, being part of the public sphere, may dispute the fact that this particular public reason is indeed a public reason; however, in doing so, he must engage in this discussion in public terms.

The reason Lafont claims that her account does not require any citizen to be cognitively dishonest, why it is not open to CD, is because of how she interprets what it means to engage with and respond to another person’s argument (2007, p. 248). She claims that, taking religious (or any other) contributions to political issues seriously only obliges us to engage them seriously. That is, it obliges us to *evaluate them strictly on their merits* and thus to be prepared to offer the counter arguments and counter evidence needed to show why they may be wrong, in case one thinks they are (2007, p. 249).

According to Lafont, it is not necessary to change one’s cognitive stance in order to justify one’s own argument and critique others’; that is, she does not view it as necessary to change what one views as the formal grounds of rational argumentation. As Rawls explains, different ways of reasoning—whether they be political, religious, individual—“must acknowledge certain common elements: the concept of judgment, principles of inference, and rules of evidence, and much else, otherwise they would not be ways of reasoning but perhaps rhetoric or means of persuasion” (Rawls, 1993, p. 220). For Rawls, all ways of reasoning “include standards of correctness and criteria of justification” (1993, p. 220). Though people with different comprehensive views may disagree as to the truth value of the content of an argument’s premises, all reasonable people agree to these formal standards of rational discourse, such as rules of inference and the presentation of evidence. Thus, Lafont claims that it is not necessary for anyone to change what he/she views as strong evidence, true premises, or correct inferences; all anyone needs to do to critique an argument is to do so using the same rules one employs, or should be employing, in reasoning about one’s own arguments. This is because all ways of reasoning have the above rules of argumentation in common, and it is perfectly legitimate to critique an argument by explaining why one disagrees with certain part(s) of it. Thus, when she claims that the non-secularists have a duty to respond to objections from the public perspective, she does not view this as requiring them to change their cognitive stance to do so. In responding to a public objection, the non-secularist will either explain why the objection is not a strong one—why the non-secularist view espoused is consistent with the public perspective—or he/she will accept that this view is indeed inconsistent with the public perspective, and is then morally obligated to give up this particular justification. Either way, according to Lafont, one is not forced to be cognitively dishonest, to accept justification that is not one’s own, for or against a particular view.

To clarify why she thinks her account of the use of public reason is not susceptible to CD, Lafont points out that while people should not be forced to provide reasons that are not their own, their own reasons are not protected from scrutiny by others. She makes the distinction between a state attempting to avoid cognitive *dishonesty* and cognitive *disso-*

nance (2007, p. 253). Cognitive dishonesty occurs when someone is obligated to provide or accept reasons for or against a particular argument that are not his/her own reasons; cognitive dissonance occurs when someone holds contradictory views. While Lafont views it as the state's moral obligation to avoid forcing its citizens to be cognitively *dishonest*, no citizen has the right to the "*protection of the integrity* of such cognitive stances" (2007, p. 253). She claims that the non-secularists who are able to provide only non-public reasons in public debate are required to respond to objections that undermine or point out problems in their argument; otherwise, this would amount to holding on to the "integrity" of their beliefs without allowing others a chance to argue against their justification. To uphold the legitimacy of the state and to continue engaging in rational debate, it is necessary to point out the flaws in one's arguments. Since, for Lafont, one is not required to change one's cognitive stance to do so, those who offer non-public reasons need not be cognitively dishonest when defending their arguments from objections. According to Lafont,

There is no cognitive dishonesty involved in being exposed to the arguments of our fellow citizens or in being obliged to make our own arguments good by appeal to arguments that other citizens can reasonably accept. Consequently, there is no argumentative path from a right to *include* in public political debate whatever views and reasons one honestly believes to a *right to be released from the obligation to engage the views and reasons of others* in order to justify to them the coercive policies one favors (2007, p. 252).

The latter right to be freed from the obligation to justify one's beliefs to others who hold a different opinion may exist only, for Lafont, if justifying one's beliefs and engaging with the reasons of others required one to be cognitively dishonest. Since Lafont claims that this is not necessary in such a case, this right does not exist. Since Frank uses the same basic reasoning tools as any secularist, his biblical support for the ban on same-sex marriage needs to be critiqued to ensure he is providing a good argument that everyone, including him, can reasonably accept. If he is unable to respond to a secularist objection, then, according to Lafont, he is not forced to provide or accept a view that is not his own (to be cognitively dishonest), but rather to simply accept that his reasoning is flawed.

Thus, Lafont claims that CD does not hold against her revised account of the public use of reason, which requires one to respond only to objections from the public perspective, and not to, as under Rawls' account, independently provide public reasons as support for one's argument. Returning to the introductory citation, a non-secularist offering this passage from 1 Corinthians as support for a ban on same-sex marriage would not be morally required, on Lafont's account, to come up with public support for this ban in addition to his/her biblical evidence. However, if a secularist were to object to this ban by claiming that this view is inconsistent with the public view of equality of all citizens, the non-secularist would then be obligated to respond, in public terms, as to why his/her view is not inconsistent with the public view of equality. If unable to do so, this justification may not be used as support for a ban on same-sex marriage, and the non-secularist is morally obligated to give up this justification. Since, Lafont claims, the non-secularist is not forced to provide public reasons that are not his/her own in addition to non-public reasons as support for this ban, as would be required under Rawls' account, this citizen is not required to be cognitively dishonest.

§5: Critique of Lafont

Despite the fact that Lafont places less of a restriction than Rawls on the non-secularist in not requiring him/her to provide public reasons as support for a political view independent of an objection from the public perspective, she has not adequately responded to CD. This is because under her revised account of the public use of reason, those who are only able to provide non-public reasons as justification for their political beliefs may still be required to be cognitively dishonest in responding to objections from the public perspective. Consider the above example of Frank offering 1 Corinthians as support for a ban on same-sex marriage. Suppose this is the only reason that Frank provides as support for this ban and he is unable to provide any public reason for its enactment. According to Lafont, he does not have an obligation to come up with additional support from the public perspective for this proposal (2009, p. 142). He is not required to provide reasons that are not his own, and thus, for Lafont, not forced to be cognitively dishonest. However, on her account, he is obligated to respond to any objection from the public perspective, and to respond *in public terms*. Say that Sally, a secularist, comes up to Frank and says, “But this law would go against the freedom and equality of each citizen in our country,” a reason generally acceptable to everyone, including Frank. In this case, though, Frank values the non-public biblical justification over the public value of freedom and equality; if anything conflicts with what he considers the Bible as advising him to do in this case, it is his religious belief that the Bible supersedes.

It is important to note that the reason Frank values biblical evidence over any public values, like equality under the law, is not because of any independent public reason, like a secular, rational, justification for the authority of the Bible over these public reasons. Frank values biblical evidence more for the sole reason that he has faith in the Bible as the inspired word of God—a meta-reason, a reason about reasons, that is still a non-public reason. If the ultimate reason why Frank values non-public reasons over public reasons is still a non-public reason itself, the conflict between him and Sally, the non-secularist and the secularist, is still the same, whether one is referring to reasons, or meta-reasons. On the other hand, if Frank could offer public justification for why this particular biblical evidence should be valued over the equality of all citizens, this should be taken as public justification and would be acceptable, barring any further objections from the public perspective, as a response to Sally.

According to Lafont’s view, since Frank is unable, because of his particular religious beliefs, to respond to Sally’s objection from the public perspective in public terms, to show that this ban is consistent with public reason, he must give up his advocacy for this law. This renouncement of the belief that this ban should be placed into law requires him to be cognitively dishonest, because he still sincerely believes that this ban should be enacted. Just because his non-public justification does not stand up to scrutiny from the public perspective does not mean that Frank recognizes what the secularists recognize—that this ban, being inconsistent with public reason, should not be placed into law. At times when there is a serious conflict between public reasons and non-public reasons, some non-secularists are obligated, on Lafont’s account, to change their cognitive stance toward their arguments in terms of what the weight of the evidence for or against it should be. In Frank’s case, he is forced to maintain the belief that evidence from the public perspective has more value than biblical evidence, a belief counter to his own religious belief that biblical evidence should be valued more than public evidence, at least in the case of same-sex marriage.

Rawls points out that different reasoning is employed by different groups in terms of how evidence is weighed or valued, as well as which authorities are deemed “relevant or binding” (Rawls, 1993, p. 221). In our example, Frank is part of a group that values biblical evidence over the public value of equality. For Rawls and Lafont, to fulfill one’s duties as a citizen of a liberal democracy, if one is unable to respond to an objection from the public perspective regarding his/her views on a political issue, then this person is obligated to give up this justification, withhold support, and vote consistently with public reason (Lafont, 2009, p. 149). Thus, if Frank is unable to respond to Sally’s objection, he must give up his advocacy for the ban on same-sex marriage, not only when debating the issue, but also during a time when he would have the opportunity to vote on the issue himself (Rawls, 1993, p. 217). However, part of maintaining one’s cognitive stance is maintaining the weight that one gives certain reasons over others, and which authorities one looks to in making decisions. By being forced to change the value/weight they give to different reasons, the non-secularists are forced to be cognitively dishonest, to accept public reasons despite the fact that they really believe that certain non-public reasons that are inconsistent with these public reasons should be valued more.

An objection to the claim that Lafont has not responded to CD is that the reason she thinks that Frank is not required to be cognitively dishonest is because after hearing Sally’s objection, that a ban on same-sex marriage would go against the freedom and equality of all citizens, Frank will then recognize that his argument has failed. However, from Frank’s perspective, which is the perspective we are concerned with in thinking about his cognitive stance, his argument has not failed. He thinks that his biblical justification for the ban should supersede any reason against the ban from a public perspective, because that is his religious belief. Had Sally countered Frank’s argument with a response that his reading of the Bible is an incorrect way to interpret this particular passage, or if she had offered another sort of non-public reason, then Frank may be more inclined to think that his argument had indeed failed. I am not claiming that Sally has this obligation, but only explaining that Frank’s argument has not failed in terms of the reasons he values most. Lafont’s account assumes that all citizens will actually accept the claim that it is more just to value public reasons over non-public reasons when deciding which laws to enact in a liberal democracy. While Rawls has provided an argument as to why it is more just to do so, the fact that this is true (if it actually is), does not mean that everyone in a liberal democracy will *actually* accept it as such, whether they *should* or not. Realistically speaking, no matter whether this is indeed the correct weight we should be appropriating to each of these values in the public sphere, there will be some people who will not accept this perspective on justification in the political arena. They will not accept the switch in values from non-public reasons to public reasons because their comprehensive beliefs are so infused into their political views, and this is the way they think it should be. If Rawls and Lafont are right, they must accept that both of their accounts require those citizens who will continue to value non-public reasons over public reasons to be cognitively dishonest.

§6: Conclusion

The reason that some non-secularists are forced to be cognitively dishonest is because, under both Rawls’ and Lafont’s accounts, public reasons are valued over non-public reasons. Though non-secularists are able to engage in rational debate about certain top-

ics in the same manner as secularists, at a certain point, the point that is at stake with CD, some non-secularists are unable to provide the secularists with the type of justification that is expected of them: either independent public justification on Rawls' account, or evidence that one's view is consistent with the public perspective on Lafont's account. To ensure that "our exercise of political power is proper and hence justifiable," one's political views must remain consistent with the public perspective (Rawls, 1993, p. 217). If those advocates of an account similar to Rawls' of the public use of reason, such as Lafont, see it as problematic that some citizens will be forced to be cognitively dishonest, then an even less restrictive account of public reason that permits the justification of coercive laws by solely non-public reasons that are inconsistent with public reasons must be created. This, however, would be so far removed from Rawls' original account that it could hardly be called an account of *public* reason.

If Rawls and Lafont are right in thinking that the ideal liberal democracy consists of only coercive laws that are consistent with public reason, then instead of attempting to ensure that no one is forced to accept reasons that are not their own, they should emphasize the feature of their accounts that involves a hierarchy of reasons. What the advocates of CD are really objecting to is that public reasons should be valued over non-public reasons. So, instead of explaining why citizens are not required to be cognitively dishonest under her revised account, Lafont should explain why a more ideal and just liberal democracy is created when public reasons are valued over non-public reasons, as opposed to a "liberal" democracy that permits the enactment of coercive laws justified solely by non-public reasons that are inconsistent with public reasons. Though it is understandable why she views it as ideal that everyone is included in the political process, if her account of an ideal liberal democracy includes a normative account of reason, then those who are, according to her, unreasonable and continue to value non-public over public reasons when the two conflict, she must give something up. Lafont's focus should be that despite the fact that some citizens are required to be cognitively dishonest, her account is the most ideal and just for a liberal democracy.⁹

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(Endnotes)

1 According to Rawls, citizens only have a duty to provide public reasons in support of their view when the debate is over "constitutional essentials and questions of basic justice" (Rawls, 1993, p. 227). These issues fall under two categories: first, "fundamental principles that specify the general structure of government and the political process: the powers of the legislature, executive and the judiciary; the scope of majority rule," and second, "equal basic rights and liberties of citizenship that legislative majorities are to respect: such as the right to vote and to participate in politics, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought and of association, as well as the protections of the rule of law" (Rawls, 1993, p. 227). In this essay I will not be focused on what issues are and are not "constitutional essentials" or "matters of basic justice." I will assume, as Lafont does, that the example of the issue of same-sex marriage is a matter of basic justice.

2 While there is much debate as to whether there are, in fact, any public reasons, I will assume that there are for the purposes of this essay. I will also assume that public reasons are a legitimate way to ground laws in a liberal democracy, as Rawls argues.

3 Rawls presents this account of the use of public reason as an ideal: "As an ideal conception of citizenship for a constitutional democratic regime, it presents how things might be, taking people as a just and well-ordered society would encourage them to be. It describes what is possible and can be, yet may never be, though no less fundamental for that" (Rawls, 1993, p. 213).

4 Depending on what one thinks about the relationship between legal and moral obligations, one may claim that these moral obligations actually ground or legitimize legal obligations.

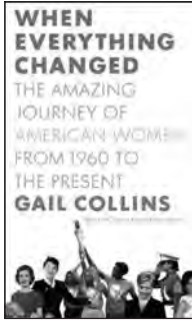
5 Habermas characterizes this objection as claiming that there is an undue "*mental and psychological* burden," while Lafont characterizes it as claiming the existence of an undue "*cognitive* burden" (Habermas, p. 9; Lafont, 2007, p. 243). For the purposes of this essay I will take Habermas' broad approach to the objection and let it be an open question whether the distinction is relevant, and if so, how.

6 Weithman's views on public reason may be found in *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship* (2002); Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge UP.

7 In "Religion in the public sphere" (2007), Lafont claims that CD is not compelling, in that Rawls' account does not require "*undue cognitive burdens on any citizen*" (p. 253). However, in "Religion and the public sphere" (2009), by modifying the type of restraint that she thinks is required by a citizen from the type of restraint offered by Rawls, it appears that she views CD as compelling against Rawls' proposal and not compelling against her modification. Since it is in her more recent publication that she appears to say that Rawls' proposal is open to CD, I will describe her view as such in this essay.

8 Other than pointing out this clarification, however, she does not make clear her particular perspective on this view.

9 I would like to thank Dr. Stephanie Patridge for being my advisor on this essay. Her suggestions were very critical (both of and to the essay), insightful, and helpful. I would also like to thank Marty Yacobozzi, Brittany Coscia, Brandon Cross, and Dr. Chuck Zimmerman for critiquing my writing and asking challenging questions of this work.



Book Review >>> Eryn Kane

When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women From 1960 to the Present

Collins, Gail. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009. 471 pp.

In the modern era, American women possess the confident knowledge that there are no limitations to what can be achieved. As a result, these women attend college in the pursuit of a fulfilling career. They are able to become lawyers, doctors, CEO's, or athletes, and if so desired, they can maintain a household while campaigning to become the next President of the United States. With the endless possibilities presented to these women, it is hard to believe that a half century ago, such pursuits were deemed unacceptable or impossible within American society. Why and when did these changes begin to occur within American society? In *When Everything Changed*, *New York Times* Columnist, Gail Collins, outlines the pivotal people and events that brought about a revolutionary change in the lives of American women and the social and political advancements they have made over the past five decades.

Collins separates the book into three parts and begins her narrative in the year 1960, the birth of the decade that would change American society through political decisions and revolutionary social movements. For generations of American women, "the world around them had been drumming one message into their heads since they were babies: women are meant to marry and let their husbands take care of all the matters relating to the outside world" (11). Women were expected to marry young and dedicate their lives to the maintenance of their household and the well being of their husbands and children. Popularized on television programs, such as *Father Knows Best*, and emphasized within feminine magazines, this restrictive message was the desired lifestyle of the average American female born before 1960. Included within this message were instructions for women on how to dress, socialize, and most importantly, interact with men. Within the first part of the book, entitled "1960," Collins uses personal narratives to illustrate the ways in which this message not only impacted the daily lives of American women but consequently restricted their entrance into the world of business, politics, and education.

In the second part, "When Everything Changed," Collins attributes the eventual emergence of the American women's liberation movement to seven key events: the Kennedy administration, the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Civil Rights Movement, the Sexual Revolution, the invention of the birth control pill, the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, and the founding of the National Organization for Women. Collins meticulously details each event and describes its importance and contribution to the women's liberation movement. For example, Collins argues that female participation within the Civil Rights movement in America made many women aware of the idea that they too were discriminated

against within society, and that could also lead a successful campaign for equal rights. Collins argues that the first step taken by female activists towards the disintegration of the restrictive female message within American society was the attempted passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The Equal Rights Amendment was the brainchild of Alice Paul, a legendary Suffragist whose militant tactics helped to pass the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The amendment intended to guarantee that equal rights could not be denied on account of gender. Led by famous female activists, Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinman, average and exceptional women worked towards its passage within Congress throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Although the Equal Rights Amendment was not added to the United States Constitution, its promotion and publicity in addition to the radical movements of the 1960s, created a change in the self-image of American women. For the first time, American females no longer saw themselves as just wives and mothers, but as strong women whose intelligence and determination made them capable of anything.

In her final section, "Following Through," Collins outlines the advancements that American women have made as a result of the women's liberation movement. Using personal narratives and testimonies, Collins presents the reader with a wide array of careers and lifestyles that have become open to American women of all races and socioeconomic statuses. The message prescribed to American girls at birth is no longer that of domesticity and subordination to men. Instead girls are taught to pursue their dreams with both confidence and determination. As a stark reminder— and to offer proof of the overwhelming change that has occurred within the lives of American women—Collins ends the book with a chapter dedicated to the very different presidential campaigns of Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin.

When Everything Changed is an inspiring and often humorous read for any reader, male or female, who is interested in the history and progression of American culture and society. Focusing on the personal aspects of daily life and historical events, the book is both an interesting and nostalgic look into the past. As a social and cultural narrative, the book applies to various disciplines and should not be perceived as a work limited to those of history and women's studies. I would highly recommend this book for anyone who has ever loved or admired a female relative or friend who has demonstrated a strong will and determined attitude. For the female reader, this book will elicit a sense of pride and appreciation for the vigilance and perseverance made by her predecessors to ensure for all American women a future free of restrictions and limitations.



Book Review >>> JT Hillier

Armageddon in Retrospect

Vonnegut, Kurt New York: Penguin Group, 2008. 232 pp.

The late-great, Kurt Vonnegut was truly a refreshing oddity by any literary standard, to put it bluntly. Time and time again, he eased the weary hearts of his readers even in the midst of the most unnervingly turbulent of times. Yet, he managed to do so in spite of—or maybe thanks to—his unflinching impulse to shake things up even more tumultuously; and his readers could never seem to get enough of it. Knowing this, Berkley Books promptly released this posthumous assembly of formerly unpublished texts, *Armageddon in Retrospect*, in which a less-than vintage Vonnegut subjects himself whole-heartedly to his preferred themes of choice: war and peace. Thematically, the essence comes through about as Vonnegutian as could be expected, with no real surprises. However, subtle aspects within the fictional short stories featured prove to be relatively unfamiliar to all of his readers, ranging from the most devoted of Vonnegut buffs, to those lucky first-timers who have never heard of Tralfamadore, ice-nine, or those three, now infamous words: “So it goes.” The first of such ingredients is the most personal, authentically human undertone of any of Kurt’s released works. The novel opens with a heartfelt and poignant introduction provided by Kurt’s only son, Mark Twain Vonnegut, a fine novelist in his own distinct echelon. And bound by the tricky circumstance of aiming to write, literally, in the shadow of his own iconic father, he could have justifiably cracked under the pressure. Instead, he thrived with class, brevity and humility while offering very personal insight for a man characterized by book covers with bold faced V’s, iconic and archetypal titles, and his utterly distinctive authorial identity, which can often fall subject to predisposed dismissal or the superficial glorification of his work. Mark, known also for his work *The Eden Express*, exposes a *human* perspective of this cherished *humanist*: revealing his flaws, admitting his insecurities, and ultimately pointing out how Vonnegut the man and Vonnegut the author were, believe it or not, one in the same. “He was the least wild-and-crazy guy I ever knew. No drugs. No fast cars” (6). Kurt’s unswerving lack of confidence is also alluded to in several passages, “He worried that every good idea he got might be his last and that any apparent success he had had would dry up and blow away” (3) Mark recollects his father’s initial struggles with publishing, his trivial mannerisms and charmingly complex character traits. One excerpt describes a very brief stint in the mid-1950’s when his father was employed by *Sports Illustrated*. He was asked to write a short piece on a racehorse that apparently jumped over a picket fence, then tried running away. After waking hours, staring at a blank sheet of paper he eventually concluded, “The horse jumped over the [explicit] fence,” (5) then, calmly set it on his editor’s desk and left, self-employed again.

Perhaps the most fist-pumping Vonnegut moments in this collection emerge in his speech at Clowes Hall in Indiana, which proved to be his last. Also presented by his son

Mark (which he mentions in the introduction as well), the speech, which took place just weeks after his death in April of 2007, displays his two best strengths: relevance and hilarity. At times, you can practically hear the audience's laughter from punch line to punch line. From knocking semi-colons as "transvestite hermaphrodites that represent exactly nothing" (22) to praising Karl Marx; he fearlessly bounces from subject to subject (honestly, at times he sounds like an adaptation of Andy Rooney with a violent strand of A.D.D.). Always keeping our attention Vonnegut's content ranges from the most commonly trivial remark to those touching, insightful epiphanies pulled from the deepest roots of his wisdom. And this unsystematic nature was precisely what made him so charming. As his son put it, "Where oh where is my dear father going? And then he would say something that cut to the heart of the matter and was outrageous and true, and you believed it partly because he had just been talking about celibacy and twerps and snarfs." (9)

The letters and essays in this collection prove to be rather solid, yet there are a few duds in this bunch. All in all, there are 11 short stories, scattered side notes, and quirky illustrations; and all of them, while they are entrenched with the presence of war, simply exploit the side-effects of wartime as a mechanism to expose the struggle of the human experience, similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses in the fabric of human character. "Guns Before Butter," is a bright spot, a mild flavored, easy-to-read character sketch, focusing on several starving American prisoners of war surveyed by their German prison guard. A common yearning for food unites the captives and their guards, while the plot's forebodingly comical dialogue, as the context rarely strays away from the subject of entrees, pancakes and the occasional cigarette drag, epitomizes the common societal struggle in Germany at this time in European history.

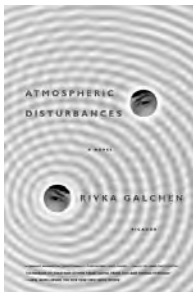
"The Commandant's Desk" offers a less inviting take on some of the same themes. It epitomizes the deprecating impact of war on anything that is genuinely virtuous, or prideful. It is focused on a Czech carpenter and his daughter, who have endured in their moral inclinations despite unbecoming Nazi and Soviet activity in World War II. The true definition of a patriot, the Czech plans on commemorating his country's escape from tyranny when Allied forces move in across the street, following their success. Yet, this proves to be drenched in irony, as the carpenter is scrutinized for unwarranted association with the Axis Powers (after openly admitting to building furniture for them during their stay). Knowing this, the new American commander also wants furniture from the Czech, specifically a flamboyant desk decorated with an American eagle. It is one of the few narratives in the collection that recite directly from the perspective of a bystander of war, civilian innocents, and calls attention to the effect war unlawfully projects upon them, regardless of one's intention or moral cause.

Another recurring feature in the layout of these texts is the blind ambition of American soldiers, who serve as fervent pawns within the 'grander' scheme of war and its demands. In one piece, entitled "Wailing Shall Be in All the Streets," an officer depicts a typical conversation between German inhabitants and his blood-drunk comrades. Vonnegut writes, "Germans would ask, 'Why are you Americans fighting us?' 'I don't know, but we're sure beating the hell out of you,' was a stock answer" (34). This narrative focuses on the desolate destruction of Dresden shortly after the American Fire Bombing raid and was simultaneously the most direct inspiration for Vonnegut's most successful work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In this narrative, the commentary swells with guilt and remorse on a very personal level, illustrating a scene in which many of the details prove to be too morbid to take out of context.

A wackier piece, "Great Day" incorporates the collection's first science fiction elements, portraying a future society in which there is only one army that handles all matters of conflict in the world (which seems to be very little). This army, consisting essentially of spineless high school drop outs, inspires a war-crazed Lt. to simulate a holographic battle site from World War I. This experiment goes awry, however, as a malfunction leaves the soldiers indefinitely 'unstuck in time', superimposed in an endless debacle between two disasters. While the story has many holes within the plot, it illustrates a memorable picture and depicts the impracticality of peace in a world in love with warfare.

The most moving of these short stories has to be the painfully vulnerable "Happy Birthday, 1951." Of all the stories it proves to be the most simplistic structurally,, thematically, and logistically, which makes it so smoothly understandable. It prototypes the embodiment of war and peace, ignorance and wisdom, and paradoxically clashes these two opposing ideals characteristically. When a war-sick old man in postwar Germany tries to teach a six-year-old boy the ways of the world, on a day that the old man elects to call the boy's 'birthday,' he bestows upon him the gift of taking him away from the war and into the forest. All the while, he finds that the little boy shows no interest in nature and instead spends the day saluting soldiers as they pass by, and playing in imaginary tanks. Its understated, minimalist diction leaves the reader in a haze of inexplicable disappointment.

While the promise of *Armageddon in Retrospect* should certainly be made aware of; realistically, it must be clarified that this work may not be a final curtain call. Nor should it be assumed this is 'the last breath of Kurt Vonnegut', taking into consideration the not-so-subtle promptness of this publication's release, only a year after his death, suggesting a slight touch of opportunism at work. Also, I must point out that these works are in all likelihood not ancient artifacts. It is no secret that the man was still writing good stuff, even into his eighties. These are still relevant pieces, nevertheless the sheer reality that none of these pieces are dated diminishes my own, profound hope beyond hope that Kurt had them shoved in a desk drawer way back in the 1950's, or a hyperbaric chamber marked "Give this to my minions when I'm dead and gone. I promise its great stuff. So it goes. -Jr." Honestly, if Kurt wanted these published, he probably would have done so himself. He may have even considered some of these works to be drafts as a number of the themes and character names can be found in other works he published on his own accord. These assumptions are far from certainties and hair- splitting conjectures are beside the point. In due course, this anthology is an appropriate and fitting work for Kurt Vonnegut, which belongs on the same shelf as *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Mother Night*. It's a must read for true Vonnegut cohorts, but for the newbies, I would suggest this as a not-so-urgent priority comparatively with his body of work. And the small moments of his hackwork that do exist in this collection, still prove to be some pretty brilliant drivel. Thanks for another one Kurt, we miss you already.



Book Review >>> Boris Hinderer

Atmospheric Disturbances

Galchen, Rivka. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2008. 256 pp.

Is an exact copy as good as the original? That is the question psychiatrist Leo Liebenstein, the main character from Rivka Galchen's novel *Atmospheric Disturbances*, is forced to grapple with. One day Leo's young Argentinean wife Rema disappears and he is greeted at his home by an exact replica of his missing wife. This fake looks and acts as his wife does, and even knows things only his wife could know. "Do you remember that little fight?" she asks him (208). Yet something within the impersonal, detail-obsessed Leo, tells him that this new woman is a fake. He sees that this "ersatz" wife has "fine lines of age on her face" and interprets this as a mark of an imperfect copy as opposed to the simple effects of age upon his wife (36).

He sets off to find his real wife using every resource he has, including his Schizophrenic patient Harvey, Rema's mother, and even the local library. His search takes him from his apartment in New York to Patagonia, and all the while, he is hunted by his wife's imposter, or "doppelganger," as he calls her. She seeks to convince her mad husband to relent his search and return to his life in New York; yet, the cold and clinical Leo is unmoved as she cries and tries to tell him, "it's you who's not yourself" (140).

Galchen explores the perseverance of love through Leo's continent-spanning hunt for his wife, as well as through the "doppelganger's" quest to regain her husband and save him from his own insanity. Even in the face of contrary evidence, Leo clings to his quest to recover his beloved Rema. *Atmospheric Disturbances* also serves to show the kind of unlikely partnerships that arise in times of desperation. Leo finds himself working alongside his patient Harvey, who believes himself able to control the weather. Leo finds an odd mentor in the form of a meteorologist named Tzvi Gal-Chen. Oh, and Tzvi may or may not be dead, but either way he responds promptly to emails. And to thicken the mystery, Rema may also be impersonating Tzvi. These are the kind of twisting, farce-like conundrums that give the book its unique charm.

In researching the possible whereabouts of the missing Rema and the work of meteorologist Tzvi Gal-Chen, Leo starts using terms such as "Doppler Effect" and "mesoscale meteorology" to address the problem of how one can know real and authentic from the fake or the copy. In the case of his missing wife, he calls it "the Dopplerganger Effect." He ponders whether we can ever be happy with replicas or whether we will be haunted by the sense that a clone is just that, an imitation.

The story is told through the perspective of an intelligent, oddly observant and very confused man in the form of Leo. This point of view, as well as Leo's strange allies and their pursuit of truth, infuses the book with a distinct and quirky sense of humor. The reader can

enjoy Dr. Leo's insights into such things as dogs, women crying, and coffee shops. Galchen's wit and attention to detail shine through, particularly in the scenes where Leo recalls his earliest encounters with his future wife:

The first time I actually spoke to Rema: she was again sitting right in front of me at the Hungarian Pastry Shop, and I leaned forward toward that hair, and I actually tapped her shoulder, but then what was I going to say if she turned around? I had no plan. She did indeed turn around in her chair, her profile showing off her long, gently fluted nose and the tendons on her neck. I found myself asking her if she was Hungarian. During the silence of indeterminate length that followed I fixed my gaze upon her forehead, since I couldn't possibly look straight into her eyes, and what I eventually heard, in a lilting long-voweled accent, was: *Why do you stare at me?*(65)

I found such passages entertaining because Galchen carefully captures this highly educated man blundering into such an encounter. That encounter then leads to the socially awkward situation of the girl ignoring his question and asking him why he always stares at her.

The novel also features situations where the blind are leading the blind, as Harvey the schizophrenic attempts to convince his psychiatrist to give up his search or at least carry it out in a more rational way. Harvey tries to explain, "You're resistant to this information, Dr. Leo," implying that his doctor is ignoring some of the facts (221). The various examples of psychosis in the book eventually lead to Galchen describing a disheartening glimpse at living with mental illness.

The novel combines elements of a mystery, a love story, and a trippy adventure, allowing it to appeal towards a broad audience. Although its eccentric language and cerebral content demand a lot of its reader, it stays well above a cheesy dime store read. This book would be especially appealing towards those interested in reading novels that satirize sciences such as meteorology and psychiatry—in this case, blending the two together in humorous ways. The cynical and often zany humor laced through its pages has plenty of appeal, like when Leo tells Rema during one of their debates, "don't be distracted by...the dog's eventual sleeping position" (154). In this way, the book echoes the satirical humor of Don DeLillo. There are also moments where Leo's thoughts resemble the sinister and unsettlingly appealing philosophies of a Chuck Palahniuk character such as when he says, "I understand how resilience is in its way a demonic kind of strength, a strength not unrelated to a capacity for indifference" (96). At times *Atmospheric Disturbances* reminded me of a watered down "doppelganger" hybrid of *White Noise* and *Fight Club*. Yet these instances are brief and scattered, making *Atmospheric Disturbances* a unique tale of twisted and paranoid companionship.



Book Review >>> Will Ferrall

Wetlands

Roche, Charlotte. New York: Grove Press, 2009. 208 pp.

"As far back as I can remember, I've had hemorrhoids." (1) So begins the novel *Wetlands*, the first work from German literary newcomer and MTV VJ Charlotte Roche. And as the quote above makes clear, this is not your average work of sanitary fictional prose.

Wetlands details a brief period in the life of abnormal, sex-crazed, and anti-hygienic teenager Helen Memel. In basic terms, Helen is spending time in a hospital, where she awaits surgery, undergoes an operation, and waits yet again for recovery. This is just the setting, however. During her time in the hospital, Helen spends much time reflecting on her life, which leads to many startling, and often disgusting, revelations for the reader. These revelations center on three main issues: sexuality, hygiene/Helen's body, and the divorce of Helen's parents (which is more than likely a heavy influence on the former two).

Helen, to put it mildly, is comfortable with sex. A significant portion of the novel deals with her sexual exploits and fantasies, which probably should not be described here. *Wetlands* also deals with feminine hygiene and the female body, or at least how Helen feels about the two. Essentially, Helen likes to explore her body, and she feels that all levels of hygiene are mere superstitions (she hasn't gotten an infection, after all). Much of this content is somewhat shocking, and would probably bother the average American reader. I certainly won't look at avocado pits the same way again.

The theme that ties this tale together is Helen's fractured relationship with her parents. This relationship divides itself between Helen's individual feelings about her parents and her somewhat naïve thoughts about their divorce. In terms of individual feelings, Helen has many problems with her mother. She rejects the things her mother holds dear (hygiene, an unrealistic view of the female body, religion), and also takes issue with the more troubling aspects of her behavior, which range from eyelash jealousy to an apparent suicide attempt. The divorce also is important; as Helen believes, wrongly, that her hospital trip can bring her parents back together. This plan fails, however, and Helen runs away with her male nurse.

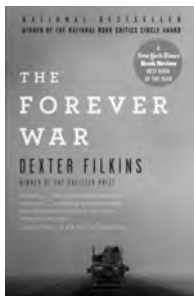
This is the essence of *Wetlands*, and it really doesn't include the kind of subject matter that makes the book particularly noteworthy, in terms of its shock value. This reviewer feels that the potential reader should discover such things on his or her own.

Wetlands has many obvious influences, most of which relate directly to the author, Charlotte Roche. The greatest of these influences is, undoubtedly, feminism. Roche spends much time discussing each part of the female body, and she includes more words devoted to female hygiene than I've ever read. These discussions of the body and hygiene fit into Roche's broader feminist goal of changing how the reader views the female body. Both Roche and her character Helen seem to feel that things like hygiene are just examples of how mod-

ern society influences the way women behave. Roche herself is a committed feminist, and was the first, and perhaps last, female MTV VJ to appear on air unshaven (in Germany). Unfortunately, in her effort to reveal the importance of the female body in its true form, Roche also succeeds in making this form appear rather disgusting. One would think this wasn't her initial goal, and it can detract significantly from her feminist message. I doubt that feminist theory would approve of the female body being representative of something gross, although I'm not very familiar with such theory. Perhaps there's a subfield that supports such a view.

A second defining influence is the previously mentioned issue of divorce. Helen spends much time and trouble (think purposeful injury) devising a way to bring her parents back together. Although her attempts are rather juvenile, and generally fail, they do help to reveal why Helen chooses to act so strangely. Divorce can have quite an effect on the children involved, and Helen certainly has the psychological scars to show for it. Like the issue of feminism, Helen's dealings with divorce were influenced by the life of the author. Roche's parents were divorced, and she even told them not to read this novel, most likely for the reason that it is rather close to being autobiographical.

It might be difficult to discern the ideal reader for *Wetlands*, based on the description above. The work itself veers between being potentially classic feminist literature and low level erotic/pornographic fiction. Despite the stigma (for some) of feminism and erotica, *Wetlands* does have literary value. Although it is often shocking and explicit, the novel features ideas and subject matter that might not be familiar to American readers, and, albeit somewhat abnormally, it questions the way in which modern society views and treats the female form. For these reasons, the general reading population might want to pick up *Wetlands* (and many have, as it was a worldwide bestseller last year). Although it does have the aforementioned literary merits, Roche's work will most likely appeal to a more narrow audience. Those interested in feminist literature especially should consider finding the time to read the shocking work that is Charlotte Roche's *Wetlands*.



Book Review >>> Justin McAtee

The Forever War

Filkins, Dexter. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. 384 pp.

The Forever War, from New York Times foreign correspondent Dexter Filkins, is an intimate examination of human resilience, told from ground-level by a man who sought to understand the traumas of a culture not his own. Told with the honesty and emotive power of a high-zoom lens, the book reads like a series of snapshots taken from a painfully perceptive pair of eyes. Filkins spent nine years embedded in Afghanistan and Iraq, living amongst the voices which fill his account. Their stories come alive in writing that is heartfelt and viscerally unflinching. But *The Forever War* is much more than a collection of second-hand accounts; Filkins truly surrenders himself to the cultural and emotional landscapes that he seeks to understand, and the reader can feel the burden in his voice. His writing is as much autobiographical as it is journalistic, and this fusion of the self with the subject is what makes *The Forever War* a remarkable book. It transcends the traditional “big picture” concerns of journalism and instead becomes a catalogue of human details.

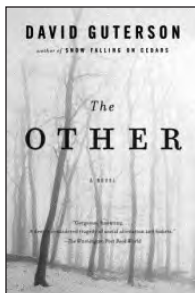
The wide-angled, historical narrative—that which is most conventionally journalistic—while certainly not the distinguishing quality of the book, is still a central component in Filkins’ message. Like any journalist, he strives to inform the public of a conflict that is usually discussed in broad, generalized terms. And while he occasionally speaks in these terms, elucidating, from time to time, the historical and political motions behind the events, his primary mode of informing is not to mimic the work of other reporters. Filkins’ work is unique because he is concerned primarily with showing us the conflict from the ground level, in full detail and for an extended stay. The book proceeds with alarming immediacy and closeness. He leads us through the streets of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, years before the American invasion, taking us into derelict soccer stadiums where captive viewers are forced to watch public executions. After a brief return home to Ground Zero 9/11, we return to a new war and are guided from safe-house to bunker to mountain battlefield, meeting leaders and lieutenants from every side of the conflict. We learn of the country’s destitute and chaotic past, how from amongst the competing warlords the Taliban rose to offer stability and order (along with tyranny and fear) and why, therefore, some Afghans were willing to accept a united country even if it meant a unification under terror.

We learn how in Iraq, like Afghanistan, brutal sectarian conflicts gave rise to a single, authoritarian stability. For many unstable years, sheiks had rallied militias against each other, grappling for control. Out of this maelstrom arose Saddam Hussein, a national hero for many Sunnis and whose 2003 ousting caused a widespread resentment toward Americans, even from the majority who disliked Saddam anyway. The problem for Iraqis was that the toppling

of the dictator not only brought the collateral damage of full-scale war, but sparked a new rise in the old sectarian violence, with competing warlords rising again to challenge each other, as well as the Americans, for power. "During Saddam's time," relates one Iraqi woman, "all you had to do was stay away...That was not pleasant, but not so hard. But now it is different. From everywhere you can be killed..." (326). Most of the Iraqis whom Filkins encounters share this outlook; virtually all are in fear of the various insurgencies and most both resent and tolerate the American presence, hopeful about a democratic future but angry that it be delivered by tanks and humvees rolling through the streets.

Many greet the American presence with the same sense of resourcefulness that has kept them alive through years of previous strife. People like Ahmed Chalabi are used by Filkins as examples of the cunning skill with which so many Iraqis have adapted to hardship, learning to twist unpleasant situations to their advantage. During the American occupation, many Iraqis embrace visions of democracy and appease Americans by smiling to the camera and providing soldiers with tip-offs about insurgents, while at the same time, they also secretly cooperate with the same insurgents in hopes that the invaders and the warlords will eventually wear each other out while the Iraqi people liberate themselves. Filkins becomes deeply intertwined in these webs of deception as he communicates with officials of the American occupation, the fledgling Iraqi government, and several go-betweens who also seem to be tied to the insurgency. Many levels of intrigue result, which Filkins sees as a testament to the spirit of survival raging strong in the soul of the Iraqi people, who have been forced constantly to adapt to new fears and new wars. He also spends much of the book's nine years living side-by-side with soldiers, be they the grizzled veterans of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance or the dough-faced American boys patrolling the streets of Fallujah. Filkins must earn their respect and survive the same harrowing perils, enduring many explosive and heart-pounding brushes with death. Meanwhile, the reader becomes acquainted with the men and women of these battlefields, where they came from, why they fight, and how they continue to exist in a world where, like much of Iraq and Afghanistan, war must be waged each day against the despair of perpetual violence.

Time and time again, throughout the chronicle of his nine years embedded in various parts of what he calls a "land of hope and sorrow", Filkins proves his legitimacy as a reporter and a humanitarian. His voice is one that offers the rest of the world some form of true enlightenment on an ongoing conflict which assaults us with headlines, but which is hardly ever investigated with such empathic detail and dedication. For anyone who wishes to examine the post-9/11 conflicts in the Middle East from a personal and immediate perspective (particularly regarding the controversial American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan), *The Forever War* is a must-read.



Book Review >>> Jennifer Rish

The Other

Guterson, David. New York: Vintage, 2009. 272 pp.

David Guterson's *The Other* is a haunting story about the choice between being a part of society and not being a part of it. The novel is about two men who meet running high school track and eventually become partners in a symbiotic relationship they do not understand, and a friendship that they understand even less. One of the men, Neil Countryman, ends up living a normal life as an English teacher and father of two. The other, John William Barry, retreats to the wilderness and eventually earns himself the title of "the hermit of the Hoh". John William sets out into the Washington wilderness, shunning family wealth and the wiles of the world to live in a trailer, and when that is not remote enough, carves himself a cave out of limestone.

Set in the state of Washington, *The Other* uses the dense forests at the end of the American frontier as a backdrop that contrasts the cosmopolitan bustle of modern day Seattle. When John William retreats from the world he retreats from it not to find himself, but to lose civilization in the retreat of his mind. The depth of John William's removal becomes apparent as he becomes further removed, reading Gnostic gospels on the evils of the world and eventually accusing Neil of "sleepwalking through life" (169). However, Neil continues to support his friend in his endeavor, saying, "There was a part of me, at 28, with a wife, two kids, a house, a dog, and a job, that agreed with him," (177). Neil has to deal with the hypocrisy that goes hand in hand with surviving in modern society, in the sense that the gains are more important than the losses. John William goes to the wilderness instead, and his suffering from his removal from society is unmistakable.

Deep and tragic, *The Other* explores the depths and nature of friendship, despite how people change as time passes. As John William grows progressively more insane, Neil sticks to the blood oath they made as young men, providing him with basic necessities in the wilderness even as he denies wanting artifacts from civilization, which he calls "hamburger world," (169). In the meantime, Neil wonders if John William may be right about the value of removing oneself from the backwards commercialized society we call home. Thematically, *The Other* explores the artistic question of whether it is possible to truly judge the world if we are a part of it, and if real art can be made by those mired in the system. Guterson shows in *The Other* that art cannot be successful in retreating and hating the world completely, but requires connection with the world to be of consequence.

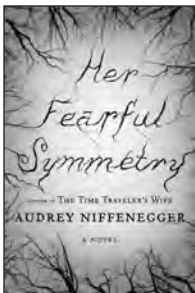
In its closing *The Other* leaves the reader wondering which of the two men made the correct choice. There is an obvious winner and loser when it comes to the physical state both men are left in by *The Other's* ending, but still we are left to wonder who, in fact, managed to defeat "the unhappiness machine."

The nature of humanity is to question. We question family, friendship, career, society, politics, and all things that define our lives as “human.” John William’s decision to spurn the world is not unfamiliar to us, but Guterson’s novel takes a tragic spin. John William’s removal leads inevitably towards his destruction, turning away from family, wealth, and power in the process; but the nature of the novel leads the reader to question the totality of his demise. Did he get what he wanted by finally escaping the world? Or did he erase himself into oblivion? The philosophical nature of *The Other* leaves us with no answer. Perhaps that is how it should be. Perhaps we, like Neil, must make that decision for ourselves.

The Other is a beautiful book that would appeal to artists and social critics alike in its showing of the necessity of both removal and involvement within society that makes life complete. Anyone looking for an engaging, critical, and thought-provoking read will find it in *The Other*. *The Other* is not for those looking for a light, feel good read.

The only thing that matches *The Other*’s thematic density is the density in its prose, which has the tendency to be pompous and uninviting. Though the descriptions of the world in which Neil and John William live are vibrant, the references that ground it are not meant for a younger audience, and some of the character’s motivations may be elusive in the way that an intimate friendship can be. Neil’s motives can be cloudy and we never have a real insight into John William’s mind; however, most of us can still recognize the disturbingly valid angles John William is coming from.

The Other is as tied into real events and cultural phenomenon as it is culturally critical, in a way that only makes the book’s message more apparent. We can never fully remove ourselves from society no matter how hard we try. It will always come to find us in the end.



Book Review >>> Danielle Wood

Her Fearful Symmetry

Niffenegger, Audrey. New York: Scribner, 2009. 419 pp.

Her Fearful Symmetry, Audrey Niffenegger's second novel, raises both similar and dissimilar issues from her first novel, *The Time Traveler's Wife*. A noticeable theme in Niffenegger's writing is the power of the written word. Both novels employ a focus on the relationships between characters and the ways in which they communicate with one another throughout the text, of which journaling and letter writing are most evident in *Her Fearful Symmetry*. Niffenegger opens the novel with a letter received by Edie Poole, written to her by her estranged twin sister Elspeth; "The letters arrived every two weeks. They did not come to the house. Every second Thursday, Edwina Noblin Poole drove six miles to the Highland Park Post Office, two towns away from her home in Lake Forest. She had a PO box there, a small one. There was never more than one letter in it" (5). It is indecipherable to the reader as to why Edie would be receiving a letter from Elspeth when they have not seen or spoken to one another in nearly twenty years. Upon moving to America from London with her husband, Jack Poole, Edie birthed a set of twins as well, Julia and Valentina. Both Julia and Valentina become the main characters of the novel when they, at the age of twenty, inherit all of their aunt Elspeth's belongings upon her death. The novel takes place in Elspeth's London apartment, near the famous Highgate Cemetery, burial site of Karl Marx and Elspeth Noblin. After moving to London to live in their aunt's apartment, the girls spend the remainder of the novel trying to uncover the secrets of their mother and aunt's past. The twins encounter many interesting characters during their stay in London, which shape their experience and growth as individuals without their parents looking over their shoulders for the first time in their lives.

Niffenegger's novel is clearly fiction, though she does incorporate many realistic situations between her characters. When it comes to the sibling relationships between Edie and Elspeth and Julia and Valentina, I believe many people would be able to relate issues and struggles in the novel between the sisters to their own experiences with their siblings. Julia and Valentina are young girls in their early twenties who are experiencing independent life for the first time, while Edie and Jack are going through empty nest syndrome when their girls leave for London. Julia and Valentina are twins that have always done everything together, not having created their own personal identity, which is something Valentina strives to discover in London.

Along their journey towards finding themselves, the girls encounter many peculiar characters in London. Martin, their upstairs neighbor, is by far the most abnormal character in the novel, "a slender, neatly made man with graying close-cropped hair and pointed nose. Everything about him was nervous and quick, knobbly and slanted. He had Welsh

blood and a low tolerance for cemeteries" (9). Martin is extremely obsessive compulsive and never leaves his apartment with the exception of Elspeth's funeral. The characters and relationships in this novel are what make it so great and easy to read.

Niffenegger's second novel is certainly worth reading whether you have read *The Time Traveler's Wife* or not. Those who love *Time Traveler's Wife* will be anything but disappointed with her second novel, even though it is not a sequel to her first bestseller. In *Her Fearful Symmetry*, Niffenegger creates an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. The reader is continuously trying to solve the mystery of Edie and Elspeth while wondering how their past will affect Julia and Valentina's future. This book is difficult to put down, especially for those who love suspense. The book is set around the year 2003 in London and Chicago and is most likely targeted at audiences who enjoy modern writing. London, however, is very different from Chicago as the twins learn shortly after their arrival at their new home. Niffenegger is able to create a realistic London atmosphere with the setting of the novel due to her experience as a tour guide at the Highgate Cemetery. Through living this experience, Niffenegger incorporates a great deal of accurate history of the cemetery. Robert, Elspeth's lover, is a historian and working on writing his thesis about Highgate. While working on his thesis, Robert "imagined the cemetery as a prism through which he could view Victorian society at its most sensationably, splendidly, irrationally excessive; in their conflation of hygienic reform and status-conscious innovation, the Victorians had created Highgate Cemetery as a theatre of mourning, a stage set of external repose" (53). It was effortless to place myself in the time and place of the story while reading this book, which is attributed to Niffenegger's strength of developing setting and characters within her novels. If given time and exposure, *Her Fearful Symmetry* could easily become a second bestseller for fairly new author, Audrey Niffenegger.



Book Review >>> Christine Horvath

Don't Let the Bastards Get You Down

Street-Porter, Janet. London: Quadrille Publishing, 2009. 170 pp.

Ever feel like the “experts” are lying to you? The experts convince you to buy bottled water and the latest skin care product to prevent you from developing inevitable jowls in your later years. Even if you do not feel this way, Janet Street-Porter believes that you should. She makes the case for reclaiming the “your way” approach to life in her non-fiction self help manifesto called *Don't Let the Bastards Get You Down*. Many of her arguments such as the one against banks and corporate executives who misuse funds are quite sound, and these arguments have the potential to inspire one to fight against corporations. On the other hand, Street-Porter contradicts herself multiple times throughout the book and can often be hypocritical. The style she uses to tell her revolutionary manifesto is quite odd, using multiple fonts and different colors to emphasize her points. Although she employs unconventional methods and enjoyable British colloquialisms, Street-Porter's unusual non-fiction work does not quite resonate as relatable to her audience as she and her readers would have hoped.

Janet Street-Porter stands proud, tall and skeptical-looking on the title of her book. Next to her are the words in bright pink block letters: “DON'T LET THE B*****DS GET YOU DOWN”. Although one might think this is a feminist manifesto aimed at fighting the patriarchal society in which we live; upon further reading I came to find out that it was not about being a strong woman but rather being a smart consumer and member of society. Instead of buying into the generic consumer and social trends that the recession and experts of money, nutrition, shopping, happiness, etc., have seemingly bombarded us with over the years, Street-Porter states that “you're in charge and there are two ways to get through life: your way and the wrong way” (9).

Street-Porter makes a good argument against, as she calls it, “mumbo jumbo” (10). In one section entitled “Money”, she discusses England's professional financial sector. In one of her bold, exaggerated blurbs, she says, “If politicians were so good at managing the economy, how come they never predicted the collapse of banks? These are the same mob who were living well at our expense, with their noses deeply in the trough, producing receipts to claim that things like jellied eels and potted orchids were necessary tools of their trade” (113). Here, she makes a great point by explaining that the people who the English (and Americans) have trusted with their money have over-extended its use. Now every citizen has to worry about whether or not their retirement fund is going to be available to them when they need it.

Another point she brings up is that private sector workers have had to keep the same hours but take cuts in pay; a sacrifice, Street-Porter explains, which was never asked of bankers or BBC senior staffers. In this way, Street-Porter exposes the social hierarchy

that surreptitiously exists in England. She explains how there are two classes in England: the working middle class and the executives. She uses the example of a woman named Celia Walden, the girlfriend of English media heavyweight Piers Morgan. She, in the author's opinion, reinforces the upper-class's "faux poor" movement, or "let's play at being poor" (162). It is fascinating that she brings up this concept because while the recession forces people out of their homes and into massive amounts of debt, people like Walden are suggesting ways to save a few dollars on shoes. She then goes back to living her privileged life in her country estate. Because Walden's advice becomes so absurd after Street-Porter's analysis, one should be compelled to stop listening to what everyone else says and live their lives the way he or she wants to live. In this case, this book is a success. Conversely, it is possible that Street-Porter is much like Celia in many ways.

On some level, I have the same problem with Street-Porter as I do with people like Celia Walden. I am not entirely convinced that Street-Porter does not also fit into this category. The author was a long-time journalist, working for famous English publications such as "The Daily Mail," "The London Evening Standard" and widely read publications such as *Vogue* and *Harpers*. Also, she has worked in television, appearing on celebrity TV shows and quiz shows. She was awarded a BAFTA award and she is also a Trustee of the Science Museum. Even if she grew up during difficult economic times, she certainly is not broke anymore. In one section of the book, she publicly outs the amount in her savings account: £131,000. This converts to almost \$300,000 US dollars. She talks of her gardening endeavors and her supposed struggle to build her dream home, but it all seems a bit contrived. It is as if she is identifying with you, commiserating because she is in the same boat, however, if you read the back of the book, you will soon realize that she is still making money with bestsellers and stints on reality TV shows. Although she is truly a very accomplished woman, in the light of her criticism of Celia Walden, one has to consider if the author isn't so different from Walden at all. The insincerity comes from the fact that Janet Street-Porter is a lot like many of the executives she criticizes: telling people the way to live their lives in order to benefit herself with book sales. She disguises this intention with the colloquial of the everyman. The swearing and the anger somehow make her easier to understand yet less credible. Because of this hypocrisy and inconsistency, I have to say that Street-Porter fails to identify with her intended audience.

While both the methods and message are questionable, the book still has redeeming qualities such as the aforementioned honesty regarding society's infringement upon the lives of the middle class. Also, the beginning and end of this book stress nothing more than being happy with the way you live your life and to "sod" (ignore) what the experts say. The introduction and the conclusion are definitely the most useful parts of the text, and in these passages she preaches simplification of your life and just plain happiness. Happiness and simplicity in life are hard things to deny.

The book is worth the read even if it is just for the pretty colors and unconventional format. You might learn a little bit about English society and pick up some fun British slang along the way. Common phrases such as "Pass the sick bag" and "piss off" make her work quite entertaining. Overall, the book fails to incite effective action against the corporate world to its readers, but it never fails to entertain.



Book Review >>> Jonna Stewart

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

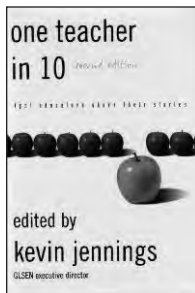
Austen, Jane and Seth Grahame-Smith. Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2009. 359 pp.

In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Seth Grahame-Smith uses an interesting new technique for satirizing the Victorian culture: zombies. Grahame-Smith took Austen's original story and added zombie and ninja action, which was absurd enough to reveal the absurdity of the cultural backdrop that it was thrown against. Mostly, Grahame-Smith satirizes the Victorian predomination of marriage, even against the onset of an epidemic of a disease that turns the people of their beloved country into the walking dead. Within the amusing discussion guide that follows the story, the author inquires of the readers: "Some critics have suggested that the zombies represent the authors' views toward marriage—an endless curse that sucks the life out of you and just won't die. Do you agree, or do you have another opinion about the symbolism of the unmentionables?" (359). The author does wittingly make the meaning behind the symbolism quite clear in the reader's discussion guide, but he also uses his wit throughout the novel. He replaces the well-known first line of the novel about the search for marriage with a line about a zombie's similar search for brains, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains" (13). Though the Bennet sisters are warriors who are highly trained in the deadly arts within this version of the classic story, the issue of their need to marry is still a main concern, especially with their mother who appears even more insensible than usual under the circumstances. Grahame-Smith writes, "The business of Mr. Bennet's life was to keep his daughters alive. The business of Mrs. Bennet's was to get them married" (15). Marriage was such a major concern for Victorian society and a frequent theme in Victorian literature, and this novel illustrates an entertaining way of questioning these concerns.

This novel could be considered a nuisance to some Austen fans, but it is written in a spirit that is not far off base from the spirit with which Austen wrote her *Northanger Abbey*, which mocked and satirized the genre of the gothic novel. A fan of zombie pop culture and classic literature might assume that this novel is the perfect mixture. It may depend on how strongly the reader feels about the original novel. Although one who is more familiar with the themes of Victorian literature and Austen in particular will be able to understand the satire, they will also be able to pick out the differences in the style of context easily, which could be distracting. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* may be more entertaining to someone who was less familiar with the original text. I found that the majority of the amusement that I experienced throughout my reading came from Austen's original content. However, Grahame-Smith's rewrite of the final confrontation between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth Bennet is extremely entertaining. In fact, to some Austen fans who do not wish to read this novel due to any offense it may give them, I would suggest they would enjoy this scene, and it would

be worth reading the book to relish this rewritten confrontation. Of course, Grahame-Smith takes on quite a challenge by having his name written just beneath the name of an author as beloved and talented as Jane Austen to share the authorship of this novel. It must have been difficult to add new material without majorly altering the original plot and outcome of the novel. This could be the reason why I noticed a lack of variety in Grahame-Smith's additions to the text. I felt that much of the additional dialogue and whims of the characters were redundant. Many times the plot was filled with "would have's," showing a lot of thinking, but no action. Elizabeth's newly attributed training of the deadly art's, though compatible with her classic warrior spirit, leads her to many extreme impulses, which she does not act on, probably because they would drastically alter the plot.

Though maybe not preferable to the original for some readers, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is an interesting read. The classic romance of the novel remains, but it does contain new complications in the face of the growing hordes of "unmentionables" that threaten the country. The Bennet sisters' primary purpose is to serve and protect their country as brides of death, yet the Victorian importance of marriage might be the only thing more important than the terrifying plague. In the midst of the zombie mayhem, there are still soldiers to be sought after, balls to be thrown, and men with great fortunes to be won. The classic characteristics of each character within the novel are emphasized by the additional tumult. Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, and Mr. Collins appear even more foolish in the face of the circumstances, and Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are twice as stunning with their warrior skills. By creating a new view of this classic and well-loved story, Seth Grahame-Smith raises some of the same concerns of the Victorian era in a contemporary way that not only lightheartedly entertains the reader, but, in addition, gives them insight into the cultural issues of one of the greatest periods of English literature.



Book Review >>> Vianca Yohn

One Teacher in Ten: LGBT Educators Share Their Stories, 2nd Edition

Jennings, Kevin. Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2005. 288 pp.

Ten years after the first edition, the second installment of *One Teacher in Ten* represents a gradual change in attitude toward LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender) educators. While LGBT teachers and administrators were once forced to remain “in the closet,” they are now experiencing more and more freedom to simply be who they are – as the authors of these stories testify.

One Teacher in Ten is a collection of essays written by LGBT educators around the United States and is compiled by Kevin Jennings, the executive director of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network – or GLSEN, a nationwide education and advocacy networking program. The essays fall into one of four parts of the book: “Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are,” which (none too surprisingly) contains teachers’ stories about coming out in the classroom; “Lessons Taught...and Learned,” in which teachers recall particularly memorable and poignant “teachable moments” related to sexuality and gender identity; “May-September,” where teachers tell of how coming out at school affected them outside of it, for better or for worse; and “Change Agent,” which details how some teachers have extended their influence in LGBT education and advocacy beyond their own schools. Within each part are essays that are sometimes humorous, sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes inspiring, sometimes frightening – but always are poignantly revealing.

The book, in theory, is not uncontroversial. Many parents and administrators balk at the idea of having LGBT individuals in schools – as do some students – but this is exactly the pattern that the book seeks to break. Many of the contributing teachers have taught for ten, twenty, even fifty years, and are no less competent (and no more sexually predatory) than their heterosexual counterparts. They also cite being in committed relationships on-par with their coworkers’ marriages, raising children, attending PTA meetings, and other such aspects of daily life that differ very little from a straight teacher’s. Despite dealing with accusations of sexual harassment, the spread of rumors about affairs with students of the same gender, vandalism and homophobic graffiti, and the fear of losing their jobs, these teachers ultimately found their niche in the education system. After working their way to a stable, safe status in their careers, they are now sharing their experiences with the LGBT teachers of the future.

Off-hand, the ideal audience for this book may seem relatively narrow and self-evident – namely, LGBT teachers and teacher-hopefuls – but the message should not stop there. Every student of a LGBT teacher – and maybe even students who are not – should read this book as another step in understanding that LGBT teachers are no less qualified or trustworthy than straight teachers. Every LGBT student of an LGBT teacher should read this book so they can be comforted in knowing that their “out” teachers can and will support them, es-

pecially if these students have no one else to whom they can turn. Every parent, whether his or her child has a LGBT teacher or not, should read this book to further their own education about how LGBT people's lives are not significantly different from anyone else's, and neither is their role as productive members of society. School administrators should read this book to either reaffirm their support of their own LGBT teachers or to hopefully learn to do so; likewise, straight teachers working with LGBT teachers should read this book, whether it be to continue voicing their support or to explore why LGBT teachers are looking for equal, not special, rights in the classroom.

Of course, my hopes for the book are considerably idealistic, but, even when I am being realistic, I have no doubt that it can be highly influential. For one, it is centered on one of the focal points of American debate: education, particularly the quality of educators. Anyone who wants the best education for his or her child must also consider the employment and protection of competent teachers, regardless of sexuality or gender identity. The book also addresses the more abstract but nonetheless important issue of human rights and fair treatment; are two teachers truly equal when one can wear a wedding ring and show her class pictures of her husband when her coworker cannot? When an administration begins to dictate what bumper stickers certain teachers can have on their cars because it doesn't agree with pro-LGBT sentiments, even when on private property? Or when a teacher can have his or her employment terminated or be threatened with termination of employment for revealing even the smallest facet of his or her personal life? In the end, whether the reader supports or opposes having LGBT educators, the book is a quintessential piece of literature from which the reader can derive evidence for, or at the very least, understand "the other side" of the debate. I recommend it to anyone who seeks the LGBT perspective of being a teacher in a heterosexually-dominated education system.



Book Review >>> Stephanie Freas

The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession

Hoover Bartlett, Allison. New York: Riverhead Books, 2009. 274 pp.

In Allison Hoover Bartlett's *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much*, readers follow the motivations, hopes, and failures of three central characters: John Gilkey, a famous book thief, Ken Sanders, owner of a bookstore and rare book collector, and the author, who strives to record their tales. Bartlett aims to gain a strong grasp on what it is that draws people to rare literature and collecting objects of high value. While the title indicates a story of a world of literary obsession, this nonfiction piece delves further into the life of John Gilkey, his history with stealing books and Ken Sanders' work of attempting to capture Gilkey and other book thieves. As Bartlett says, "books...are more than just beautiful objects, and their physicality makes their contents seem more meaningful, somehow" (215). In an era where everything is digital, now even books are electronic with E-book readers such as the Amazon Kindle and Sony Reader, and the urge to collect books is one many clutch to. In her attempts to understand these two men as examples of the literary world of collecting, she believes that books are physical representations of our history. While some collect for the monetary value, others collect because books are "repositories for memories," especially of childhood (Bartlett 20). Further, some men, like Gilkey, collect books not for a profit, but for the way the books make them look or feel; they represent an identity that some may not acquire otherwise.

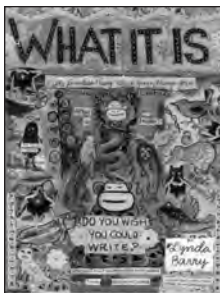
Despite her fascination with book collectors, the story inspiring Bartlett is Gilkey's. She records her experiences with the man who attributes ownership of rare books and a wealth of knowledge to being someone of higher societal status. Sanders provides Bartlett with opposing information: those with great collections start out with little money, but only through time and work do they gain their desires. The tension between these two men who have never had personal contact with one another resonates through Bartlett's own inner tension of collaborating an honest story that portrays the two lives of men, as well as her own, in ways to make readers aware of the effects that book collecting have on people (Bartlett 202). From here, we see men stealing books, men murdering others for a single copy, or people spending thousands of dollars to have the best collection to the point that it may be "an addiction, but finding those books is such a good feeling," as collector Joseph Serrano admits (113). Bartlett's research into the lives of those who love books beyond Gilkey and Sanders solidifies the text at hand; readers recognize that the market for rare books is far from rare.

Bartlett's style of presentation of the stories at hand is very personal; she often includes anecdotes that explain her own love for literature. Further, Bartlett segues into

Gilkey's tale through her own encounter with a rare book she came into possession of which belonged to a library years before. Readers may notice that the general substance of the book is inspired by numerous interviews between Bartlett and either Gilkey, Sanders, or other book collectors that have been affected by Gilkey's thefts and fraudulent purchases. Because of her approach to the stories, readers gain a more personal entrance into this world fascinated with books, but we also easily recognize the text's shortcomings.

For instance, Bartlett writes with uncertainty often; not only does she question the validity of her information, but also her own ability to understand the story, which makes it seem more genuine, but problematic. At different moments in the text, Bartlett attempts to impose bibliomania on herself just as she finds it in Gilkey and others. She ponders, "does the fact that I adore a book I cannot read a single word of indicate at least some leaning toward bibliomania" (131)? Here, Bartlett trivializes the issue at hand, indicating that anyone who loves books not for their content but for aesthetic pleasure may be bibliomaniacs themselves, although later she admits she is not a bibliomaniac.

Overall, Bartlett's *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much* aims, thematically and contextually, to dig deep into the literary world and show a side of it that modern society overlooks. Bartlett sets out to find the reasons people love collecting, especially—but not exclusively—books, to share the story of John Gilkey and Ken Sanders, and to explore her own love for books. Bartlett accomplishes all of these goals within the text. The issues she raises create an air of authorial uncertainty and create disjointed transitions between focuses of the literary world and John Gilkey's own story. Although *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much* has various issues that affect the reading, it still is a read for audiences who appreciate non-fiction stories, or more specifically those who enjoy either educating themselves more about collecting or the world of rare books.



Book Review >>> Ashley Butler

What it Is

Barry, Lynda. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2008. 209 pp.

In a graphic literary text that is wrought with moody collage artwork and beautifully executed narration, Lynda Barry's *What it Is* is a perfectly constructed anomaly within the graphic medium. In this intricately formed graphic text, Barry provides the reader with sections of deeply personal and engaging questions that are surrounded with unique artwork and also sections of autobiographical narration from when she was a young girl trying to know and embrace her own desires as a child, a woman, and an intellectual. Targeting so many of the important (and underlying) questions that we often forget about, this graphic text forces the reader to slow down and take a minute to really get to know him or herself as a person and also the journey that brought them to that point in life.

The book begins with a very brief bout of narration that is set up very similar to an average comic strip. This short piece showcases Barry herself having a conversation with a man that illustrates her own ways of thinking and communicating as well as her attitudes toward life. At the end of the two-page spread, there is an abrupt shift to a more three dimensional and tactile type of artwork that simply says "Hello! Its Me" (See Figure 1). This personal introduction into her text is something that lets the reader know that she is not claiming authority over her readers, but that she has, in fact, personally been at every level in her career and in her life. She invites all readers to take part, to get involved, and to lose themselves in order to find what they might be overlooking.

After her brief introduction, Barry provides a two-paged spread of collage-type artwork on yellow legal pad paper (See Figure 2). As this is how a large majority of the book is set up, it is nice to get a couple of pages of it before she begins her artistic journey. Addressing a series of questions such as, "What year is it in your imagination?", "What is the difference between imagination and memory?", and "What is an image?," Barry really challenges the reader to examine just how much imagination he or she really has left. This is a theme that comes up continuously throughout the text—not only how and why we lose the imagination that was so present at one time, but more importantly, how to go about getting it back.

Since imagination is something that we generally identify with children, Barry fittingly follows those initial pages of collage-type artwork with narration from when she was a little girl exploring her own imagination. Within the narration, Barry talks about the time in her childhood in which everything (toys, photos, etc.) had a sort of 'aliveness' that her imagination allowed her to take part in for awhile, but eventually ended. Here, Barry makes us think about what happens the first time we realize that what is in our imagination is not the same as what is in our reality. Barry writes:

I believed there was another world—but I only noticed it when it became harder to get to. There had been a time when a toy elephant was as alive as a real rabbit in the grass. I didn't know there were different kinds of aliveness, and two worlds contained by each other...no one told me the print on the wall was just ink and paper and had no life of its own. At some point, the cat stopped blinking, and I stopped thinking it could (11-12).

Barry continuously hits on the realizations and disillusionments that invade our childhood and begin to decide the person we become in the future.

From this point forward in the book, Barry focuses her energies on the question of what happens when our imagination begins to fade, and what we keep from it for ourselves. She discusses at the end of the first narrative section that she has since stopped believing that the stuffed animals and photos could move and become alive, but the images—despite it never happening—have stuck with her for years. In the collage sections that follow, she explores the idea of the image, the past, personal experience, memory, and what our imagination really is. Throughout the book, she explores a moment in her childhood that revealed something new to her—and then she follows it with these questions that circle around that which she is trying to identify. The question as seemingly simple as “What are thoughts?” (69), is something which we can all produce examples of and something we all think that we inherently know; but, as far as definition is concerned, we find it difficult to arrive at an adequate statement of description. Barry continuously poses questions throughout the text that the reader has to circle around multiple times without ever really arriving at a definition for—they are meant to merely linger.

According to Barry, in our creative lives, we are almost completely governed by questions—especially the two questions (See Figure 3) “Is this good?” and “Does this suck?” (123). These two questions, for Barry, are ones that seek us out and begin to decide the fate of our work before we even start it. They become guidelines, in essence, which we use to assess our own work—therefore paralyzing the production of work because we cannot get past those two brutal questions. The first step we can take to get back to our authentic creative self, for Barry, is ceasing to ask ourselves those questions and becoming okay with not knowing the answers to them. Barry writes, “To be able to stand not knowing long enough to let something alive take shape! Without the two questions so much is possible. To all the kids that quit drawing...Come back!” (135). Essentially, Barry claims that in not being unnecessarily critical of ourselves, we are finally able to produce something of which we can be proud.

Fittingly, Barry follows her personal exploration through narration and collage with an activity book that is set up as a sort of writing guide. This guide is really a way of exploring our memories and experiences. In this, we are able to focus on the natural material within our lives, rather than trying to start with the two governing questions and aiming to create something perfect and successful from the very beginning. In this activity book, Barry provides many little devices that aid anyone who wishes to play with creative writing without fear of it being ‘bad’. One of the biggest goals, it seems, of this part of the book is to get the individual to take the time to remember and explore oneself in a way that is focused and uninterrupted. This principle goes much further than creative writing—taking this time to explore is the most integral part of the creative process and personal growth. Without personal exploration, the process of thought becomes forced and inauthentic.

The final and perhaps most personal section of Barry's book is one that solidifies the importance of allowing oneself to really flourish creatively without the constructs of outside

judgment. In this section, Barry includes some of the notes from her notebook during the writing of *What it Is*. She discusses that while she is writing and creating, she has another blank pad of paper that she can go to in the case that she is not connecting with what she is working on. This section is devoted to showcasing some of the things that she was preoccupied with when she was writing the book—some of the things that she personally worked on while she could not focus on what she was writing (See Figure 4). Including this part of the book was crucial in showing the reader that everyone has days when his or her concentration is low, or the two dreaded questions come back, or the focus is lost—but more importantly, Barry shows the reader that it is okay to have days like this and that it is perfectly normal to not feel confident about one's work all the time. The reader can see throughout the last section exactly which pages Barry may have been working on while she was using her extra pad of paper. This is what distinguishes this text from other texts (especially books on writing—the audience can see what the process really looks like rather than only seeing the end product).

On the outside, this book is about writing. But on the inside, it is a book that asks the reader challenging questions, encourages the attempt of new things, suggests trying a new mode of thinking without feeling 'wrong', and most importantly urges us to just try without fear of judgment. In a novel or work of nonfiction, the author often spends hundreds of pages getting at a single theme or a cluster of truths, but in *What it Is*, Barry is able to ask innumerable questions that are immediate and do not warrant deciphering via a plot of any sort. She wants the reader to come to these questions directly so that nothing is missed. The style of this text is innovative and successful because of the efficiency of what it does for the reader. In one book, we have striking narrative, beautifully personal artwork, an activity book that encourages the reader to play with new and exploratory techniques, and even a glimpse into what creation looks and feels like. Whether the reader is an avid lover of comics or someone who has had little to no experience with the graphic form, Barry's book is perfect for anyone who wishes to become engaged by the creative, who desires to know the freedom of being able to play with something new, or is interested in feeling liberated from the social and cultural constructs that hinder our pure and primitive love of living and creating. *What it Is*, is a successfully personal piece which draws the reader in and demands them to life—it is an experience in itself.



Figure 1



Figure 2

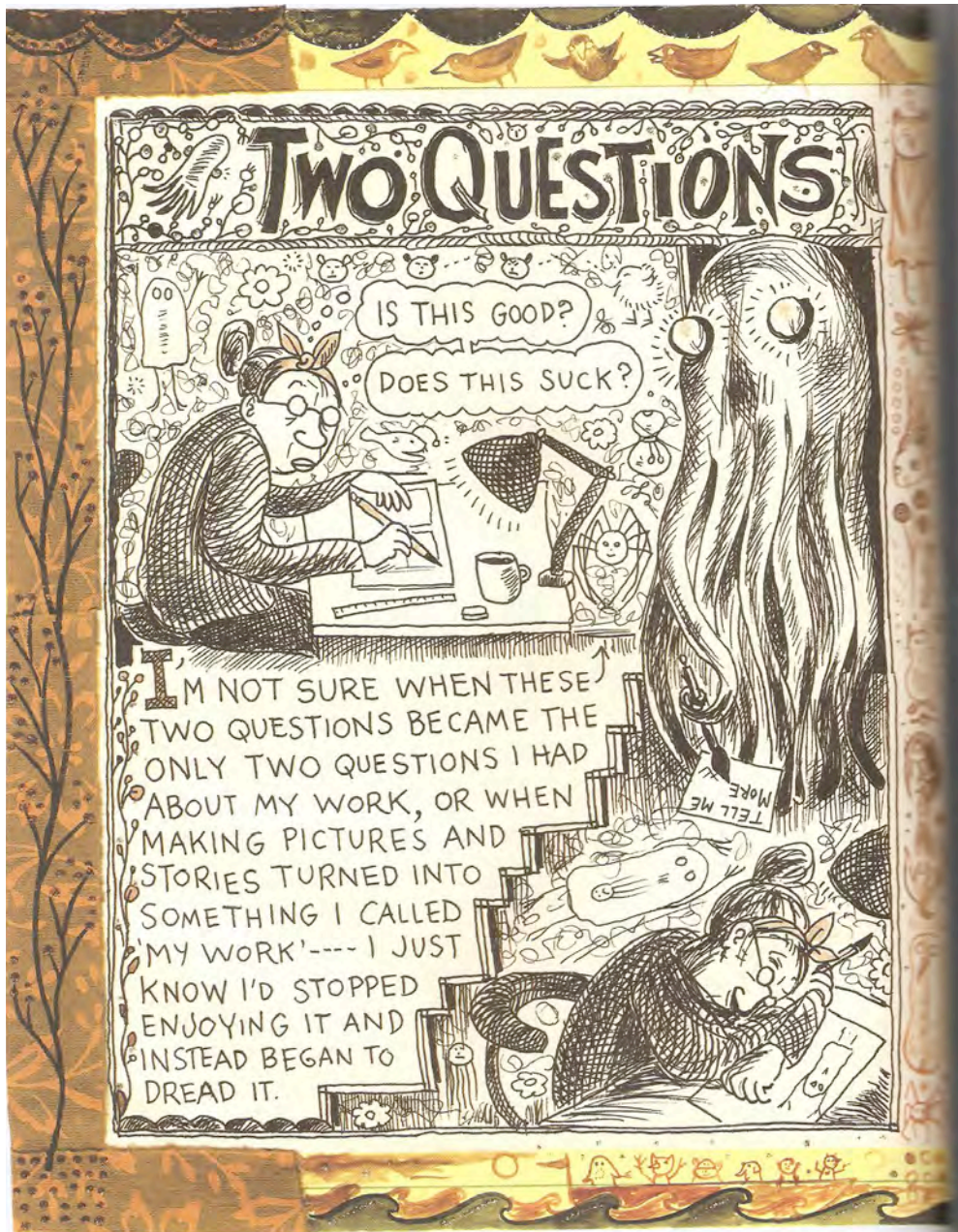


Figure 3



Contributors >>>

>>> **Ashley Butler**, originally from Ashland, Ohio, is a graduating senior majoring in English and Psychology. After taking a year off of school to meander and explore, she plans to pursue graduate study in English with a focus on 20th century and contemporary literature and critical theory (primarily psychoanalysis). In her loads of spare time, she also enjoys running, photography, reading for pleasure, porch-swinging, and traveling. She is extremely thankful to the advisors, mentors, professors, and friends from whom she has learned so much and to whom she can attribute her academic and personal successes at Otterbein. In particular, she would like to thank Paul Eisenstein, Tammy Birk, Margaret Koehler, and Cindy Laurie-Rose for their fervent support and constant encouragement to pursue what feels most intellectually stimulating and authentic. And, of course, she'd like to thank her family for being so incredibly supportive, always.

>>> **Ruthann Elder** is a senior Music and Business major originally from Mount Vernon, Ohio. She has been an active percussionist in several Otterbein ensembles including Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and the Westerville Symphony. After graduating from Otterbein, Ruthann plans to attend the University of La Verne College of Law in southern California.

>>> **Will Ferrall** was born and raised in Portridge, New South Wales, where he attended primary school before moving to Hilliard, Ohio in 1996. Time has since passed, and Will now attends Otterbein College, from which he will soon graduate with degrees in Political Science and, vaguely, International Studies. Following a hopefully fruitful summer, Will will be attending New York University, where he shall pursue a Masters in international politics and be forced to pay his rent in-kind. Despite this financial strain, Will has hobbies and participates in meaningful activities.

>>> **Stephanie Freas** is a senior double English major with a philosophy minor. Her passion is writing poetry and reading, researching Holocaust literature, community service, working early mornings in the library, Quiz and Quill, and her beloved sorority Kappa Phi Omega. She will be graduating in the spring and hopes to attend graduate school and become an English professor one day. Stephanie gives thanks to her family for shaping her, the English department for inspiring her passion for academics, and her friends for making these the best years of her life so far.

>>> **JT Hillier** is a sophomore English major originally from Delaware, Ohio. A bit of a social loner, he's enjoyed spending most of his college experience expanding his deep love for music, conversing with close friends (sometimes with complete strangers), stocking his book shelf, and playing a guitar as often as humanly possible. He would like to thank all of his friends and faculty in the English department for their inspiration, and for molding him into a life-long learner.

>>> Boris Hinderer is a sophomore creative writing and psychology double major here at Otterbein. He is involved with the Student Alumni Association and the Outdoor Adventure club here at Otterbein.

>>> Christine Horvath is a Junior at Otterbein. Currently, she is studying English, concentration in Literary Studies, with a minor in Womens Studies. Although she has no idea what she will do with her life after graduation, she is hoping to achieve the American Dream in any field that will take her. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, watching and quoting The Office religiously and being with her beautiful sisters of Tau Epsilon Mu and her gallant and refined boyfriend, Jeff. She'd like to leave you with a quote: "With each gift that you share, you may heal and repair / With each choice you make you may help someone's day / I know you are strong, may your journey be long / and now I wish you the best of luck." -Xavier Rudd, Messages

>>> Brianna Joslyn is a senior at Otterbein and will be graduating this June with a major in International Studies and minors in Dance and French. Next year, she will be attending George Mason University to begin her M.A. in Global Affairs. She was born in New Jersey, raised in Ohio, studied abroad in the Czech Republic, traveled around Europe, and plans to see as much of the world as possible, especially that of Asia. Her favorite activities include dancing, reading, traveling, drinking mochas, and labeling her friends with sticky notes. Thank you to her lovely roommates for their patience and friendship and to her parents for their infinite support and love.

>>> Eryn Kane is a senior graduating in June with a BA in History and a minor in Women's Studies. When she is not busy with homework, Eryn loves to spend time with her beautiful sisters at Epsilon Kappa Tau, express her Irish heritage, travel, and pursue new adventures. After graduation, she plans to take a year off to catch her breath and then pursue a Doctorate in Colonial American History. She would like to thank Stephanie and Lindsay for being her oldest and dearest friends, the amazing women of EKT for believing in her, her family for their constant support, and Dr. Fatherly for her encouragement and inspirational wisdom.

>>> Justin McAtee is a sophomore Psychology/Creative Writing double major hailing from the hills and pastures of southeast Ohio. Armed with only the crudest understanding of scholarly thought, literature, and their relevance to an Appalachian farm boy, he is honored to have blundered his way into Aegis. Much thanks to Dr. Steigman, Will, and Ashley for their patience.

>>> Victoria Mullins graduated from Otterbein College in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in literary studies. Currently, she and her husband are expecting their first child in May 2010. Victoria is planning on returning to school in pursuit of a graduate degree with the hopes of eventually becoming an English professor. She would like to thank Dr. Beth Rigel Daugherty, Dr. Karen Steigman, and Dr. Margaret Koehler for inspiring her to continue her education. She also thanks her family for believing in her and supporting her through all her endeavors.

>>> **Kirsten Peninger** is a senior with an individualized major in Global Music and Cultural Relations. In the fall of 2010, she will begin attending Michigan State University, working toward a PhD in anthropology. When she isn't in class, Kirsten can usually be found at Java Central, enjoying a Double Mocha Java and raging against the machine. She would like to thank her friends for living with her mess while she put together this article and others (crawling around four foot tall stacks of books is, apparently, not fun) and her professors, most especially Dr. Cooper and Dr. Pariola-Smith, for their years of encouragement.

>>> **Larsa Ramsini** graduated from Otterbein in the spring of 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, Philosophy, and French. That summer she taught summer school at South Philadelphia High School and began teaching 7th and 8th grade math in the fall at Bay Brook Elementary/Middle in southeast Baltimore as part of Teach For America. She will continue teaching this coming school year and will begin at William and Mary Law School in the fall of 2011. She would like to thank her family and friends for being extremely supportive during the transition from college to teaching in Baltimore City.

>>> **Jennifer Joy Rish** is an English ILA, Lit Studies, and Creative Writing major who likes good food, books, singing, and oxford shirts. She is an absolute sucker for romantic poetry and plans to eventually become a professor or teach Middle School or High School English. She also hopes to become a writer.

>>> **Jonna Stewart** from Cedarville, Ohio, is an English major with a concentration in Literary Studies and a Legal Studies minor at Otterbein College. After graduating in 2012, she plans on attending law school. When she's not busy reading or writing for her classes, she's studying some other topic of interest. She loves visiting her hometown to spend time with her family and church family. She's extremely thankful for Cedarville Schools and Otterbein College for providing amazing teachers and outstanding education.

>>> **Danielle Wood** is a junior Middle Childhood Education Major from Marion, OH. Outside of class and working she enjoys running and swimming. After graduation in 2011, Danielle will be teaching either Math or Language Arts in the middle grades. Danielle is actively involved in Otterbein's Collegiate Middle Level Association and hopes to affect the lives of many young adolescents with her teaching.

>>> **Vianca Yohn** is a sophomore double-concentrating in English literary studies and English creative writing as well as working towards her Integrated Language Arts (grades 7-12) teaching certification. She is president of the GLBTQA (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, ally) organization, FreeZone!; a student blogger for the Otterbein admissions department; and works for the school as a tour guide in the Admissions Office and a writing consultant in the Writing Center. After she graduates from Otterbein, she plans to enter directly into teaching, though her long-term goals are to earn her Master's degree, publish some of her writing, and ultimately return to Otterbein College to teach in the English department.

