Wide Angle

a journal of literature and film

Mission Statement

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing one issue each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, and screenplays.

Contents

Creative Writing

Special Series:

Harper Lee and Her Legacy

Laura Ann Prickett

Edward Colston, Atticus Finch, and the Human Condition

During the summer after my first year of college, I spent a month studying the Transatlantic Slave Trade at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom. The experience shaped me in many ways, but perhaps the most profound lesson I learned came from a metal statue in Bristol's city center. Edward Colston's statue reflects the significance of the man's legacy for the city of Bristol. As a Merchant Venturer during the eighteenth century, Mr. Colston greatly profited from his investments in Transatlantic trade. A philanthropist, he gave back much of his wealth to his city, investing in the infrastructure of his community by providing money to its most pressing causes. In addition to the statue, many buildings still hold his name including a school, a hospital, and a public performing arts center because of the continued benefit of his financing. However, much of Mr. Colston's profit, like many successful businessmen during his time, was discovered to have come at the expense of the enslavement and exploitation of Africans. Recently, many in Bristol have begun to call for the removal of the statue and the removal of Colston's name from these important city services. Because of his involvement in and benefit from the Slave Trade, many citizens find it unethical to continue to allow his name to represent their city, in spite of the fact that Colston willingly offered his wealth to help serve them.

I find the story of Mr. Colston's legacy essential to understanding the brilliance of Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* in its controversial development of the character Atticus. Like the

citizens of Bristol, many of Lee's readers find the change in Atticus's character deplorable and allow his new characterization to taint their opinion of the novel. These critics hold Atticus as a stagnant symbol of morality. However, understandings of morality change over time within communities, and I believe, in refusing Atticus the status of a purely righteous hero, Lee offers her audience both a realistic representation of a round life and a commentary on the social fluidity of moral opinions.

Like Colston, Atticus is not impeccably righteous. Lee forces us to consider the history of Atticus's character in its entirety. We consider his compassionate tolerance in *To Kill a Mockingbird* alongside his deliberate racism in *Go Set a Watchman*. We see the outcome of a change in Atticus and are forced to ask ourselves how we might change with time and what injustice we are capable of justifying. The audience, like Jean Marie, must settle the tension of Atticus's identity as a wise father and as a hateful bigot. In this novel, Lee beautifully represents Scout's bildungsroman—the process of coming of age and resolving her disillusionment after discovering the imperfections of her parents and of her home.

Readers who deny Atticus the ability to change his mind and be shaped by community forces are stuck in a romantic, eighteenth century understanding of fiction. They require fiction to abide by the same standards as suggested by Samuel Johnson in Rambler No. 4. Johnson holds that the design of fiction is "to increase prudence without impairing virtue" and "to teach the means of avoiding the snares which are laid by Treachery for Innocence." These moral requirements limit fiction's ability to grapple with the complexity of human life and limit the frequent disparities between action and gradual depravation of moral belief. While I appreciate the historical value of Johnson's criticism, I think requiring fiction to moralize its narratives and use character typologies of "good people" and "bad people" is unrealistic and impractical. In

truth, there are no morally perfect heroes. Being human entails that each of us is Edward Colston in our own way. We must face the real possibility that our posterity might overshadow the good we do today with a new interpretation of our beliefs. In *Go Set a Watchman*, Atticus Finch represents the human condition, always evolving and always holding within us both the power for good and the power for evil.

Special Series:

Harper Lee and Her Legacy

Ben Crabtree

Memories of *Mockingbird*: A Reflection and Analysis of 1962's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Since the beginning of cinematic history, directors have adapted works of literature into films in order to breathe new life into an already beloved work of art. While many adaptations have disappointed audiences, there have been a few film adaptations that have received acclaim and stood the tests of time to become classics. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) is one of the greatest examples of a successful adaptation. This film was loved, both by critics and audiences, upon its release and is viewed today as one of the greatest films of all time. While *Mockingbird* is not a perfect adaptation or a perfect film, its faithfulness to the source material and brilliant performances set it apart as a mesmerizing piece of art worth viewing for years to come.

In order to assess the brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one must first realize that it is not a perfect film. The cinematography and editing techniques are definitely dated, and some of the acting seems melodramatic, especially from a couple of the children and Ruth White as Mrs. Dubose. However, one must understand that times were different and this film follows a long tradition of melodramatic adaptations, including films such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952). Furthermore, the narrative occasionally seems slow and slightly choppy as *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a long novel to condense into two hours and nine minutes. Also, since *Mockingbird* is a universally loved novel, one may find that his/her favorite

scene has been left out in order to include more pivotal moments to the plot. Nevertheless, these complaints are few, and they do not detract from the brilliance of the film.

Even in spite of the differences from the source text and adherence to overused trends, director Robert Mulligan, cinematographer Russell Harlan, and screenwriter Horton Foote crafted a masterpiece that remains true to the beloved book. Mulligan's direction is a wonderful blend of the artistic cinema of the '50s and early '60s and the commercial adaptations of the '30s and '40s. The opening credits hearken back to the films of Max Ophüls, especially the opening scene from *The Earrings of Madame de…* (1953), as Mulligan showcases objects that embody Scout's childhood, such as crayons and dolls, and other objects that subtly foreshadow the plot, such as the drawing of the mockingbird. Mulligan also creates an environment that embodies the setting of the novel, similar to Raymond Bernard's *Les Misérables* (1934) and William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939), as it beautifully transports the audience to Harper Lee's Maycomb, Alabama. Furthermore, cinematographer Russell Harlan's masterful use of black and white, in an era dominated by color cinema, emphasized Mulligan's attempt to intricately recreate the novel's setting in Depression-era Alabama. Also, the black-and-white cinematography acts as a symbol for the segregated society, emphasizing the majority Maycomb's citizens' view that black and white should remain separate.

While Mulligan's direction and Harlan's cinematography make this film aesthetically beautiful, Horton Foote's script brings more substance, passion, and power to the narrative. Foote's screenplay is one of the finest in cinematic history. He craftily uses quotes and dialect from the book alongside his own written dialogue in order to lovingly encapsulate the narrative and honestly convey the themes of racial equality and standing against oppression that are present in Lee's novel. Furthermore, his adaptation of the courtroom speech from the novel is

one of the most powerful courtroom scenes of all time. The screenplay reads like poetry and conveys the beautiful themes of coming-of-age, illustrated through the various conversations between Atticus and Scout, and the importance of equality, showcased in the aforementioned courtroom speech, that pervaded Harper Lee's novel.

Although Horton Foote's screenplay was powerful on paper, it is nearly impossible to deny that the true narrative power was emphasized and encapsulated in the brilliant performances throughout the film. Brock Peters gave an equally strong and sad performance as Tom Robinson. In his unfortunately limited screen time, Peters embodied the character's despair and tender strength poignantly. James Anderson also gives a fantastic performance as the despicable Bob Ewell. Throughout the film, Anderson portrays Ewell as disgusting as he appears in the novel. This film also introduced the world to the now Academy-Award winning Robert Duvall, as the mysterious and sympathetic Boo Radley. However, one of the most pleasant surprises throughout the film is Mary Badham's brilliant portrayal of Scout Finch. Badham embodied Scout's spunk, curiosity, and independence perfectly, ranking this role among the best child performances in all of film history.

While these performances made *Mockingbird* a great adaptation, Gregory Peck's Oscar-winning turn as Atticus Finch made this film a cinematic classic. In the novel, Atticus tells Scout that you can only understand a person if you "climb into his [or her] skin and walk around in it" (Lee 30). Similarly, Gregory Peck "climb[ed] into" Atticus's "skin," giving us a completely immersive and believable performance. He also boldly addressed the issues of segregation and inequality in the Southern United States in the 1960s. The fact that Peck filmed the courtroom scene in a single take is enough to set his performances apart as one of Hollywood's best. However, his consistency and dedication to the role throughout the film sets him apart even

further. Even when modern American students discuss *To Kill a Mockingbird* in school, it is nearly impossible to avoid a mention of Gregory Peck's Atticus Finch. His Atticus Finch audaciously embodied the Civil Rights movement of the 60s and brought ideas of racial equality even further into the mainstream media. This performance not only defined Peck's career but also set this film apart as one of the greatest and most revolutionary adaptations in cinema history.

Robert Mulligan's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a poignant film characterized by a beautiful, artistic adaptation of a timeless novel and bold, powerful performances from Gregory Peck and most of the cast. While the film has aged technically and may seem drawn out at times, the positives definitely outweigh the negatives, setting *Mockingbird* apart as an American cinematic classic. Furthermore, both Horton Foote's screenplay and Gregory Peck's performance brought the issues of segregation and the need for racial equality into the forefront, setting this film apart as a revolutionary piece of art. Even after fifty-three years, this film conveys the timeless truths that everyone, no matter race, gender, religion, or social standing, should be afforded equal opportunities and be treated as a valuable human being.

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Essay

Carlson Coogler

The "Wild Inconsistency":

Dis-ease and Dys-function in "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Gothic fiction, according to Teresa Goddu, reflects the dialogues occurring in its time period (5). In order to interpret Gothic fiction accurately, this essay will examine the medical diction in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" according to an aspect of the historical context: the contemporary shift in the philosophy and practice of medicine. In particular, I include the medical context to illuminate the articulation of mental dis-ease as physical dys-function. This embodying of mental illness in the narrative blurs the distinction between mind and body, infecting each term with the meaning of the other. However, this tendency to embody the mind is not solely due to the medical context. Rather, the evolutionary tendency of humans is to read the mind by the body (a theory that Lisa Zunshine explains in her article "Theory of Mind and Fictions of Embodied Transparency"). Furthermore, as this essay notes, the sense of contamination is also due to the Gothic form itself, which is "obsessed with transgressing boundaries" (Goddu 5). Since infection of meaning comes with the Gothic form, it naturally contributes to the mingling of the ideas of dis-ease and dys-function. Together, the medical context, the embodying of the mind, and the nature of the Gothic form, are agents in the infecting embodiment of dis-ease as dys-function.

It is significant that the only characters in the story are the narrator, the Ushers, and the physician. The physician's appearance in the story, though brief, highlights the medical diction and the narrator's preoccupation with disease and diagnosis. Indeed, the narrator "clearly puts

himself in the position of a physician," as the timing of his arrival suggests (Richard qtd. in Roche 23). As the narrator is shown to Roderick Usher's chambers, he passes the physician, evidently leaving from diagnosing and treating Madeline "on one of the staircases" (Poe 704). The narrator immediately interprets the physician's appearance, whose face "wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity" and who exhibited "trepidation" (704; Roche 23). After this diagnosis of the physician's state, the narrator enters the presence of Roderick and continues diagnosing. The narrator decides that around Roderick lay "an atmosphere of sorrow," invoking with his diction the medical theory of miasmata, which associates illness with atmospheric conditions (Poe 704; Hannaway 295). The miasmatic diction does more than describe an emotional state. It also establishes the narrator as an expert who is capable of recognizing the infecting agency that could have so "altered" the appearance of Roderick's face (Poe 704). The narrator also prescribes and performs treatment: "I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend" (706). As they pass on the staircase, the reader associates one diagnostic with another. The doctor is a physician by profession and title, but Roderick is one by the practices and interpretations within his narrative.

Roderick is not the only character the narrator diagnoses. When he and Roderick view Madeline's body, he speaks with surprising authority, confirming the evidence of her death. This certainty is strange because he previously indicated that the doctors who treated Madeline were "long baffled" by "the disease of the lady Madeline" (706). The same disease that the medical physicians failed to understand is the disease for the narrator interprets as the posthumous symptom of "the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face" (710). Assured, he explains this odd manifestation was "as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptic character" even though the trained physicians' bafflement suggests uncertainty in their diagnosis of her

"transient affections of a partially cataleptic nature" (706). The narrator's odd confidence must be partially from Roderick's own conclusions. Roderick presents himself as an expert due to his "consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased" and his initial confiding to the narrator of "the evidently approaching dissolution" of Madeline (710, 705). Nonetheless, it seems strange to the reader that the narrator is so at ease accepting Roderick's diagnosis considering the narrator's uncertainty of Usher's mental stability. For example, when Roderick informs the narrator that Madeline had finally become bed-ridden, the narrator concludes that "the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more" (706).

Sheer trust in Roderick, knowing both his mental instability and extreme distress, suggests the narrator has been "infected" already with Roderick's condition (711). The narrator was likely aware of his own sickness because Roderick is also aware of his illness. In Roderick's poetry, the narrator recalls sensing Usher was strangely cognizant of his decay: "in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived [. . .] a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne" (707). Whether or not we are to conclude a lucid self-awareness in Usher regarding his own mental deterioration, the connection between the conditions of Roderick and the narrator suggests the narrator is aware—with the horror of inevitability—of his own decline. If so, it explains why someone who was initially confident in his ability to help Roderick out of his "melancholy" state would then fail remarkably to read correctly the more obvious and certain evidence of life in Madeline's body (706). The narrator is absorbed in watching his decline, just as Roderick is absorbed in witnessing his own descent into madness.

The medical liminality of the time period is inherent in some of these diagnoses by the narrator-physician. In the history of medicine, the early nineteenth century was the arena of a

very important shift in both the theory and practice of medicine. Before this time, humoralism was the dominant guiding interpretation of disease and treatment. Humoralism is the theory that the body is composed of four fluids called humors—phlegm, blood, black bile, and yellow bile (Bynum 10). Illness was the result of an imbalance of these humors (Bynum 12). Because of the internality of humors and the belief that it was their imbalance (not just presence) that caused illness, sickness was a hidden and largely theoretical entity. Though the doctor could interact with blood in treatment, the illness itself was not isolated and addressed by the physician in the way that a surgeon isolates and removes a tumor from the body. This is a particularly foreign concept to modern readers who are accustomed to understanding illness by presence. A virus makes one sick; a virus that is not there does not make one sick. Though the abundance of phlegm is a diseased state, the presence of phlegm itself is not. Instead of removing the disease as if it was an entity in itself, humoral medicine corrected the imbalance in the individual. This implies a very important aspect of the perception of illness. A doctor would treat a patient without necessarily coming into contact with the illness because illness was thought of as a state of being rather than the presence or absence of a single removable factor.

However, with the advent and popularization of the French hospital and medical school, doctors took up a surgical role (Bynum 46). Physicians largely treated the person as a unit via holistic remedies based on the theories of balance and imbalance from humoralism, "the surgeons had always been confronted with the local: with abscesses, broken bones, specific abnormalities requiring definitive intervention at a particular site" (46). When French medical schools began diagnosing based on the presence of a lesion, which is an observable "pathological change," physicians began to treat patients as a surgeon would, conceiving disease as something that can be directly treated, e.g., completely removed (46). As part of this change, diagnosis also

began to depend on "objective signs" and privileging the "public" instead of the "private"

manifestations of disease (47).

The narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher" diagnoses and administers treatment as

one would expect from a physician practicing during this medical upheaval. On one hand, he

maintains the vestiges of the still-present-but-fading theory of humoralism when he refers to

disease using particularly humoralistic diction, and he preserves the notion of disease as a hidden

state of being. He refers to the "melancholy House of Usher" and to Roderick's mind as both

"melancholy," and as producing music that is "pervers[e]" (Poe 702, 706). In these cases, the

illness is an internal corruption of a person's hidden aspects. Likewise, when the narrator recalls

Roderick's poem, the images suggest purging, a common humoral treatment, when "through the

pale door / a hideous throng rush out forever" (Poe 708). On the other hand, the narrator

obsessively seeks to identify a lesion, which is namely evidence that externally and publicly

proves the existence of a diseased state (Bynum 46). In particular, he continually embodies the

illness in Roderick's mind, making a dis-ease into a dys-function. By dis-ease, I mean to imply

an abnormal condition of the internal balance, either in the mind or in the emotions. By dys-

function, I mean to imply an abnormal condition of the physical structure of the body, whether

organs, blood, genes, or other structures. The narrator's diagnoses of Roderick's decline after his

sister's death typifies the articulation of dis-ease as dys-function in the narration. Citing the

extinction of the "luminousness of his eye" and the change in Roderick's behavior, the narrator

diagnoses that "an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my

friend" (Poe 710). The particularly revealing diction assumes that a mental state, like the

expression of an eye, has a proper order and behavior from which a deviation can be directly

perceived. The narrator imagines he can interpret a hidden, internal state the way he would

perceive the swelling of a limb: by its deviation from a structure. The narrator views the hidden dis-eased state of Roderick's mind as if it is dys-function.

Roderick's association with the literal house further evidences the embodying of dis-ease as dys-function. As David Roche points out, the narrator means for us to explicitly connect the house with not solely an idea of the family or familial heritage but also with the physical bodies of the family members when he draws our attention to the "the physique of the gray walls and turrets" (22; Poe 705). But, the narrator also makes it clear that we should recognize in the state of the "physique" of the house an embodiment of the internal, non-physical illness of Roderick when he describes both with the term "inconsistency" (Poe 703, 705). With the eye of a diagnostic, the narrator notes in the condition of the house "there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaption of parts, and the utterly porous, and evidently decayed condition of the individual stones" (703). Soon after, upon arriving in Roderick's chamber, the narrator says he was "at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency" in Roderick's "manner" (705). Clearly the narrator retroactively interpreting in an attempt to make sense of his experience connects the physical home's appearance with the state of Roderick's mind. As Donald A. Ringe points out by quoting Poe, the deteriorating mansion had particular significance in the author's conception of the mind. In a letter, Poe wrote "by the Haunted Palace I mean to imply a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain" (qtd. in Ringe 136). The narrator invokes a sense of "disorder"—which draws on spatial ideas of functioning to further suggest the physical biology of the mind, the "brain"—to connect the dys-function of the home with the dis-ease of Usher.

The other rooms and enclosures in the tale also represent the mental condition of Roderick (Ringe 136). Ringe cites many aspects of the architecture, including Usher's "study

enveloped in darkness" and the tomb-like room painted by Usher, to suggest "the mental condition of one who has lost his hold on reason" because of his "utter isolation [. . .] and the strange light" within (137). Extending the same logic, the narrator's description of "old wood-work which has rotten for long years in some neglected vault" evokes the hidden moldering of the mind suggested by the decay of the brain in the skull (Poe 703). When the narrator views the literal house of Usher, he imagines that it shares the condition of Roderick's mind: an internal, hidden decay in agreement with the external structure's evident deterioration. Evidence of the dys-function of the physical, an architectural lesion, manifests the hidden reality of the immaterial, dis-eased mind.

Besides the appearance of the house, the narrator reads Roderick's mental condition through other embodiments. Before he visited Roderick, the narrator says that he perceived "evidence of nervous agitation" in the "MS"—as if the physical paper was an accurate, external "clinical sign" of Usher's internal state (Poe 702; Roche 24). Then, when he first sees Roderick, he examines Usher's face for a pathological change, and he imagines he locates the lesion. "Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher!" (Poe 704). Later, when Roderick perceives Madeline at the door, the narrator interprets a "sickly smile" on the face of Usher (713). Most tellingly, the narrator talks about Roderick's madness as if it is communicable bodily: "it was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me" (711). In fact, the narrator interprets Roderick's mental state as intensely "public," in both symptoms and nature, when he diagnoses that it has spread to himself (Bynum 47). Roderick's mental condition is read like a "public" dys-function of the brain, instead of a "personal" dis-ease of the mind (Bynum 47). In this articulation, Roderick's dis-ease is more like a physical virus than a mental imbalance.

Throughout the narrative, Roderick's condition is highly contagious. The narrator records that simply by viewing the home for the first time, "there grew in [his] mind a strange fancy" (703). The action of expansion and the abnormal nature of the idea suggest the grotesque lesion of a tumor enlarging in the brain. This abnormal thought, which "grew" tumor-like in the narrator, is the conception that the home produced a strange "atmosphere," which is a thought Roderick later expresses independently (703). The physical house, in representing Roderick's internal condition, transmits his condition as a vector transmits physical disease. Because an idea that "grew" in the mind suggests a physical change in the brain, it provides a lesion through which the narrator-physician could embody "the pathological change," the otherwise abstract experience of fear (Bynum 46). The narrator, functioning as a physician, examines the history of his own illness and performs metaphorical surgery to locate the first pathological warping of his once healthy thoughts. Interestingly, in French hospital medicine, doctors also searched for such a tumor or an abnormality as an embodied cause for mental illness (63). Physicians who examined the mad for "lesions, the basis of Paris medicine, were usually disappointed" because "the brains of lunatics rarely pointed to some specific reason why the patient displayed symptoms" (63). The lack of physical connection challenges the interpretation of dis-ease as dys-function in medical history and in the narrative. Nonetheless, the narrator still imagines a lesion, the "strange" growth in his mind, to explain the infection of his mental condition.

The narrator's attempts to embody the dis-ease of Roderick's mind and of his own mind in biological, locatable lesions can be traced to the larger evolutionary tendency of human kind. Scholar Lisa Zunshine points out in her articulation of "mind-reading" that the phenomenon of assigning an internal condition to an individual based on an external manifestation is a common cultural practice (67). She argues that reading the body is essential because the body has

historically been "the text that we read throughout our evolution as a social species" (69). Interpreting the body in order to diagnose the hidden, internal condition of the mind is a prominent aspect in literature, Zunshine explains, because authors write characters' "bodies [so that they] are temporarily forced into functioning as direct conduits to mental states" (66). This does not mean the body is an accurate reflection of the mind of the character. It does mean that we read it obsessively as both "the best and the worst source of information about the mind" (66). Zunshine's evolutionary understanding of reading the mind by reading the body implies it is an essential strategy for survival, which helps illuminate why the narrator would retroactively be so concerned with reading the physical evidence in order to explain an experience he has barely survived.

However, the physicality in the narrator's representation of Roderick's and his own immaterial conditions results not only from the medical liminality of the time period nor from just the evolutionary phenomenon of interpreting the mind via the body. The embodiment of the mind also results from the Gothic form itself. Although critics disagree on an exhaustive list of the defining characteristics of Gothic fiction, many articulate an obsession with boundaries and liminal spaces. It explores "extremes and excess," Allan Lloyd-Smith notes, and exists in "an investigation of limits" (5). Teresa Goddu argues it is "cobbled together of many different forms and obsessed with transgressing boundaries" (5). In a metanarrative way, it chooses to "represen[t] itself not as stable but as generically impure" (5). The form is aware of its own instability like Roderick is aware of his descent out of reason and into madness (5). In support of her articulation of the Gothic form, Goddu also cites Maggie Kilgour, who compared the Gothic form to "'a Frankenstein's monster assembled out of bits and pieces of the past' (3-4)" (qtd. in Goddu 5).

This interpretation of the Gothic form as piecemeal aligns with David Roche's interpretation of the "The Fall of the House of Usher" as a narrative. Roche argues that there is an "ultimat[e] [. . .] impossibility of locating the cause of the illness with any certainty" (21). This uncertainty results from the "unhealthy" in the story, which is a term that Roche defines "as the relation making possible the transmission of [. . .] disease" (22). Importantly, he describes the function of the "unhealthy" as "blur[ring] the dividing line between subject and object" (22). That is, the sense of illness in the narrative results from the cross-contamination of liminal terms. "The Fall of the House of Usher" indeed joins together the narrator and the physician, humoralism and French hospital medicine, dis-ease and dys-function, Roderick and the narrator, and Roderick and the house. As it blurs the boundaries between these ideas and identities by joining them, the pure meaning of each term is lost in infection. The "unhealthy" Roche perceives is the possibility and reality of the between. When is the illness wholly dis-ease, and when is it wholly dys-function? How can the reader tease apart the narrator's mind from Roderick's? The terms are so infected by each other we must conclude the story itself is, as one critic argues, a vector: "the meaning of the tale [. . .] is the contamination" (113; Claude Richard qtd. in Roche 21). Because the Gothic form infects the terms it contains due to its "cobbled" and "tragressi[ve]" nature, it is an agent of infection in this narrative of contamination (Goddu 5).

On one level, the reader could interpret the tale as a meta-narrative exploration of the Gothic form. "The Fall of the House of Usher" is "a story about its own construction" (Peeples qtd. in Roche 22). In particular, the house of Usher suggests that the narrative is a performance of its particularly Gothic "construction." The literal house of Usher is tied to Roderick's internal condition. On one level of interpretation, therefore, it is his death that causes the home to finally

crumble into the lake. However, the house can also be read as an embodiment of the narrative itself, because it is not until the narrator exits "the chamber, and from that mansion" that the narrator notices and records the crumbling of the stones (Poe 714). The narrative ends with the home's fall; the home's fall ends the narrative.

Yet, perhaps more accurately, the home's fall begins and ends the narrative. It is the house and its environs, not Roderick's condition or Madeline's live burial, that first horrify the reader. When the narrator, as he contemplates the literal house of Usher, is struck by its precarious appearance, he articulates a paradox: a whole that maintains a "still perfect adaptation of parts" but is impossibly "decayed" and "utterly porous" (703). The story itself, enacting the piecemeal nature of the Gothic, further expounds this impossibility. Significantly, the house maintains its paradoxical architecture through most of the narrative until the stress of the death of the last two Ushers cause the house to fall into its "fragments," and the Gothic narrative resolves firmly with their deaths and the narrator's escape (714).

The existence of the fissure also teaches us to read the home reflexively. Although the walls themselves "gave little token of instability," the narrator plasters the fall as priori onto the walls: "perhaps the scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure" (703). The precise imagining of the feature responsible for the fall reveals the "construct[ed]" nature of the narrative. The impossibility surrounding the home's fall also exposes the narrative's "construction." Before it fell, shining "vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure," was the light of the "blood-red moon" (714). There is no way for external light to shine through a home, except through aligned windows. No matter where you put the moon, the narrator's observation of "vivid" light seems impossible. At best, light that must shine completely through two walls of a home would be weak not "vivid" (714). Presumably, this description is symbolic

and ties directly back to the "red-litten windows" of "The Haunted Palace" (708). But, at this point in the narrative, reality and fantasy have been so mixed that truth is obscure, which is a "defining" aspect of the Gothic form (Jackson qtd. in Spooner and McEvoy 1). It is clear that the narrative "vividly" glows with the red light of infection, terror and madness. The house and the fissure embody the contamination of the narrator's experience and the infection within the Gothic narrative.

The "construction" and communicability evident in the narrative are not isolated because "[G]othic stories are intimately connected to the culture that produces them" (Goddu 2). That dependence on historical context brings the reader right back to the other aspects which influence the narrative: the medical context, the evolutionary phenomenon of embodying the mind, and the piecemeal form of Gothic fiction. Together, these aspects contribute to a particularly eerie story of dis-ease and dys-function, which are made more terrible for the multi-layered uncertainty in interpretation and diagnosis. This "wild inconsistency" thwarts Roderick and the reader and infects the meaning (Poe 703). Contamination is the only thing that seems certain about the "The Fall of the House of Usher" and its narrator-physician.

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Essay

Casey Cunningham

The Inversion of Insanity in Modern War:

The Satirizing of Military Bureaucracy in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* defies traditional expectations of the war novel by using dark humor and blatant satire to ridicule even the most serious subjects. Through repeated reversal of expectations, an ironic claim about the nature of modern war is communicated; when killing becomes morally acceptable and warfare is subservient to the petty whims of military bureaucrats, the traditionally insane become the only voice of reason. In *Catch-22*, this voice of reason is the central character: the antihero Yossarian. He opposes the ridiculous actions of the commanding officers, and through his strange behaviors, he communicates the ultimate theme of the novel: the pointless absurdity of capitalism and bureaucracy in warfare. Chris Hedges, in his book *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, states, "Characters who are, by the standards of civil society, the most retrograde stand above the baseness of those who prosecute war, if only because they speak the truth" (25). In *Catch-22*, Hedges' claim is evident: truth is spoken not by those in power but by those who seem least likely to reveal it. People such as Yossarian—the most unpatriotic, reluctant, fearful, and crazy— are ultimately proven to be the least corrupt and the most sane. By satirizing the military bureaucracy and capitalism, Heller presents a darkly humorous statement about the inversion of insanity produced by modern war and the pointlessness of patriotism in a society with corrupt, opportunistic leaders.

Catch-22 is a clearly satirical work because it uses disturbing, yet humorous situations to attack the absurdities of American society, specifically of the military bureaucracy. According to literary critic Northrop Frye, "Satire requires at least two elements: humor resulting from the portrayal of fantasy, the grotesque, or the absurd; and a definable object of attack" (qtd. in Nagel 49). Both elements are present in *Catch-22* in identifiable ways. Heller creates the first element, humor, through absurdity, by taking serious situations and imposing the ridiculous antics of Yossarian on them. For example, Yossarian is outraged at the fact that people try to kill him when he drops bombs on them, and he arrives naked to accept his medal of honor (Heller 25, 111). Heller also creates humorous absurdity by presenting illogical conclusions as logical facts. As Beverly Gross states, "Inversion is a ruling principle of *Catch-22*. Much of the comic [. . .] impact of the book comes from systematic undercutting through the reversal of expectations" (88). For example, Heller's paradoxical description of the Texan: "The Texan turned out to be good-natured, generous, and likeable. In three days no one could stand him" (17). Here, expectations are reversed because one would expect, based on the qualities given to the Texan, that he would be well liked. In this way, Yossarian repeatedly defies the traditional or socially expected responses. When reflecting on the new officer's club, he remembers how he, "throbbed with a mighty sense of accomplishment each time he gazed at it and reflected that none of the work that had gone into it was his" (Heller 22). Again, although normally working hard gives one a sense of accomplishment, Yossarian feels proud because he did not do any of the work on the club. Throughout the novel, similar inversions of logic contribute to the absurd humor characteristic of satire.

The second element of satire, the "definable object of attack," is also present; Heller suggests the pointless nature of commercialized war by ridiculing those in charge. According to

Nagel, Heller is attacking "aggressive capitalism, bureaucracy, and certain 'insane' and destructive elements of modern civilization" (49). His attack reveals the purpose of the satire as a protest against the corruption of the modern military system. This attack is seen most clearly through his depiction of the characters with military power, such as Colonel Cathcart, Captain Black, and Milo Minderbinder. Nagel says that as a group, the military officers of *Catch-22* "are caricatures who cannot be evaluated by realistic standards. If they are to develop any functional thematic depth at all, they must be seen in their satiric roles as symbols of social attitudes" (50). Their satiric roles do not give them much depth as characters, but as symbols they hold deep meaning in the novel. They serve to symbolize the opportunistic and senseless nature of modern bureaucracy and capitalism. As Hedges states, "War turns human reality into a bizarre carnival that does not seem a part of our experience" (74), and based on the military of *Catch-22*, it is the bureaucracy that facilitates the creation of this "bizarre carnival" through their irrational, opportunistic behavior.

The ridiculous nature of bureaucracy is illustrated well in the person of Colonel Cathcart, a "beefy, conceited man" who spends all of his time riddled with anxiety about how he is perceived by the other bureaucrats. Cathcart is described paradoxically as "dashing and dejected, poised and chagrined [. . .] daring in the administrative stratagems he employ[s] to bring himself to the attention of his superiors and craven in his concern that his schemes might all backfire" (Heller 197). Through these contradictory characteristics and the attention-seeking strategies, which he employs at the expense of innocent lives, Cathcart displays the anxious, people-pleasing insecurities that seem to propel most of the absurd actions of the bureaucracy. When sending the bombardiers to fly a mission, Cathcart is not concerned with hitting his target but with having a certain "bomb pattern" produced which he thinks will be most likely to appear in

the papers (Heller 338). He even instructs the men to bomb an innocent village, under guise of

creating a roadblock. However, when informed by Major Danby that, "[The roadblock] will be

much more effective with a loose bomb pattern," Cathcart and Colonel Korn reveal the truth

behind the mission: "We don't care about the roadblock [just] [. . .] a good clean aerial

photograph" (Heller 338). They are not concerned with the effectiveness of their war strategies

or the lives of the people in the village but merely with appearances.

Therefore, Cathcart's character is a symbol of this obsession with the superficial. In

addition to his focus on "bomb patterns," he displays this by continuously raising the number of

missions required for the squadron, preventing new military members from joining and current

members from returning to their families only with the misguided hopes of impressing superiors

(Heller 338). Hedges says of this superficiality in wartime, "It gives a justification to [. . .] gross

human cruelty and stupidity. It allows us to believe we have achieved our place in human society

because of a long chain of heroic endeavors, rather than accept the sad reality that we stumble

along a dimly lit corridor of disasters" (23). Indeed, Cathcart's character strives to be recognized

for "heroic endeavors" and, therefore, consumes those he commands with never-ending

bureaucratic tasks, which seem important but in reality cause only disaster. Gross concludes,

"Public relations with a view toward personal careerism has taken over. The enemy is not Hitler

but Colonel Cathcart; the evil is not Nazism but playing the game" (93). Cathcart and his cronies

turn war into a pointless game that cannot be won. They symbolize superficiality and satirize the

bureaucracy through inane, nonsensical endeavors at the expense of the lives of innocent people.

Nonsensical bureaucratic absurdity is also seen in the character of Captain Black, whose

chief goal is to become Squadron Commander. He is constantly preoccupied with undermining

other members of the bureaucracy, particularly the timid, nervous Major Major, who is promoted

for no reason, as is typical of the meaningless bureaucratic machinations of the novel. Black's struggle for power is described in yet another example of satirical reversal of expectations: "Each time Captain Black forged ahead of his competitors, he swung upon them scornfully for their failure to follow his example. Each time they followed his example, he retreated with concern and racked his brain for some new stratagem that would enable him to turn upon them scornfully again" (Heller 123). He symbolizes the opportunistic nature of the bureaucracy, which feeds upon the destruction not of the enemy, but of the compatriots, who are viewed as competition. Black's attempts to win the favor of his superiors by requiring the men to pledge "Oaths of Loyalty," multiple times each day support Jones's statement that, "In bureaucratic society, [. . .] people are trained to surrender their human prerogatives to processes and institutions" (51). Black trains the men of the 256th squadron to pledge loyalty by singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" and signing their names dozens of times per day, preventing them from accomplishing any of their actual work. Heller describes, "Without realizing how it had come about, the combat men in the squadron discovered themselves dominated by the administrators appointed to serve them" (123). Black converts his position in service to his country into a personal struggle for power in which he is "filled with a surge of joy" when other commanders in his unit are killed (Heller 122). Through this character, Heller's work communicates that bureaucratic control actually undermines war because it is filled with insincere, self-promoting individuals who propagate nationalism and the myth of war yet remain outside of its deathly influence.

Also outside of the direct influence of the war is Milo Minderbinder, the mess hall officer who creates a syndicate that Heller uses to satirize capitalism. Milo's character is a symbol of the negative effects of big business and the commercialization of modern war. As Jones states, "The war is ruled by capricious irrationality [. . .] and by the international, profit-motivated

corporation represented by Milo Minderbinder" (51). His syndicate spans both sides of the war and manipulates everyone involved; he is a genius in that he has managed to overcome the absurdity of the war and make a profit from it. Heller uses this to satirize capitalism by making the syndicate completely ridiculous. From feeding the troops chocolate-covered cotton to bombing his own unit, Milo consistently demonstrates how the power of capitalism is used for personal greed, not to better the country (Heller 381-382). As Gross states, "The reality of death is what punctures the innocent hilarity of the escalating activities of M & M Enterprises" (101). When Yossarian is searching for morphine and supplies to bandage Snowden's wounds, he discovers that the supplies in the first aid kit have been replaced with the bitterly ironic message, "What's good for M & M Enterprises is good for the country" (Heller 446). Heller uses this pivotal scene of the book to show the futility of soldiers such as Snowden laying down their lives for their country in a military where capitalism and opportunism have overtaken patriotism and ultimately proven it pointless.

Amidst all of the pointless hopelessness presented by the corruption of bureaucracy and capitalism, Heller provides an inverted look at insanity through the central character, Yossarian. Although Yossarian is one of the least mentally stable characters, Heller displays through the course of the novel how "that crazy bastard may be the only sane one left" (120). While everyone else allows their lives to be controlled by the absurdity of the nonsensical bureaucratic regulations and increasing numbers of required missions, Yossarian persistently resists. He moves the bomb line at night to avoid flying missions, fakes a liver condition to remain in the safety of the hospital, censors letters with the signature "Washington Irving," and hides naked in a tree during Snowden's funeral (Heller 129, 15-16, 271). Each of these acts denies what Hedges

calls the "collective psychosis" of the "nationalist agenda in war" by resisting the nonsensical acts of the supposedly sane military officials (48).

Yossarian refuses to conform to the attempts of the bureaucracy to control and manipulate him. Gross states, "Yossarian's protestations, madcap acts, malingering, and his campaign to be excused for reasons of insanity are simply the healthy objections of someone who has not resigned himself to dying" (102). Through this resistance, he offers another option to those disillusioned by the futility of war; ironically, the cowardly, fearful character becomes the most morally upright. Nagel claims, "The military, with [. . .] its power struggles, its bureaucracy, its bombing of villages to block roads, is the insane factor in the novel and Yossarian [. . .] endorses a much more humane standard for sanity" (54). He shirks the empty patriotism of naive characters such as Aarfy and Nately, and ultimately, he refuses the corruption of Cathcart and Korn. The generals, once again displaying opportunism, offer him a bargain which they describe as, "a thoroughly despicable deal [. . .] it's absolutely revolting. But you'll accept it quickly enough" (Heller 436). They are willing to send him home if he will "say nice things" about them to boost their chances of being promoted (Heller 437). Yossarian's refusal to accept this offer might seem insane in a character whose ultimate goal is to escape the war, but once again expectations are reversed. This decision actually displays his sanity. Nagel states, "Yossarian's rejection of Cathcart and his world allows him to [. . .] become an agent in his own destiny. He declares himself apart from and above the military world" (55). His final decision to desert the military and escape to Sweden is not one of cowardice but of freedom. He has not succumbed to the futile hopelessness of modern war, and, therefore, he reverses traditional perceptions of sanity and insanity.

Yossarian, an inversion of the traditional idea of a hero, fits well in a book that inverts traditional ideas of a war novel. *Catch-22*, despite being set during World War II, is not protesting the war itself; surprisingly, it is not about the war at all. Instead, it examines and condemns the corrupt dealings of the people in charge of it. In an interview, Heller himself stated, "I wasn't interested in the war in *Catch-22*. I was interested in the personal relationships in bureaucratic authority" (qtd. in Jones 52). Gross corroborates the idea that this so-called "war novel" is attacking not the war itself, but those who wage it is, stating, "[It] is not about war so much but the military, which is to say that it is about the institutionalized, bureaucratized mayhem" (92). Mayhem is an accurate description of the activities of the numerous generals, captains, colonels, and government officials, whose absurd actions throughout the novel are defined well by General Peckem's instruction to Colonel Scheisskopf: "While none of the work we do is very important, it is very important that we do a great deal of it" (Heller 330). Another inversion of logic, this statement is one of many in which Heller conveys the futility of war when the leaders are consumed not with the noble cause for which they are supposedly fighting, but with selfish, pointless, and attention-seeking diversions. Jones supports this idea, stating, "Irrationality and bureaucracy are omnipotent in *Catch-22,* and war is but an aspect of their greater absurdity" (46). Although the novel is categorized as a "war narrative," it is actually a larger satirical statement about the corrupt nature of modern American bureaucracy and capitalism, illustrated by the leaders of the military bureaucracy.

Catch-22 is a satirical novel that exposes the corruption of military bureaucracy and capitalism by inverting logic and reversing expectations in order to prove the pointlessness of commercialized war and the insanity and absurdity of the modern military system. Yossarian, though he seems insane, is ultimately proven to be the voice of reason in the novel, while those

in power, through their simultaneously opportunistic and pointless activities, are proven to be collectively insane. Heller's satire reveals the collective insanity of war and exposes the lies presented by patriotism, capitalism, and bureaucracy. As Nagel states, "*Catch-22* allows its readers to celebrate their ethical superiority over and distance from, the military machine and bureaucratic structure, which are made to look ridiculous and insane in the novel but seem unassailable and incorrigible in reality" (51-52). Yet the truth of the matter is that Heller is asserting that these concepts are not distanced from the reader at all. Corruption and misguided patriotism are issues close at hand in modern-day wars. The novel evokes important questions about the wastefulness of modern war and corrupt military leaders, reminding readers through dark comedy of the deadly serious nature of war.

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Essay

Stone Hendrickson

Codes, Confusion, and Cohesion in Joyce's "The Sisters"

James Joyce's "The Sisters" relies on a complicated system of codes. On the most basic level, this assertion characterizes all literary works. Words consist of signs that relate to some meaning or object according to the social or literary community in which they function. However, as readers (and communicators in general) we use these systems of codes so often that we lose or never even gain an initial awareness of their nature. Stories such as "The Sisters" draw our attention back to this inherent quality of language. In a broad but perceptive analysis of the opening story of Joyce's collection *Dubliners*, Edward Geary observes that "in a fundamental sense 'The Sisters' is about the decoding of signs" (306). As such, the work reflexively acknowledges its fundamental nature as a system of signs by creating elaborate layers of signification. As Geary notes, the characters in the story continuously work to decode messages from each other and from their situation and experiences (306). In so doing, they invite us as readers to engage in self-conscious analysis of these sets of codes and to elucidate the codes' implications. The inconsistency of the codes at work in "The Sisters" reveals that the characters' assumed moral authority is ultimately artificial.

The first decoder at work in "The Sisters" is the first-person narrator himself. The story opens with a description of him looking through the window of Father Flynn's house. He refers to the practice of setting "two candles…at the head of a corpse" (Joyce 1), which he interprets as a sign that his friend, the priest, has finally died. The opening paragraph already invites the reader to join the narrator in his efforts to decode the signals that he observes all around him.

Even Joyce's description of the "square window" alludes to portals through which the interpreting narrator must look and the structures within which he must operate (1). The narrator quickly learns that those who communicate within these structures use codes to indicate approval and disapproval, thereby assuming a sense of moral authority. When the narrator's uncle describes the boy's close relationship to Father Flynn, Mr. Cotter indicates a strong disapproval by closely examining the boy and commenting that he would not want his own children "'to have too much to say to a man like that'" (2). At this point in the story, the only basis that Mr. Cotter acknowledges for this negative reaction is his strong opinion that young boys should spend their time in physical exercise and sport, not studying with mysteriously suspect priests. The uncle agrees by referring to his own practice of taking cold baths throughout his life. The two men are clearly describing a system of behavior that signifies health and normalcy. Interestingly, the narrator carefully avoids betraying too much concern about Father Flynn's death, perhaps for fear of revealing too close of a connection with a person who operates in a different system and thus lies outside Mr. Cotter and the uncle's definition of normalcy.

The characters' conversations eventually reveal a significant source of Mr. Cotter's disapproval of Father Flynn. The priest's sister, Eliza, claims that "there was something queer coming over him latterly" (Joyce 6) and describes one night when several men found Flynn laughing in the confessional. Apparently, his family and parishioners believed that he had gone mad. The evidence for Flynn's generally supposed madness reveals the method that the characters use to signify madness. Certainly, laughing in general does not raise suspicion of insanity. Rather, laughing in a confessional is what causes the characters' concern. As such, it is unlikely that the characters interpret any action as objectively and always indicating madness. Instead, they rely upon the context of an action in order to interpret its significance. Laughing in

a confessional, a sacred space, indicates an inconsistency within the characters' system of codes. This inconsistency signals an aberration and, by extension, madness. Specifically, Michael Timins, a physician, notes that critics generally believe that Father Flynn suffers from syphilis, a malady rampant in Europe at the time (441). In this historical situation, interpreting codes correctly becomes extremely important for protecting oneself against diseased influences, literally and ideologically.

While the codes of the majority of the characters ostensibly govern the logic of the story, various elements undermine these codes and suggest an alternative reality. Joyce repeatedly uses suggestive ellipses in the characters' dialogue. In fact, every conversation in the story involves multiple instances of characters trailing off in their thoughts and sentences. These thoughts are so unfinished that many would be incomprehensible to the reader were it not for responses from the other characters that clarify the meaning, although the reader must still make some inferences as to the original statement (or lack thereof). Significantly, every character who alludes to or agrees with the assessment that Flynn is mad fails to complete at least one thought in the course of the dialogue. The uncle and aunt only vaguely support the diagnosis and trail off in their statements less often. Mr. Cotter and Eliza offer the strongest suggestions of Flynn's madness and also utter incomplete sentences more often. These incomplete sentences lack cohesion and consistency with the general rules of formal English. As such, these characters violate the standards for sanity within their own system. While Flynn only performed one significantly incoherent act, most of the other characters are continuously failing to express themselves clearly.

Other statements indicate further incoherence. In the final scene, while ruminating on the nature of Father Flynn's odd actions, Eliza abruptly begins describing her brother's long-held dream of taking his sisters on a drive to the house in which they were born (Joyce 6). In his

essay, Edward Geary suggests that Eliza "verges on illiteracy" based upon instances such as her use of the word "rheumatic" instead of "pneumatic" (Geary 307) in her description of the "carriages that makes no noise" (Joyce 6). After trailing off at the end of this story, Eliza reverts to her former train of thought concerning her brother's strange behavior, which further signifies her lack of cohesion. The uncle also loses focus on his train of thought in the first conversation of the story and fails to finish a grand statement about the limitations of education as he abruptly offers a leg of mutton to Mr. Cotter (Joyce 2). These examples of conversational incoherence reveal disjointed minds that are even more inconsistent with the systems of appropriately contextualized acts than Father Flynn's laughter. The narrator supports this conclusion when he acknowledges that he also struggles to understand the characters, particularly Mr. Cotter as he attempts "to extract meaning from his unfinished sentences" (Joyce 2). Thus, according to the standard of coherence, several of the characters signify just as much "madness" as Father Flynn. In fact, they actually commit more violations of the standard of coherence and thus exhibit a higher degree of madness according to the conventional logic of the characters' system of signs.

At this point, this analysis could feasibly conclude with the assertion that the characters have in some sense violated their own standards and can be condemned as mad according to their own rules. However, to end with that conclusion would be to make the same mistake of the "mad" characters. While their system may not appear coherent to the reader, a careful reading of the text shows that these characters are perfectly coherent to each other (excluding the narrator). The characters never indicate that they have failed to completely comprehend each other's meaning. When one speaker trails off into silence, the other responds totally unfazed and with seamless continuity. When the narrator and his aunt enter the priest's house, Father Flynn's sister, Nannie, uses gestures to inquire as to their purpose, gestures to which the aunt responds

with complete understanding (Joyce 4). Even the abrupt changes of conversations described above do not distract or confuse any of the characters in conversation. They understand each other clearly.

While the characters may not meet the readers' criteria for coherence and consistency, they sufficiently meet their own standards. These characters are using a complex system of their own. From the narrator's perspective, these interacting systems form a complicated relationship. As already discussed, the narrator struggles to understand the signifying systems of those who consider Father Flynn to have been mad. Yet, the narrator has also experienced difficulty in communication with Father Flynn. In his personal interactions, the narrator describes how Father Flynn "used to uncover his big discoloured teeth and let his tongue lie upon his lower lip" when he smiled (Joyce 4). This habit unsettled the narrator until he grew used to it after developing more familiarity with Father Flynn (Joyce 4). The narrator also recounts how Father Flynn spent many hours trying to train him in the complicated discourse of theology and church practices. The priest taught him about "certain institutions of the Church," the Eucharist, and "the responses of the Mass" (Joyce 3-4). Despite the narrator's obvious preference for Father Flynn over characters such as Mr. Cotter, he expends equal effort in his attempts to understand their respective systems of discourse and signification. Of course, this implies that the narrator has yet a third system of codes unique to his perspective.

Acknowledging a plurality of systems of discourse forces the reader to move beyond a simplistic binary logic. Instead of reality consisting of two alternatives, the world of "The Sisters" involves multiple systems that relate to each other in complex ways. Mr. Cotter's privileging of spoken over written texts exemplifies one such relationship between systems. In his essay explaining deconstruction, Ross Murfin describes Derrida's argument that the West has

tended to privilege spoken words over written words based on the notion that speech involves more immediate presence than writing (Murfin 207). Cotter enacts this habit by criticizing Father Flynn's teaching of the narrator which involved the study of "books as thick as the *Post Office Directory*" (Joyce 4). Instead of reading, Cotter privileges playing with friends, an activity exclusively involving spoken communication. Yet, according to Derrida's theory, spoken words share the same essential qualities of written texts. Both lack a substantial connection to the things to which they refer (Murfin 208). Essentially, all words are references to other words and concepts and derive meaning from their differences from other words.

Another important relationship between the different discourses is the idea of presence. In one of his seminal essays on deconstruction "Différance," Derrida argues that the present derives its essence from its relationship to the past and the future. Ironically, presence only constitutes meaning based upon what it "absolutely is not" (Derrida 287). If the idea of the present lacks inherent substance, then it cannot give spoken words a privileged status. Even if a speaking individual is more "present" than a writing individual, that presence is just as insubstantial as words themselves. In a similar manner, Joyce brings the theme of presence to bear in the character of Father Flynn. Ostensibly, the priest's death results in a lack of personal presence. Yet, the literal presence of the priest's body is an important element of the story. However, the characters create different senses of the priest's presence in their descriptions of him. According to Eliza, the lady who prepared the priest's body for the funeral noted that "he just looked as if he was asleep, he looked that peaceful and resigned" (Joyce 5). This statement suggests a sense of the priest's living (albeit sleeping) presence even in the process of treating him as a corpse. Eliza later suggests something quite different when she is describing his habits. She strikingly notes that Father Flynn was just as quiet around the house while alive as he is

while dead (Joyce 6). While ostensibly Eliza meant the comment as a kind description, she is actually revealing some sense in which she already saw her brother as dead even while physically living. Both of these statements support Derrida's argument that the present is a non-objective construct that relies on what it is not (i.e. the past and the future) in order to constitute meaning. The subjectivity and relativity of the idea of presence manifests itself in the differing discourse of the characters and reveals the plurality of perspectives at play in the story.

While these conclusions are compelling in theoretical discussion, they have significant implications in the realm of moral discourse. Friedrich Nietzsche argues for a conception of language that historically served as the foundation for Derrida's later work. According to Nietzsche, language consists of "nerve-stimulus" and lacks any ultimate cause or objective basis (262). Language consists of a vast array of metaphors which society has accepted and even regulated. Truth itself is a "mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms…; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions" (Nietzsche 262). The moral implications of these linguistic theories lie in the way in which individuals and societies use and respond to these metaphors. Nietzsche argues that societies use the notion of truth as a way to control the use of language. "Truth" enables societies to create a system of morality that is inherently and totally artificial. Society creates the obligation "to be truthful, that is, to use the usual metaphors, therefore expressed morally" (Nietzsche 263). Traditionally, moral discourse has constituted a realm in which individuals can appeal to an objective authority to pass judgment and call for sanctions against other individuals. However, Nietzsche's arguments significantly undermine this authority. Similarly, characters such as Mr. Cotter and Eliza use language that suggests moral discourse as they directly or suggestively pass judgment on Father Flynn's bookish or overly "scrupulous" habits (Joyce 6). Their judgment also extends to using

the language of madness to mark him as "other." Yet, the very nature of the distinction they attempt to create reveals the arbitrary manner in which they use language to assert moral authority.

The theoretical perspectives of Derrida and Nietzsche inform a reading of the story that draws attention to the incoherence of any one system of discourse and reveals the inherently unstable nature of the codes used in the story. As Joyce invites us as readers to join the narrator in his attempts to decode the various signifiers, he warns us to avoid being "too scrupulous" in studying any one particular system of discourse. The multiplicity of voices and codes in "The Sisters" liberates us as readers to examine them individually and interactively, enjoy their particular merits and idiosyncrasies, but not take any one system too seriously. Instead of fearing the "dark in his confession-box," perhaps we might even join Father Flynn "wide-awake and laughing-like" (Joyce 7).

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Essay

Lauren Morris

The Rebellion Against Meaninglessness:

A Brief Inquiry into *The Rebel* by Albert Camus

Albert Camus (1913-1960) was an award-winning author, philosopher, and journalist whose views contributed to the rise of the philosophy of Absurdism. In 1951, Camus wrote *The Rebel*, a distinguished book-length essay exploring the metaphysical and historical roots of rebellion in Western civilization. In parts one and two of the essay, Camus focuses his discussion on metaphysical rebellion, citing numerous philosophers from Epicurus to Nietzsche, who help Camus discover what a rebellion is and what a rebel does. Camus concludes with a paradox summarizing the themes examined in his essay. It reads, "I rebel, therefore we exist. […] And we are alone" (104). From this apparent inconsistency stem the questions: How can "we" stem from "I"? How does "I rebel" lead to "we exist"? How are "we […] alone" if, by the nature of the word, "we" implies the opposite of loneliness, which is companionship? This essay aims to resolve these questions by clarifying how an individual's rebellion shapes his or her existence.

In order to begin to unpack this paradox, we must first ask what it means to be a rebel. According to Camus, a rebel is a "man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation" (13). Yet the rebel also "says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion" (13). Through this seemingly contradictory statement, the rebel claims that some things are acceptable and other things are not: "Up to this point yes, beyond it no" (13). The rebel acknowledges that a certain amount of offensive treatment is tolerable; nevertheless, the

rebel sees an authority figure abusing his or her authority, acting as if the rebel has no rights that are necessary to uphold. Camus further explains that the rebel "experiences a feeling of revulsion at the infringement of his rights," and in acting reveals a "complete and spontaneous" allegiance to certain principles (14). In other words, to be a rebel, one must value life and human rights. There must be some idea greater than oneself worth rebelling against, an idea one is willing to sacrifice his or her life to protect.

Still, how does "we" stem from "I," as in "I rebel, therefore we exist" (104)? In rebelling, one defends "values which are still indeterminate but which he feels are common to himself and all men" (16). Through rebellion, the rebel discovers his or her own existence reflected in the rebellion of others. A rebel discovers "a limit where minds meet," a common place where all people draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable (22). The rebel finds "identification in another individual" (16) in that he or she recognizes his or her suffering as an experience shared by the whole of humanity: "From the moment when rebellion begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience" (22). Therefore, the first step for an individual plagued by his or her apparent lack of value is to become aware that all people bear the same feeling of meaninglessness. In this way, the rebel surpasses him- or herself; one person becomes accessible to another (23). The rebel is lured out of his or her place of solitude and tolerance. He or she rebels against his or her feeling of insignificance and in doing so, assigns meaning to all of human existence by defending values that he or she deems inherent to all people.

However, a rebel does not rebel simply to uphold intrinsic human rights. He or she rebels against the ultimate futility of existence, and in this way, his or her rebellion is individualistic; it is an acknowledgement of anguish and finitude. In other words, he or she rebels to exist, and he or she rebels against existence. In contemplating his or her suffering, he or she perceives that he

or she is only happy when he or she identifies his or her despair in others. He or she invents "intrinsic" human rights in order to assign meaning to his or her existence, and he or she rebels to defend these values from anyone or anything that threatens them. Thus, he or she searches for meaning and finds it in rebellion. Though he or she ultimately determines that his or her uprising is inherently meaningless, it cannot change the futile nature of the human condition. In the words of Camus, "Rebellion is a claim, motivated by the concept of a complete unity, against the suffering of life and death and a protest against the human condition both for its incompleteness, thanks to death, and its wastefulness, thanks to evil" (24). Ultimately, the rebel rebels against despair, attempting to assign value to his or her arbitrary existence.

The rebel subsequently blames God for the finite emptiness of the human condition. No longer can he or she recognize the hopeful existence that belief in an Absolute once nurtured. Instead, he or she encounters a god "who does not reward or punish," a god "who turns a deaf ear" to existence (29). He or she incriminates Divinity as "the father of death" and the "supreme outrage" (24), asking why God allows injustice to exist in the world. Yet the rebel does not only challenge the way God orders life on Earth; the rebel also protests how he or she orders life after death. The rebel questions the Absolute: "Why should evil be punished when we can easily see, here on earth, that goodness is not rewarded?" (31). Characterizing God with unfairness, he or she wonders if there is any reason for a person to be virtuous. If the Absolute is unjust, why should a person be moral? The rebel reels at this unfairness, feeling a lack of purpose for his or her life and for humanity. His or her search for meaning is at a standstill.

With the sovereignty of God rescinded, the rebel feels a responsibility to create underlying law and order in an otherwise meaningless universe. He or she searches for ultimate justification of evil and finitude, painfully striving to create a place where he or she feels at home

(70). Upon attempting to establish the "dominion of man," the rebel realizes that "freedom exists only in a world where what is possible is defined at the same time as what is not possible" (25, 71). In other words, if people are not bound by law, they will be bound by chaos. Values must guide humanity because if people are unlimited, "there is nothing but the step in the dark and the appalling freedom of the blind" (71). Since the rebel cannot trust free people to adhere to values on their own, he or she must demand that all submit to created law. In Camus' words, influenced by Nietzsche, "If nothing is true, nothing is permitted" (71). If there is no meaning, if there are no universal laws or principles, people must create their own meaning, their own laws and principles.

The problem is, however, that rebels, made to choose between responsibility and complete freedom, do not choose responsibility; they choose freedom. Camus explains, "Judgments are based on what is, with reference to what should be – the kingdom of heaven, eternal concepts, or moral imperatives. But what should be does not exist; and this world cannot be judged in the name of nothing" (102). The rebel yearns for a unified and orderly world, ruled by a fair and just god who cares for humanity; but when he or she understands his or her condition, he or she finds a chaotic world void of order, with an unjust god who does not deserve to exist. In this world, there can be no truth or underlying principle. Therefore, the maxim "if nothing is true, nothing is permitted" evolves into "if nothing is true, everything is permitted" (71, 102). The freedom for which the prisoner aspires can bear no restrictions. If it does not condone all action, it is no longer freedom.

According to Camus, true freedom paired with hatred of God and of injustice will result in the vindication of murder (47). The rebel's autonomy justifies crime; he or she is willing to consent to death–the ultimate defeat–rather than deny him- or herself complete freedom (15).

This idea ensures the continuation of an individual's struggle for existence: "License to destroy supposes that you yourself can be destroyed" (41). If everyone is kept under the same assumptions, if all can be murdered, then all is fair. When the rebel admits the possibility of his or her death, he or she highlights his or her existence. Disorder and lawlessness make his or her life more real. Therefore, when the rebel rebels, he or she exists more fully: "Within rebellion, awareness is born" (15). It does not matter that crime, murder, and evil prevail alongside his or her awareness. For the rebel, total freedom and perception of the chaotic nature of life trump limitation and mutilated injustice.

The great paradox is that in attempting to solidify these "inherent" human rights for which the rebel rebels, he or she creates a world void of any rights whatsoever. For this reason, rebellion concludes with madness (61). Camus illustrates the rebel's nonsensical reason: "To kill God and to build a Church are the constant and contradictory purposes of a rebellion" (103). Since religious thought claims that God is all that is good, the rebel derides goodness at the same time that he or she destroys Divinity and establishes the domination of humanity. He or she creates order by ordaining disorder. The irony is that the same person who despises murder–and rebels against it–is the one who validates it to justify his existence. Through this contradiction, Camus demonstrates the importance of an individual's being. To the rebel, generalized injustice is superior to existence without meaning or purpose.

Though the achievements of rebellion may be ignoble, Camus indicates that rebellion itself is not. After all, the rebel rebels to defend common values and inherent human rights. Whether he or she wants to die or wants to cause death, he or she, like all other rebels, is "consumed with desire for true life" (102). The rebel rebels so that every person can be free to express his or her being without boundary or limitation: "I rebel, therefore we exist" (104). In

other words, rebellion is not just his or hers; it is the rebellion of all. Though it may seem that rebellion is profoundly negative, Camus asserts that its productive roots make it deeply positive. It allows the rebel to gaze at something greater than the self; it allows him or her to recognize an innate component of all people, and in this way, rebellion unites rebels.

Camus' paradox does not stop at "I rebel, therefore, we exist" (104); it adds, "And we are alone" (104). "We" implies togetherness and community, while "alone" implies solidarity and isolation. These two words seem to contradict each other, yet this is precisely the point. After a rebellion, crime ensues, and the individual is once again on his or her own. As Camus exclaims, "In principle, the rebel only wanted to conquer his own existence and to maintain it in the face of God. But he forgets his origins and, by the law of spiritual imperialism, he sets out in search of world conquest by way of an infinitely multiplied series of murders" (103). In a world where everything is permissible, the rebel must protect him- or herself from the will of others. Though he or she rebels to create a community of shared values, rebellion turns into a will to power. He or she no longer idolizes justice and no longer cares for the rights of others. Rather, he or she protects him- or herself and freedom. Therefore, the rebel becomes solitary once more. The process of finding meaning in something outside of the self begins again.

Rebellion describes the contradiction between the individual's quest for purpose and order and the apparent meaninglessness of existence. Though Camus entertains philosophies that allow for its existence in *The Rebel*, he concludes that true rebellion is not attainable. The very act of creating oneself and, in doing so, creating the world and its values, is futile. At the beginning of *The Rebel*, Camus poses an issue that he calls the "question raised by rebellion" (21). He asks, "Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion and its absolute values?" (21). Camus deduces that no, it is not possible to determine universal truth

outside of religion because rebellion always leads to murder, and "murder loses the right to be called rebellion" (101). Therefore, the human condition, the will to power, prevents true rebellion from existing. The search for meaning is ultimately ineffectual. The rebel must learn to exist without reason to exist, for humanity defies existence by shaping existence.

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Essay

Chelsea Pennington

Row, Row, Row Your Boat, Life is Not a Dream:

Stephen Crane's Disillusionment with the American Dream in "The Open Boat"

F amilies crossed the Atlantic for it. People fought and died for it. Politicians argue for it, and human activists help others toward it. It is the American Dream—an elusive idea of being able to arrive in the United States with nothing but the clothes on your back and, through hard work and determination, make it to the top of society. While it is not exactly what our country was founded on, it is what brought many people here in the first century of the country's existence, with the hope of a new life shining in their eyes. Looking at history, we can see that rags-to-riches stories rarely happened, but for Americans back then, it was not until something unexpected jarred them into reality that they began questioning the American Dream. This jolt was the Civil War in the 1860s. Stephen Crane was born in 1871, and his life was deeply influenced by this fight that tore apart the nation as well as by the attempt at Reconstruction that followed. Indeed, his most well-known novel, *The Red Badge of Courage,* takes place during the war, portraying how intimately his imagination played with the experiences of the war. This vivid contrast against the all-inclusive hopefulness of the American Dream, as well as other negative experiences in Crane's life, resulted in dissatisfaction with the American dream. Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," in defiance of popular opinion at the time, rejects the possibility of the American Dream by infusing the plot with a lack of freedom and mobility, the arbitrary nature of status, and failure despite considerable effort.

What in Crane's life led to his deviance from the typical American mindset? As stated before, Crane grew up in a time when the nation itself was shaky, still trying to get back on its feet after the destructive war. The idea that America was the Promised Land, the ideal place for the destitute and desperate, was shattered as the nation turned against itself, and Crane focused on this, rather than looking to a new hope of revival and rebirth during Reconstruction. Crane saw firsthand the struggles of poverty during his time in New York as he lived among other artists and gained knowledge of the terrible living conditions in tenements at the time. His view of how so many American citizens fell through the cracks of the American Dream inspired writings such as *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets,* Crane's first novel. This firsthand experience allowed Crane to see the darker side of the United States and realize that simply working hard and being a good person did not always guarantee a better life. Crane's knowledge is not a singular experience; in his contribution to "Antebellum North and South in Perspective: A Discussion," Thomas B. Alexander describes Edward Pessen's view that "wealth in the antebellum United States was very badly distributed, that highly undesirable class distinctions were embedded in the system, and that an image of extensive economic and social mobility is unjustified" (1151). Crane's fiction reflects what many scholars of the time have concluded.

Crane's scathing view of the American Dream is evident in many ways in "The Open Boat," but reveals itself most clearly in the lack of free will humanity has against nature. In his book, *Five Novelists of the Progressive Era,* Robert W. Schneider describes how Crane and other novelists of his time have "rejected the traditional American notion that man is the free and creative center of a moral universe, embracing in its stead an amoral philosophy of biological determinism" (60). Indeed, this is a key theme in the short story. Crane describes the boat as "just a wee thing wallowing, miraculously, top-up, at the mercy of five oceans" (1771). Nature

could easily overwhelm the small boat, and "from the outset it is obvious that the correspondent and his three companions are at the mercy of nature, which appears savagely hostile to them" (Buitenhuis 35). Unlike the American idea of total free will, the men in the boat quickly come to know that they have a very limited number of options to save themselves. Their literal lack of mobility in the small lifeboat symbolizes the lack of social mobility in the United States.

As the crew realizes they have no control over what happens to them, they begin to infuse this meaning into other symbols, such as the wind-tower. Crane states plainly that the wind-tower represents "the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual—nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent" (1781). Despite this realization, they continue to struggle against nature: "The oiler and the correspondent rowed the tiny boat. And they rowed. They sat together in the same seat, and each rowed an oar. Then the oiler took both oars; then the correspondent took both oars; then the oiler; then the correspondent. They rowed and they rowed" (Crane 1765). Although they work hard, "the success or failure of that action is not totally dependent upon the extent of [their] efforts or [their] moral worth, but also upon the decision of fate" (Schneider 78). This episode of trying and still failing is akin to what Crane saw happening to so many people in America, particularly the poorer class. America as a whole tended to believe in and support the idea that by working diligently, you can get yourself out of any situation. Crane has seen firsthand that this does not work.

Crane also argues against the idea that our status is important and inherent. On a ship, there is a clear hierarchy of positions, with the captain at the top. In the lifeboat, the captain is still there, but the source of his power seems unfounded. While he does command the other men, one cannot help but wonder why they follow him. The captain is the only injured one on the

lifeboat, giving him no physical dominance. It seems solely because of his arbitrarily assigned title that he has power. By taking an accepted position and putting it out of context, Crane forces readers to examine their assumptions, such as the captain's need to be in a place of power. In his article "Being at Sea: Ontologising the Sea Narrative," Dawid W. de Villiers states that in "The Open Boat," these assumptions are "revealed by the sea which at times, for all its material intractability and perhaps because of it, constitutes a kind of 'abyss of meaningless.' Human beings are entirely alienated, not-at-home, upon it" (44). Crane has taken the familiar, examined it in a new setting, and made it strange, prompting the reader to question aspects of our society often taken for granted.

To illustrate further how humans have simply assigned prestige to some positions, Crane includes the example of nature asserting its dominance over the captain in the scene when the sea gull tries to land on his head. The bird's "black eyes were wistfully fixed upon the captain's head," and the captain cannot assert his dominance with a desire to "knock it away with the end of the heavy painter" because "anything resembling an emphatic gesture would have capsized this freighted boat" (1770). The power of the captain's position is not inherent, and therefore nature does not recognize it; indeed, taken away from his traditional setting, the captain cannot even enforce his power over a sea gull. In the United States, certain positions are elevated, whether they are based on power or influence or money or respect, and it is part of the American Dream to achieve these higher statuses. While we can sometimes view these positions as inherently more important, Crane reminds us it is simply the meanings we have given them.

Crane does not stop at using the sea gull incident to make his point. He illustrates how values can be randomly designated by further imposing structure onto his story. The short work is divided into seven sections, a division which seems fairly unnecessary. In some instances, it

shows the passage of time, though not always, such as between sections four and five. Section four ends with the cook asking about pie, and section five picks up with the irritated response from the oiler and correspondent. There seems to be no break in time, and yet there is a break in the sections. While the passage of time needed to be expressed elsewhere, there are other ways to show this. By arbitrarily inserting sections into his story, Crane is reflecting how society simply assigns meaning to statuses. In his article "Why Does the Oiler 'Drown'? Perception and Cosmic Chill in The 'Open Boat,'" Oliver Billingslea discusses how it is a "human desire to interpret, to confer meaning, and to 'say' to the universe that 'Sir, I exist!' but as Crane says in his famous poem, this desire does not create a sense of obligation on the part of nature" (27). It is natural for humans to try to bring meaning into their lives, such as by assigning importance to certain roles, but ultimately these titles are irrelevant.

The characters within the story illustrate this futile desire for purpose and meaning as well. Numerous phrases are repeated throughout the text, such as when the crew cries "Funny they don't see us!" or laments that "it don't mean anything," or, most noticeably, repeats the phrase "If I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned—If I am going to be drowned, why in the name of the seven mad gods, who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?" which has repetition even within itself (1773, 1774, 1776, 1777). The characters in the story, as humans do in real life, repeat the same fact or question, trying to make sense of it or discern a purpose. What often happens instead is the phrase loses meaning, and becomes just a set of words repeated over and over. The lack of purpose to the words further illustrates the "conceptual truth that all experience is a supreme fiction, a 'made' thing that celebrates the human spirit" (Billingslea 27). Crane sees how Americans in particular have tried to impose meaning into their lives and use the American Dream as a method to reach

these fanciful goals. The story illustrates that this hope is false, and "The Open Boat" forces the reader to confront the notion that there is no ultimate meaning to life, making the American Dream purposeless.

The final, and possibly most depressing, truth that the story conveys is that failure is still a very real possibility, despite immense amounts of effort. The death of Billie the oiler most clearly portrays the potential for failure in spite of hard work. In his article "William Higgins and Crane's 'The Open Boat:' A Note about Fact and Fiction," William T. Going describes how Billie stands out and even "in the first section of the story [has] already begun to separate himself from mortal life" (51). He is the only character to be named, and he also breaks the pattern of alliteration with *c*ook, *c*aptain, and *c*orrespondent by being called the *o*iler (Going 51). Moreover the oiler works the hardest—he is one of the two oarsmen, and it seems that he rows the most. When the boat does capsize, it is the oiler who "was ahead in the race. He was swimming strongly and rapidly" (Crane 1782). Despite his efforts and even being ahead at one point, he is the one who drowns. According to the ideology of the American Dream, this is the opposite of what should happen—those who work hard succeed. Researcher Dalton Conley explains this theory, called the "equality of opportunity," in which "we all go into the game of society, as we do into a game of Monopoly, knowing the rules, and therefore any existing inequality is fair as long as everyone plays by the rules" (247). America likes to think of itself as an unbiased nation where anyone who plays fairly and works hard can succeed, but as Ralph Ellison points out in his essay "Crane's Fiction Depicts the Civil War in Everyday Life," this belief is not always true and "often the best are destroyed in the trial—as with Higgins, the oiler, whose skill and generosity have helped save the men from the sea but who in the end lies dead upon the shore" (51). Billingslea describes the hierarchy of the four men in the boat, and places the oiler at the

bottom, thus "his sacrifice, when it comes [...] is an unquestioning duty in the hierarchy" (35). Crane recognizes that in American society, it is often those on the bottom of the ranks who stay low or sink even lower—rather than moving up because of their labor. The oiler's death reflects this harsh truth. Crane has seen that as much as the American Dream likes to espouse the idea that determination results in success, in most cases it simply is not true, no matter how deserving the person may be.

Beyond "The Open Boat," much of Crane's work was centered on war, a focus that ultimately reveals his unbelief in the idea of the American Dream. Specifically in this story, his disillusionment is evident through the various aspects of the plot. Crane encourages both his contemporary readers and even modern readers not to accept blindly the widely held tenets of the time. We must always be alert and questioning, because sometimes the most popular idea is not the correct one. This attitude is a clear predecessor to the "Lost Generation" after World War I, and the many writers of that time who lost faith in the ideal society that America once represented. Long before writers such as Hemingway and Eliot, Stephen Crane was learning from the wars of his time to question and reject the popular deception of the American Dream.

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Essay

Laura Ann Prickett

The Unexpected[1] and Gender in Chopin's "Desiree's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour"

Through the eyes of her all-knowing reminiscent narrator, Kate Chopin injects her narratives with land mines of unexpected conclusions. Her stories are largely remembered for the surprising irresolution with which they leave the reader. Once detonated, the explosions of Chopin's unexpected events shatter the strongholds of the readers' and the characters' previous expectations. In two of her short stories, "Desiree's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour," Chopin intentionally uses the unexpected to break the expectations of her contemporary social identity structures of gender, and, from the shambles of old expectations, she creates an opportunity for new identity concepts to be constructed.

Chopin masters mechanisms of narratology in order to splinter her audience's expectations. Narratology, or narrative theory, is "the systematic study of narrative forms" (Castle and Dubord, n. pag.). In other words, it is the study and application of the various structures, forms, and processes of storytelling. Two specific tools of narratology used by Chopin in her short stories are narrative voice and verb tense. The craft of narrative relies on both of these mechanisms in different ways in order to convey the intended message. For Chopin, these short stories told through an all-knowing, reminiscent narrator enable her to make claims of social identity construction and demolition.

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[1] Most of the framework for understanding the "unexpected" and its role in narratology comes from Mark Currie's *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*. Though Currie is also specifically cited throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted, assume that all ideas concerning the unexpected come from Currie's work.

The omniscient perspective implies unlimited epistemological and creative power; readers initially assume they have no power in plot or character formation. "As a pretense of unlimitedness," Audrey Jaffe indicates in her essay, "Omniscience in *Our Mutual Friend*: On Taking the Reader by Surprise,*"* "omniscience also depends upon the narrator's establishing characters' and sometimes readers' limitations" (91). As the narrator quickly unravels the assumed trajectories of the stories, Chopin's reader faces his or her powerlessness over the trajectory of the plot. Furthermore, the reader recognizes the characters' powerlessness over their own stories. As fiction, short stories exist not as facts or events in objective reality but as products of the narrator's point of view. Therefore, the characters' decisions, actions, and the resolution of their situations rely entirely on the narrator. The reader recognizes the characters' lack of autonomy as well as the reader's own lack of autonomy, which forces him or her to submit to the will of the storyteller, otherwise known as the narrator.

To the reader, a narrator's omniscience essentially implies omnipotence. In the omniscient perspective, the narrator combines absolute knowledge of the story and absolute power to change the course of the story and, as a result, produces skepticism in the reliability of someone so limitless. In "The Pragmatic Perspective Revisited," Heyd mentions the ironic relationship between an unreliable narrator and the reader as well as the subsequent superiority the reader feels in recognizing an unreliable narrator (8). Using the omniscient point of view creates constant tension through situational irony, because the narrator knows what eventually happens while the reader does not. In finishing a story told from omniscience, readers willingly release all control to the will of the narrator, accepting the possible consequences of their powerlessness. The situational irony of an omniscient narrator forces the reader both to trust the narrator to reveal what he or she knows and to suspect the narrator at all times of withholding

some necessary insightful information from the reader (Jaffe 97). Chopin masterfully uses the reader's double-perception of omniscience in order to employ the unexpected in her works.

Furthermore, the narrator's omniscience creates tension between the reader's perception of the character's present and future. The reader is forced to question each character's present circumstance and action because of the lack of control the reader has over the story's outcome. Readers fear the future not simply because it is unknown but primarily because it is unknown to them and known to the omniscient narrator. Consequently, Chopin manipulates and fulfills her readers' fear by presenting them with an unexpected resolution. Jaffe describes this manipulation: "It is precisely at the moment of surprise, when we become aware of how misled we have been, that we glimpse the potential depth of our insecurity – the possible existence, always, of knowledge we haven't got" (97).

The second narrative mechanism essential to Chopin's element of surprise is verb tense. Though her narrator transcends time, the reader discovers the story after it has happened and not as it is happening. This contributes to the total dependency of the reader on the narrator for information and the powerlessness of the reader in the narrative's development. However, for the characters of the story, the story is happening in real time. The characters experience the present as it unfolds and have an awareness that the future also will unfold. Awareness of the future consists not only of the recognition of specific future moments but also of the recognition of what will have happened between now and those future moments. What will have happened is classified as the future imperfect verb tense (Currie 1). The future imperfect uses the experience of the past and present to form a context for understanding future experiences (Currie 5). In other words, people use experience to form a framework for how they expect that they will act in the future. Humans conceive of the future primarily in terms of the gray area that exists between the

present moment and the future moment of action. That gray area is the future imperfect. For example, I have a test on Friday. On Monday, I expect that I will have studied before the test on Friday. I allow myself to assume that I will have studied before the test happens because of the future necessity I have to have prepared for the test. My assumption is the future imperfect employed in the previous scenario. Similarly, in narrative, the characters, as representations of humans and human experience, also have frameworks under which they act and expect to act. Characters constantly employ the future imperfect: Desiree assumes that Armand will have continued to love her and will have continued to be proud of his child; Armand assumes that his son will have continued to appear white because his wife is white and that his son will not have darkened pigmentation as he matures; Louise assumes that her husband will have stayed dead once she is told that he died.

It is necessary for readers to notice the implied future imperfect in order to understand Chopin's application of the unexpected primarily because the future imperfect is expectation (Currie 16-17, 32). Chopin never explicitly uses the future imperfect tense in these short stories. However, the future imperfect is the mechanism of assumption, and assumption naturally follows any acquired knowledge. The characters in Chopin's stories possess certain assumptions about the course of their lives, assumptions rooted in the framework of their individual experiences, and Chopin breaks those expectations. For example, the narrator describes Desiree's relationship with her husband Armand as having improved significantly since the birth of their son (Chopin 1610). Based on this information, the reader reasonably assumes that, in the future, Armand and Desiree will have had a fruitful, intimate relationship. The reader assumes Armand, as a wealthy plantation owner, and his community will have known the truth about his ancestry. When Armand exiles his wife, the reader assumes that his reasons for doing so will have remained

consistent with what he said. However, not one of these assumptions and expectations remains true at the end of the novel. Currie elaborates on dismantling assumption, "The unexpected is not a matter of stupidity, or of some kind of failure of accurate prediction, but a question of something that could not have been predicted" (35)—a question of something impossible. Chopin's characters are not stupid, ignorant, or less human because they are surprised; in fact, they are more human because they are forced to recognize their limitations. They experience an unintelligible circumstance, an act seemingly impossible within the context of their framework. Furthermore, as readers who naturally saturate all texts with their own consciousnesses, Chopin's readers also hold their own ideas of a future imperfect for the characters, ideas of what will have happened before the story ends. With the occurrence of the unexpected, the readers' assumptions are derailed also. Because reflexivity is inherent in the act of reading, it is reasonable to assume that Chopin intends primarily to demolish the expectations of her reader. Chopin uses the omniscient narrator and future imperfect tense to take her readers by surprise in order to deconstruct social identity categories of gender.

After establishing the narrative mechanisms of voice and tense through which surprise occurs, the actual plot developments in Chopin's primary texts reveal the significance of unexpected outcomes. "Desiree's Baby" portrays snapshots of timeless human experiences, such as love and parenting. However, as a tragedy, these universally human circumstances are twisted by the power of deceit. Chopin's purpose for creating this fiction is more than retelling a classic theme. With its subject matter of primarily racial complexities, "Desiree's Baby" is quite obviously a commentary on race relations. As Robert Arner suggests, Chopin recognizes the inconsistencies and injustices of the "imaginary line drawn by white men between white and black" that was "made by a number of other Southern writers both before and after [her]" (140).

However, the story is more than a successful provocation of racial sentiments. What classifies Chopin's work as particularly unique is not her insight into racial relationships but rather her ability to connect the absurdities of racial distinction with the inconsistencies and arbitrariness of gender categorization.

The final discovery that Armand is a child of mixed race, that he is to blame for the darker coloring of Desiree's child, suddenly reroutes the trajectory of the story (Chopin 1609). Up to the point of Armand's disclosure, the reader assumed the story would conclude with the peril of an innocent mixed woman abandoned because of the misfortune of her ancestry. Before the moment of disclosure, or the moment of surprise, the misfortune lies within Desiree and her unknown bloodline. Desiree was the problem, however unjust that might be. Yet, with the reader's final shocking discovery, Armand becomes the problem. Desiree and Armand switch places in the reader's mind as the catalyst of tragedy, causing readers to realize Desiree's female gender implied the expectation that she was the problem. The revelation of Armand's responsibility overturns the patriarchal expectations of the reader.

Because the piece is so blatantly about race, it is entirely unexpected for Chopin to add an element of gender commentary. This surprise changes the story's resolution entirely. The reader leaves the piece no longer concerned solely with racial injustice but also disturbed by his or her own expectations of Desiree's guilt. Chopin successfully accomplishes this twist because of her mastery of the narrative mechanisms of voice and tense. Chopin conveys the story through the medium of omniscience, and the reader entirely depends on the will of the narrator to reveal information as it becomes necessary. The story's fourth paragraph reveals, "[Armand] had known [Desiree] since his father brought him home from Paris, a boy of eight, after his mother died there" (1606). This small, forgettable sentence informs the reader that Armand lived in Paris

with his mother and father for the first eight years of his life. Yet, the narrator waits until the end of the story to reveal Armand's mother's color (1609). Armand knew his mother's race and lied to save his "white" reputation by blaming his wife for the skin tone of his child and turning her away. The omniscient narrator always knew Armand's parentage and always knew that Armand knew his parentage, but in order to achieve the intended shocking effect, the narrator reveals details slowly. The reader's complete submission to the narrator allows Chopin to disclose information about her characters sparingly, consequently enabling her to shock them.

Chopin's mastery of creating assumption and expectation also allows her to demolish assumption and expectation. Throughout the story, Armand knows that no one within his American circle met his mother personally. He also expects he will never have had (future imperfect) to publicly recognize his mixed racial heritage, because his mother, the source of his racial anxiety, is deceased. Armand's expectation, his perception of what will have happened in his life, is a reliance on the future imperfect tense for creating a framework by which he can understand and manipulate his world. But Armand's reliance on the future imperfect is unfulfilled; it shatters with the unexpected, the birth of his and Desiree's child. Similarly, the reader's experience of shattered assumptions parallels Armand's. The seeming lack of concrete background information on Armand's parentage couples with the dramatic detail with which Chopin describes the uncertainty of identifying Desiree's natural parents (1605). Naturally, the narrator's focus on the uncertainty of Desiree's origin encourages the reader's assumption that Desiree is of mixed descent. Because of the amount of attention the narrator pays to describing Desiree's adoption, the reader believes that her origin will have some significance to the plot. The reader assumes that by the end of the story the descriptions of Desiree's abandonment *will*

have had some significant impact on the story's development or resolution. Chopin takes her readers down this path of assumption, only to destabilize it with her unexpected conclusion.

As a result of the instability Chopin creates, the reader wrestles with the expected impossibility of Armand's mixed parentage. The reader's shock transfers from the unexpected full disclosure of Armand to, in his or her own reflection, the unexpected false assumption of Desiree's guilt. Chopin intends for her readers to recognize that their skepticism of Desiree existed primarily because she is a woman. To her readers, socialized by a patriarchal society, Armand's dominant, authoritative, educated, wealthy, male character appears more reliable and less capable of guilt than Desiree. Chopin consequently further intends the shock of the conclusion to destabilize the reader's reliance on patriarchal assumptions for understanding and constructing gender identities. By contrasting the innocence of Desiree with the deep darkness of Armand (Arner 141-144), Chopin also comments on the absurdity and injustice of Armand's treatment of Desiree, implying the existence of absurdities and injustices in the broader male-female community relationship.

While "Desiree's Baby" uses surprise to comment on the inconsistency and absurdity of assumptions associated with social gender identities, "The Story of an Hour" uses surprise to suggest the depressing inevitability of gender assumptions. Initially, Chopin's reader assumes that "The Story of an Hour" is a portrayal of a young woman's journey into feminine individualism. The story begins to follow, so to speak, a feminist narrative pattern: the protagonist escapes the clutches of an oppressive male figure; within her, she battles between her connection to the past of oppression and the new life awaiting her; and she frees herself from the past recognizing her own value and power as a woman. However, Louise Mallard's story does not end with freedom; instead, her story strays from the narrative pattern and ends with her

death. The omniscient narrator knows all along that Brently Mallard is alive and yet waits until the end of the story to inform the protagonist and the reader (Chopin 1611). The reader's dependence on the narrator for all information once again allows Chopin to manipulate the story's sequence of events in order to convey her message concerning gender. Also similarly, after the surprise of her husband's death (Chopin 1609), Louise also develops expectations about what will have happened with her life by the end of her life. In "resurrecting" Brently and thus shocking Louise to death, Chopin abolishes the potential fruition of Louise's expectations. Louise's shock at Brently's survival parallels the reader's shock at Louise's death—what Louise assumed would have happened and what the reader assumed would have happened was shattered with a single action.

Though Chopin applies the unexpected and makes a critical statement on gender in both "Desiree's Baby" and "The Story of an Hour," Louise Mallard's death reveals an entirely different layer of gender identity. In her analysis, Mary E. Papke, suggests, "This piece offers no escape for those who live outside that world [traditional gender society] but who do so only in a private world in themselves. Either way, Chopin seems to be saying, there lies self-oblivion if only the individual changes and not the world" (134). The negative reality of Chopin's contemporary feminine experience shocks the reader out of the positive trajectory of Louise's freedom found in individual self-consciousness. Chopin's contemporary reality demanded the death of the private self-conscious individual at the hands of the traditional patriarchal society. The unexpected shock of Louise's death plucks the readers out of the ethereal realm of feminine freedom and individualism and slams them into the pavement of feminine submission and the oppression of practical reality. Louise's story reminds the reader that, regardless of injustice, freeing women from being victims of gender expectations is not possible in a patriarchal society.

Until a new social system develops, separate from dominant male influence, women will always be subjected to oppressive social expectations.

According to the late nineteenth century context in which Chopin wrote her short stories, it was impossible to conceive of gender equality and gender irrelevance. Chopin uses the unexpected—the impossible—to resolve her storyline (whether or not there is true resolution for her reader) in order to recognize the injustice and frivolity of the current systems of gender and racial identity construction. Chopin attempts to offer her readers a new perspective on the stereotypical gender categories of her contemporaries. However, though Chopin creates the opportunity for new identity concepts to form, she gives no insight through her narratives into what those new constructs should or would look like. Largely, Chopin's work is destructive and not prescriptive. Initially, it is easy to find Chopin's work frustrating. She focuses blindly on the problems with gender identity constructions and offers no solution for improvement. However, with a deeper, more contextual reading, frustration with Chopin dissipates. Her writing is not nihilistic; it does not lack a prescription for change because she believed there was none. Rather, her writing is an existential call; it unveils society's deepest sins and challenges society to create a new system in order to redeem itself.

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Review

Dr. Keya Kraft

The Strange History of Reading for Pleasure

Lynch, Deidre Shauna. *Loving Literature: A Cultural History*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P,

2015. 352 pp. $40.00. Cloth.

I n *Loving Literature: A Cultural History*, Deidre Lynch traces the history of how the labor of reading and studying literature came to be aligned with private pleasure and emotional attachment, "beholden to statements of personal connection" (1). *Loving Literature* charts the rise of affective reading in six thematic chapters organized into four major sections, each of which examines a different way that literary "love" was expressed or understood by authors and readers of the Romantic period. Lynch draws upon an impressively large archive of diverse literary and critical sources, organizing her history into what she defines as four major categories of literary love: the everyday affection that readers expressed for specific authors, the self-consciously aberrant love expressed by aristocratic male readers for expensive rare books, the common reader's reverence for his or her national literary inheritance invoked by the collected canons of important English authors that became popular during the Romantic period, and the bizarre necromantic love that characters express in gothic novels for the dead authors of discovered manuscripts.

In the introduction to *Loving Literature*, Lynch demonstrates that the expectation that one "love" literature originated in changes to reading practices in the late eighteenth century. At that moment, she argues, reading culture found itself eccentrically positioned within "post-Enlightenment culture's conventional and gendered scheme for segregating 'personal life' from

the public sphere, feeling from knowing, and recreation from labor" (4). The formal study of English literature, which emerged in the nineteenth century, frustrated the boundaries that had been established during the Enlightenment between public and private identities, work and leisure, logic and feeling, love and disinterested critical study. Literary study since the Romantic period has carried the expectation that its practitioners have an intimate relationship with their subjects of study. Lynch's history does not unreservedly embrace the belief that reading should simultaneously, at once, give pleasure and instruct. Instead, she reveals the strange nature of the demands placed upon students and teachers of literature to cultivate the affective nature of reading even as they engage in the disinterested work of critical analysis. She traces the ambivalence of readers back to the moment that reading culture changed, after the 1774 copyright law that introduced the idea that literature eventually entered a space of collective ownership known as "the public domain." This occurred at the same moment that high romantic poetry became associated with literary genius as a form of aesthetic rebellion against what poets and critics saw as a growing population of indiscriminate bourgeois readers.

Thus, literary affections have a complicated and important modern history originating in the moment when authorship became associated with the idea of individual genius and when reading became associated with the leisured activities of the bourgeoisie. In tracing the history of "literary love," or affective reading, Lynch demonstrates that the contradictory expectations that English professors cultivate a love of reading while also demonstrating the practical value of a degree in literary study originates in the Romantic period. Today, we take this central tension of literary labor for granted: for modern readers, the book travels seamlessly from the bedside table to the classroom and in the process metamorphoses from an object of pleasure to a pedagogical instrument and the subject of rational critical inquiry. But this was not always the case, and

readers were not always expected to bond emotionally with the subject of their labors. Rather than producing a teleological history of how modern readers came to love their books and libraries and to see affection for certain authors as natural and inevitable, Lynch traces her subjects' doubts and ambivalences over the legitimacy of such love and the correct ways of expressing it.

In her first chapter, "Making It Personal," Lynch demonstrates that eighteenth-century writers articulated anxiety over the way that literary consumption was becoming understood as an affective experience aligned with the emotions rather than the mind. She writes that "it was not easy for readers to accommodate the notion that the book was not a storage unit but a surrogate self, a hegemonic notion once it was agreed that . . . literature is 'writing that has "authors" rather than writing which is anonymous'" (31). Moreover, she writes that authors debated how best to express literary affections in their own writing. Samuel Johnson warned readers against the "affection potentially lurking in their affections" (46) whereas the more sentimental Anna Seward criticized Johnson's aberrant lack of proper emotion. Sir Walter Scott accused Thomas Wharton of loving the subjects of his collection *The History of English Poetry* too much, which according to Scott explained why the collection remained unfinished and fragmentary at his death. The antisocial and obsessive desires of bibliomaniac collectors of extremely expensive, rare books in the second quarter of the nineteenth century celebrated a kind of aberrant love of books as objects, but their fetishized love of the antiquarian discovery undermined the way that the cheap publication of books in the public domain made the pleasures of reading available to more readers. Loving books and their authors was dubious and contentious activity at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Nowhere was the contentious nature of affective reading more evident than in the way that authors, readers, and reviewers discussed the gothic, and in her penultimate chapter titled "Canon Love in Gothic Libraries," Lynch invites critics to think more extensively about the role that the gothic has played in the history of how literary scholars came to feel ambivalent about loving the books central to our cultural heritage. Her history called to my mind a litany of scenes of problematic acts of private reading in gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Edward Waverley's troubled political career begins with a poor foundation of indulgent and desultory reading in his uncle's library. Catherine Morland's reading of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* shapes her (mis)interpretation of the nature of her own marriage plot to Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*. In *The Antiquary*, Scott makes fun of himself as an antiquarian enthusiast like Oldbuck, but in making the joke through self-portraiture, he acknowledges the border between enthusiastic private consumption of a collection and masturbatory practice. Thomas Hardy's Jude Fawley loves the ghosts of authors and the corpse-like books of a canonical and ecclesiastical canon that does not love him back. The authors of these novels, self-conscious about rhetoric that denigrated the consumption of gothic novels, anticipated readers who would misread and produce antisocial or morally problematic interpretations of their novels. Demonstrating how their own characters go awry in their reading practices, gothic novelists acknowledged the problematic slide by which reading for pleasure could become a form of hedonism.

Lynch sets this cultural ambivalence to the gothic in the late eighteenth century within a history in which affective reading was promoted even as readers and writers were uncomfortable about how intimate forms of reading restructured the relationship between reader and text. Lynch writes that gothic romantic fiction "combines its discussion of possible returns from the afterlife

[through texts that haunt their readers] with lessons in literary appreciation" (201). Devotion to dead texts, she posits, sees a new iteration in gothic novels that "make visible the necromantic possibilities that their contemporaries discovered lurking in that affiliation" (201). Scenes of readers haunted by the books of their dead ancestors demonstrate a fascination with literary immortality that the writers of sub-canonical gothic fiction might be denied, and they remind readers of their indebtedness to the canonical dead authors. Lynch concludes that gothic novels depict legitimate reading in the eighteenth century as a model of filial devotion to their ancestors, which she attributes to the rise of the literary and cultural heritage industry. As British national culture after the copyright statute of 1774 came to be understood as the collective cultural "heritage" of the nation, to be culturally English became equated with understanding one's debts to a past literary canon and demonstrating payment such debts by celebrating dead authors. To love dead authors and to be haunted by old manuscripts and dead writers is to be a good citizen.

Loving Literature is compelling and demanding reading, which calls upon the reader to reflect continuously on his or her own practices of reading, relationship with dead authors, and place within the cultural history of reading. Lynch's study is focused on the Romantic period, and she does not carry her study forward to the present, but she assumes that literary scholars and academicians will reflect upon their own practices as a result of understanding the cultural history of reading during the Romantic period. It seems counterintuitive that a scholar writing about the love of literature would not actively seek to address more members of the modern cult of reading. Lynch's study is dense, her writing is at times opaque, many of the works she references are esoteric and out of print, and her book—important as it is for literary history—will likely not reach a wide audience beyond the academy. But for members of academy, she provides a crucial history for the modern practice of literary study, reminding us that expansion

of readership after the 1774 law that placed statutory limits on the ownership of copyright in Britain brought with it cultural anxieties about who exactly was reading books and for what purposes, which continue to shape the nature of literary study today. Ultimately, one might rationally conclude after reading *Loving Literature* that it is okay if students see Dickens as a labor of drudgery rather than of love, and she gives us all—students and scholars—permission to recognize our work as meaningful labor whose value has only been obscured by the demands of love and emotion. She provides some historical context for understanding that the labors of humanistic study are undervalued precisely because of the anticipated pleasures of the work, which is itself a modern idea; the very concept of loving literature is a modern idea born of the cultural transformations of the late eighteenth century.

It is my own belief that incorporating a rational discussion about emotions in literary study in the classroom and in scholarship can help elucidate the ways in which the field of literary study has been simultaneously understood in the marketplace to be both critically rigorous and self-indulgent. This may pose a unique challenge for those of us committed to the study of English, but it is a challenge that speaks to one of the paradoxes of the modern world, which is that at the very moment that workers gained the right to enjoy leisure time, they ironically began to imagine a world in which they could labor at things that they might have otherwise enjoyed doing for free.

Review

Jud Potter

Discovering the Literary in Comics

Hoberek, Andrew. *Considering Watchmen: Poetics, Property, Politics.* New Jersey, Rutgers UP,

2014. 227 pp. $26.95. Paperback.

C an comic books be literature? Those opposed to the idea argue that they have almost always been commercial products. In *Considering Watchmen,* Andrew Hoberek examines not only *Watchmen's* history as one of the most critically well-received graphic novels of all time but also its status as literature. *Considering Watchmen* is ambitious to say the least. In the book, Hoberek offers his analysis of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's classic graphic novel *Watchmen* in three categories: poetics, property, and politics. In the introduction, Hoberek defends the superhero narrative as worthy of academic study. Yet, he makes it clear that he fully understands the pulpy, often cheap origins of superhero narratives. Hoberek defends the genre as having matured and become self-aware over time, citing *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* as examples. This leads Hoberek to what I consider the heart of his analysis in *Considering Watchmen*: *Watchmen* is fundamentally, in terms of form and content, modernist literature. For Hoberek, this idea is central to appreciating comics as literary art.

In the first section, "Poetics," Hoberek immediately establishes *Watchmen* as worthy of contemporary literary discussion in his introduction: " . . . it anticipates a recent shift in the definition of what counts as mainstream literary fiction. In the early twenty-first century . . . literary fiction turns to genre fiction for its form as well as its content . . ." (Hoberek 11). He goes on to list authors such as Cormac McCarthy, Michael Chabon, Jennifer Egan, and Colson

Whitehead as having " . . . more or less permanently moved into territory that blurs the line between literary and genre fiction, in ways that popular and academic critics of contemporary fiction have had to acknowledge" (11). More importantly, however, this section deals most directly with the seemingly wild assertion that a graphic novel from the mid-1980s can be considered modernist literature. Most scholars would agree that modernism, the literary era pioneered by T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, had its origin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hoberek briefly defines modernism as " . . . generally understood to turn a formal innovation spurred by dissatisfaction with the conventions of an ossified realism" (39). This creates a contradiction. If modernists are dissatisfied with rigid attempts at objective realism, could a work about super-heroes be considered modern? Historically, superhero narratives dealt almost exclusively in unreality. However, that unreality was just as complacent, as the literary era preceding modernism was experiencing formal atrophy. Hoberek explains that "Moore and Gibbons, working in an essentially unrealistic genre . . . innovate by introducing greater realism" (39). In the case of *Watchmen* and the superhero genre itself, Moore and Gibbons are dealing with a trite unrealism. Moreover, "*Watchmen* in particular devotes itself to fleshing out the subjectivities of its characters . . . paralleling . . . Henry James, E.M. Forster, and Virginia Wolfe" (39). By pursuing psychological realism in its characters, *Watchmen* defies readers' expectations in both form and content. Hoberek points out the psychological complexity and reality in all of the principle characters and some of the minor ones. For example, Hoberek addresses Dr. Long, the psychiatrist assigned to Rorschach (a.k.a. Walter Kovacs), " . . . Long, who might simply have served as a device for presenting Rorschach's origin story, both complicates our understanding of Rorschach's motivations and himself becomes a fleshed-out character—one with his own motivations . . . and his own ambivalence . . ." (50). I think

Hoberek is on to something here. We see Long eventually succumb to Rorschach's nihilistic worldview. As characters interact within the narrative and incompatible worldviews come into fierce contact, they experience existential crises both personal and geopolitical. Whether that interaction is between Rorschach and Dr. Long or, for example, Dr. Manhattan and the rest of the world. The very existence of a god-like character such as Dr. Manhattan not only renders the masked adventurers obsolete but entire armies and governments as well. This acute subjectivity is a distinctly modernist device. This section, in my reading, was the most fruitful. I had never considered *Watchmen* as modernist literature before, but Hoberek makes the idea seem like the only logical way to read the text.

In Hoberek's second section, "Property," Hoberek takes a closer look at Moore as an author. More specifically, he explores *Watchmen's* place in the comic book industry. Hoberek then shows a deft understanding of the comics industry in the 1980s and how it made *Watchmen* possible; specifically, he notes the rise of specialty retailers selling comics. These retailers allowed comics to move out of magazines and newspapers and step toward autonomy. It allowed creators to have more freedom than ever before. It made big publishers such as DC and Marvel more confident in selling more obscure and creative titles because of the rise of this new "direct market." Within the text of *Watchmen,* Hoberek points out that Moore uses the characters of Ozymandias and Rorschach as " . . . a metacommentary on this struggle between corporation and creator . . ." (31). In this analysis, Hoberek proposes Rorschach as a stand-in for the creator, who desires more control of characters and story. He proposes Ozymandias as a stand-in for the corporations concerned more with bottom lines and units sold than narrative cohesion or continuity. Here, Hoberek has found a brilliant way to read the finale of *Watchmen.* Ask any regular reader of comic books about continuity and you will probably get a chuckle at the notion.

For much of his career, Alan Moore has been firmly antagonistic to the large corporate system that startlingly resembles the studio system during the golden age of Hollywood more than anything else. For example, a large publisher would rather write ten different versions of Superman that never end than a single, stand-alone work that permanently changes or evolves the character. Big comics publishers treat their characters as golden-age studios treated their actors. The characters and intellectual properties are there to sell a certain story and world. You will not find many canonical main series or arcs that permanently change or evolve a character. Batman will always be, more or less, brooding around Gotham. Iron Man will always, more or less, be a wise-cracking, billionaire playboy in a metal suit. From the artist's perspective, such a system is more focused on the bottom line and quarterly reports than any artistic endeavor or experiment. Considering this, Hoberek equates Moore with Rorschach, painting him as an anarchist who resists aimlessly serialized narratives. However, he makes an interesting note that

> . . . the values associated with these characters flip at the very end of the story, when Ozymandias becomes associated, through a conversation with another character, with the desire for narrative closure—a shift I read as evidence of an internal struggle between Moore's modernist notion of the autonomous literary work and his and Gibbon's understanding of comics as a collaborative, serial medium with its own history and aesthetic strategies. (31)

Hoberek proceeds into a conversation about the improbability of the auteur in the medium of graphic narrative. Understanding comics as an inherently serialized medium is where Hoberek gets this idea of the characters changing roles. Ozymandias, desiring narrative closure, comes to represent Moore himself. Hoberek points out the irony that this "rebel" author is writing this form-breaking graphic novel for DC, one of the biggest companies in the industry.

In his third section, "Politics," Hoberek gets into the political text and subtext that permeates *Watchmen*. When analyzing what he describes as Ozymandias's "totalitarian deception" from the end of the novel, Hoberek says, "Insofar as totalitarianism is the ideological conceit through which the United States . . . and in particular the Reagan administration . . . vilified its communist opponents, this suggests a certain ironic complicity on *Watchmen's* part with the very order it seems to be criticizing" (120). Hoberek explains this complicity by discussing *Watchmen*'s 1980s, where Richard Nixon is in his fifth term as President. He discusses this fictitious setting as a displacement of Reagan's United States and Margaret Thatcher's England. Hoberek decides that this link " . . . gives us a fuller picture of the politics of both *Watchmen* and the Cold War intellectual framework from which it emerges" (120). Hoberek again gets to the heart of what makes *Watchmen's* alternate-reality politics so compelling and enduring. We are taken into a world that is simultaneously alien and familiar to readers.

Hoberek concludes his book and his coda by comparing *Watchmen* to none other than *Citizen Kane* (1941). The comparison is not unfounded. Both works challenged their respective mediums from the context of big studio and publishing industries. They both challenged readers and audiences to expect the literary in a medium where it was not expected. *Watchmen* challenged the established form in so many ways. For example, the seemingly odd, almost neon choice of color palette is entirely unusual in the medium of superhero comics. Like *Citizen Kane,* each section takes the readers into different characters' subjectivities to shed light on the world and the mystery that frames the story. Yes, I agree with Hoberek that *Watchmen* challenges its medium's form as *Citizen Kane* does. However, I would compare the film to Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon (*1950). *Rashomon* is a film about exploring characters' subjectivities in order to get to the bottom of a murder. *Watchmen* explores different subjectivities to get to the bottom of the

Comedian's murder, which is set up on the first page. In any case, by comparing *Watchmen* to *Citizen Kane,* Hoberek demonstrates a care for the material and a reverence for what it accomplished for graphic narratives. Respect is imperative when analyzing a text such as *Watchmen.* Imagine someone doing analysis on *Citizen Kane* or *Rashomon* without an appreciation for how those films challenged and changed the medium of film. If you have read *Watchmen* and would like to read an academic work that treats the text with reverence and will challenge the way you read the text and give you a new appreciation for a classic, Hoberek's *Considering Watchmen* is the book for you. I would also recommend this book to anyone who still needs convincing that comic books and graphic narratives should be read as literature. Hoberek will convince you to read them as closely as you would any novel. Moreover, if you are tired of the glut of the same superhero narratives in theaters, read this book as a companion to *Watchmen.* Ultimately this novel points out how *Watchmen* was and probably still is a high watermark of what superhero narratives and graphic novels can do. I will conclude this review with the final line of Hoberek's book. It displays his deep understanding of *Watchmen,* and honors the source material: "*Watchmen,* like *Kane* in transcending the constraints of its medium, not only remade the world of comics but also helped transform the cognate medium of print fiction. It was and always will remain a comic book, but it also, we might say, becomes literature retroactively, by expanding our understanding of what literature can do and be" (183). *Considering Watchmen* is a work of considerable academic value. It presents *Watchmen* as a text worthy of study to the academic world. It is my hope that someday *Watchmen* is read in American Literature classes alongside Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the poetry of Robert Frost.

Review

Megan Burr

Banks, Miranda J. *The Writers: A History of American Screenwriters and Their Guild.* New

Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015. Xi. 327 pp. $34.95. Hardback.

I n my experience, most books on screenwriting, as a rule, focus primarily on planning, writing, and editing your own scripts. These books range from helpful to completely useless, but the subject matter they cover tends to be about the same with only slight variations from book to book. Dr. Miranda J. Banks, author of *The Writers: A History of American Screenwriters and Their Guild*, sets herself on a different path. Rather than teaching the individual aspiring screenwriter the craft, Banks hopes to educate amateur and professional screenwriters—the intended audience of the book—on the history of the profession by "[mining] the collective experiences of writers as media practitioners and [tracking] the conditions of their creative labor" (2). Banks collected interviews with more than two hundred screenwriters to create what one of her interviewees calls a *Rashomon*-like account of the history of the Screen Writers Guild (2). However, despite this vast array of experience at Banks's fingertips, what results is a surprisingly dry, rarely colorful text that only seldom utilizes the very writers Banks hopes to represent.

Banks homes in specifically on what she refers to as "five key moments" of Screen Writers Guild (SWG) history (2). She dedicates a chapter each to these "moments" and the details surrounding them. The first body chapter examines the formation of the Screen Writers Guild in 1933, tracings the SWG's almost ten-year path from a "social club" (32) to the first major battle with the studios over a minimum base agreement (MBA) for writers (64). The

second major moment, the most infamous in the history of the SWG, is that of the blacklist era, which Banks refers to as "the most damaging [era] in the history of the writers and their union" (67). In this chapter, Banks does not hesitate to charge the SWG and other culpable parties with the notorious missteps still written of today.

The third moment is that of the meteoric rise of television, what Banks refers to as a "critical era of transition" for the screenwriting community (123) as writers began finding new venues of expression in television and power in the role of hyphenate (producer-writer, e.g.). The penultimate body chapter builds on the idea of hyphenates in Hollywood, examining their unsteady role in Hollywood as both employee and management (157), and the chapter culminates in the various strikes of the 1980s that resulted in a major "[rupture of] trust and solidarity between members" (158). The final historic moment Banks examines seems to be where she finally hits her stride in writing this text, perhaps because the 2007-2008 strike is the most recent. Banks explains how the various strikes of reality television writers such as the staff of America's Next Top Model paved the way for the major strike of the decade. These were the first strikes in which writers were able to reach out directly to their fanbases through the web, using MySpace and YouTube to air their grievances in a more public fashion than ever before possible.

Banks also traces three major recurring concerns of the Screen Writers Guild: ownership, credits, and the screenwriter's place as an outsider within the insular world of film and television. This gives her a thesis of sorts to pursue consistently throughout her book. Considering that, in times such as the studio era or the blacklist, screenwriters were unable to claim ownership or credit of their writing, and considering that both of these aspects of scriptwriting are almost required to continue to get work in the industry, it makes sense for

Banks to focus on these recurring concerns. In terms of the screenwriters' position in the industry, Banks notes that, unlike most workers in film and television, most writers "spend their working hours outside studio walls" (19), which separates them from the rest of those who work on set. Additionally, even within the SWG itself, minorities (women, writers of color, LGBT, etc.) have been underrepresented, creating a sense of isolation even within the group. Banks introduces these three issues in her opening chapter and consistently pursues them throughout her book, shining a final light on them in her conclusion. The pursuit of these concerns provides a solid baseline with which Banks structures her narrative.

Although Banks's goals are lofty and her process admirable, her conversion of raw interviews to the text of this book loses quite a bit in translation. When Banks deigns to use the words of the writers she interviewed in brief quotes or anecdotes, her book becomes alive and full of character, but these moments are far fewer than one might expect. The book is largely composed of Banks's own words and paraphrases of her interviews, which becomes apparent when noting the abundance of footnotes directing the reader to citations of her interviews. Though I understand Banks had to cobble together dozens upon dozens of accounts into a coherent, single narrative, the overwhelming dryness of the majority of her book results in a fairly dull account of a history that was anything but. Towards the end of the book, Banks notes that many of her interviewees have "written their own accounts of this story in some of media studies' most respected journals" (233). I find myself wondering if one of these more subjective, though certainly biased, accounts might be more worth reading. In writing on the collective of voices that make up the SWG, Banks seems to lose track of her own.

Overall, despite my problems with her prose, I consider Banks's work a supremely important endeavor. Banks writes that "most of the writers [she] interviewed for this book

emphasized how important it was for them to understand their own history as a creative community" (241), and I completely agree. Aspiring or even currently working screenwriters should know the history of their profession, and much of this information was entirely new to me. With the right professors, *The Writers* might serve well in a Film History course at either the undergraduate or graduate levels. However, I would not recommend it as a solo read unless the reader in question had no other options as the format in which Banks presents her findings is hard to stomach on an individual level. Banks's book creates more of a history textbook that must be slogged through than a presentation of the rich history of the screen and television writers of the past and present.

Review

Jennifer Lackey

Landsberg, Alison. *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical*

Knowledge. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 232 pp. $30.00. Paperback.

I n *Engaging the Past: Mass culture and the production of Historical Knowledge*, Alison Landsberg takes seriously the idea that media such as film, television, and the internet can be valid ways to understand history despite the criticisms that they are overly manipulative and mediated forms. She rightly counteroffers that all history is a construct and a mediation of the past. However, the book is also an attempt to react against the postmodern and poststructuralist theories that history is only a simulation, as Baudrillard states, and that the "real" is unknowable by a subject that is merely discursively constituted. Landsberg's project instead is to suggest that, through certain kinds of mass media, one can engage history in one's actual body while still maintaining a critical distance from the events, thus creating "a more sophisticated account of experience in the contemporary media landscape where one engages with or 'experiences' mediated representations all the time" (17).

It is this "critical distance" from the events depicted that Landsberg seems most determined to establish. Her turn to the experiential mode seeks to avoid the emotional over-involvement and identification that opponents have long bemoaned. She explores the objections of historians such as Vanessa Agnew who argues that "those engaged by affective history—film or television viewers or participants in historical reenactments—will misread the past by projecting their own contemporary responses backward" (8-9). Many, if not most, academic historians fear that experiential involvement through dramatized events will always create this

"presentist" view, which lacks the complexity of the past as an "alien" or different place and that obscures the mediated nature of one's relationship to it.

Landsberg, however, draws on the work of historian and philosopher R.G. Collingwood to establish an affective mode of engagement that can nonetheless be critically distant. Collingwood felt that the work of the historian necessitated the re-enactment of past historical situations and decisions. A historian could not just look at a historical artifact but needed to imagine the experiences surrounding its creation, putting him- or herself into the position of the past person in order to explore the possibilities of that historical moment, to become aware of the myriad choices that were potential, to contextualize the object. The key point, however, is that the historian possesses a continual awareness that this engagement is a construction only, that this reenactment can never be literally identical to the original situation; it can be only a resemblance. Collingwood posited that the historian must *know* he or she is thinking this way. The "historical knowledge" thus revealed can only be the result of conscious activity (5).

Landsberg argues that some, not all, popular media can create this same kind of "awareness that one is thinking," thus countering the fears of Agnew and others (6). While media does create powerful, emotional states regarding historical events through disruptive devices of form, the viewer can be forced back into her own self, where a critical analysis of the events takes place, instead of simply overlaying her own present emotional understandings onto those events or, even more problematically, having her own identity lost through emotional and experiential suturing into the story and characters. Landsberg believes that this process creates the powerful experiential component (fundamentally different from traditional academic historical exploration because the events are now *felt*) and the necessary conscious activity that leads to Collingwood's "historical thinking." Landsberg writes, "I argue that for real historical

knowledge to be produced, the affective engagements that draw the viewer in must be coupled with other modes that assert the alien nature of the past and that viewer's fundamental distance from it" (10).

Landsberg lays a groundwork for these "other modes" by including an extensive discussion of form, citing the work of Jacques Rancière, Walter Benjamin, and Gilles Deleuze, who explore how new aesthetic forms could directly lead to new ways of thinking and new perceptions and thus create political and social action. She is especially interested in Benjamin's idea of distracted engagement and Deleuze's discussion of sensuous encounters that deny easy recognition (13). It is a strong exploration but becomes especially powerful as it underscores her belief that we ignore popular mediated representations to our potential peril. Viewers without strong affective engagement, or as postmodernism would have it, viewers who are only discursively constituted subjects without "the materiality of the body," are often left as inactive social agents (17). She is able then to conclude her initial discussion with a deep exploration of recent scholarship on affect through the writings of Baruch Spinoza, Jerome de Groot, and Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, among others, who all argue that affect has immense political significance. Affect creates powerful knowledge formation, especially in the area of history, by activating one's own personal stake in that knowledge, thus leading to "one's desire to engage in politics, to work against injustices in the present" (19). She is thus arguing for both "historical knowledge" and a "historical consciousness" coming from affect.

Interestingly, as Landsberg shifts into her first chapter and an analysis of specific films and filmic devices, she makes reference to D.W. Griffith, a reference that also figures in her introduction. She offers him as the voice of one who sees film as an unbiased tool that can fulfill the fantasy of having unmediated access to the past, but, strangely, does not address the

disturbing reality that Griffith's films are incredibly skewed and problematic for producing historical knowledge. Perhaps she does not need to; she is not defending Griffith. It is widely known that Griffith actively avoided the stylistic devices she sees as necessary (e.g. alienating language and sounds, editing breaks, use of documentary footage alongside re-created footage, etc.) and helped create the very language of absorbing and affecting cinema, actively and purposively avoiding aspects that could stimulate Collinwood's critical reflexivity. Her uncritical inclusion of Griffith actually shows in a very pointed way that despite the goals of some filmmakers, their own works prove that all media cannot be used as history and some of it should be ignored, as she chooses to do. Although it is subtle and qualified often, this creates a dichotomy, already mentioned above, that pervades her writing: there are some products worthy of discussion because they include disruptive devices and modes, and there are some that are not. I find this suggestion problematic.

In analyzing examples such as *Hotel Rwanda* and *Mad Men,* she points to the use of television sets and radios in the diegesis that reveal historical events; we continually watch the characters watch and listen to historical events. She argues that this obvious mediation creates a reminder that what we are watching is a construct. I agree, but this device is used in other films as well, films that incorporate "deep identification with the characters and events of the past" (35). For me, it raises the question of how much "screen within screen" time (or any other device she identifies) is needed to offset identification. These calculations and categorizations seem unclear and show the dichotomy as false. An acknowledgement that both identification and distancing devices might be possible in all media could make her argument more powerful and certainly open to more application. She states, "For history on film to be recognizable as history by academic historians, it needs at the very least to complicate the kind of simple identification

that tends to be encouraged by filmic technologies and the stylistic and narrative conventions of classical Hollywood cinema" (29). I am offering that this might not be as difficult as she seems to suggest and that "facile identification" is rare (35).

To take a classic example, Stephen Neale argues that even in genre-driven Hollywood films such as Westerns and superhero movies, where everything possible is done to create overwhelming identification with the ideal male protagonist, there is "no simple and unproblematic identification on the part of the spectator" (8). In this case, the image on screen is too perfect, too different from day-to-day existence. Thus, eventually the viewer comes to terms with not being that hero, even if it is just the final letdown when the lights come up. Texts that work hardest toward ideological closure and attempt to create "simple identification" are also open to critical distance. Some audiences may find a compelling affective engagement and a strong cognitive dissonance with a Griffith film simply because it is such a blatantly over-sentimentalized and offensive alternative history that in no way attempts to create self-aware distancing.

Conversely, it also seems simultaneously possible that since a device such as screens within screens is present in other classical Hollywood style texts, it may not automatically distance viewers of *Mad Men*, especially viewers who are not trained or interested in history, visual literacy, or media studies. The contradictions Landsberg finds inherently disruptive in that series may have no disruptive effect on many audience members who enjoy being overwhelmed by the highly stylized look of the show or the sexual exploits of the characters, thus missing the reflexive racism, sexism, or despair. It would also be a productive addition to Landsberg's work to look at how the audience's characteristics or their interest in critical engagement might create

the needed critical distance. Would certain racial groups, such as African Americans, have differing experiences of the show than white viewers?

None of this is to say that her analysis of the textual techniques is not valid or compelling. Landsberg's overall theme that audiovisual devices, by swinging the viewer between proximity and alienation, create the affective engagement that is lacking from academic history while maintaining a critical self-awareness. Perhaps the strongest example of this is her exploration of the much discussed and debated use of dialogue in *Deadwood*. The dialogue is both the most familiar part of the show, since it includes very contemporary instances of profanity, and the most off putting because the characters' phrasing is intentionally ornate and takes extensive cognitive work to glean any meaning from it. Thus, it is the key for keeping us engaged and also alienated, the perfect space from which to reflect on the historical knowledge the show is producing.

In addition to the complex issue of identification, much of her discussion in the first two chapters, especially on televised serial historical drama in chapter two, explores how audiovisual materials operate under different rules than historical monographs, rules that are not about producing historical accuracy but that produce "historical knowledge" in different ways (2). She argues that these serial dramas are set in a distinct, historical time period but do not attempt to follow the life of a famous person or to convey a specific historical event. Shows such as *Deadwood, Mad Men*, and *Rome* are "social history experiments" in that they follow a group of ordinary people living in that time, exploring their possible choices, situations, and definitions (70). Thus the text aims to show "how individual lives are circumscribed by the political, economic, and social constraints of a given historical moment" (70). This desire to create "a fidelity to the spirit of the moment" is what she believes "can foster historical understanding" in

a new way (63). Additionally, this fidelity is enhanced by the long format that gives the space to follow subplots, explore the messiness of history, and deny closure—none of which a two-hour film or even a history monograph can achieve.

In fact, it is when Landsberg discusses devices and formats that are most different from film and academic history that she makes the strongest arguments. By far, the final two chapters on historical reality TV and virtual reality internet sites are the most convincing for how media can create historical knowledge and consciousness. In chapter three, she explores the *Colony House, Frontier House*, and *Texas Ranch House* series aired on PBS, where, by focusing on real people "cast" as historical but fictional persons, the proximity and distance needed for historical knowledge comes closest to realizing Collingwood's vision for the historian. As Landsberg discusses, the physical strain and bodily changes that the participants not only encounter but remark on give us an emotional connection to the past while simultaneously reminding us that we are physically different from history and can never really, bodily, understand it. The interviews of participants directly addressing the camera also keep viewers from simple identification with the participants.

The strongest of Landsberg's observations here, however, is the discussion of "alternative histories" created when the participants refuse to enact the aspects of the past that are most offensive to their present sensibilities, choosing to do something anachronistic instead. For Landsberg, the result is not the creation of a presentist moment where the show loses any understanding of the past; rather, she argues that these moments actually function to highlight, make more real and clear, the prejudices of the past by throwing them into sharp relief against the differences of today. When present people are asked to act like people in the past but cannot

or will not, those present people experience, rather than just understand, the contradictions of the past and how those contradictions may take different forms today.

For example, *Colony House* explores the American experiment as one of freedom, specifically religious freedom, and yet, in the show, the participants are forced to realize they are on someone else's land (they interact with descendants of the Native American tribe that lived on the spot), that they are imperialists, denying freedom to others. They also confront the fact that there would have been laws at the time demanding they be involved in religion or face physical punishment. However, when participants refuse to come to church, there are no physical sanctions imposed. These moments of dissonance and alternate history create for the participants, but also for the viewer, the kind of discomfort that "serves as a productive catalyst to thought" (145). It is one thing to understand intellectually the contradictions of the American experiment, at once focused on freedom and imperialism, but it is another understanding to see that contradiction expressed bodily in the participants. She states that even a scripted drama such as *Mad Men*, which attempts to confront contradictions in the past, "cannot make competing or contradictory narratives seem mutually exclusive to the extent that the *House* programs do" (145).

The most promising discussion, however, is the final chapter, which explores websites that use virtual reality to reconstruct historical places in an interactive manner, places such as the house where Anne Frank and others hid during WWII and a German village devastated during Kristallnacht. Landsberg observes that these sites do not let you experience the actual events as a participant or victim but allow you to interact with the spaces and the objects after the fact, as an observer or reporter. She explores how being able to move around in the spaces as an avatar, to act and be acted on by the site, once again creates new oscillations of involvement and distance.

These experiences are contrasted with visiting actual traumatic sites such as a concentration camp. Landsberg states that actual sites have an aura of authenticity that seduces the visitor into believing one is really living or experiencing the past without an author's bias. Virtual reality can avoid this because the "original is not there in any literal sense" (153). In a way, an actual physical site such as a concentration camp or even a museum with actual objects, becomes analogous to many films that might also create a false sense of truly experiencing the past. She spends time in this section contrasting film and TV to virtual reality websites.

However, I think the former could be more like the latter than she allows. When she discusses the *Rome* serial, she mentions an interactive DVD feature that overlays captions on the screen while the episodes play. By pressing "enter," more historical information can be displayed. While Landsberg offers this as testament to the show's desire to take "historical interpretation seriously," I see more implications (106). As film and TV become more interactive, as the apparatus through which we engage those texts gives us more control, the interactions become more akin to the VR website discussions above but with new and interesting ramifications because they overlay a scripted drama. She does discuss Apparatus Theory earlier but might revisit it here as this interactive layer for film and TV might create the very distancing and awareness of production that is so crucial to her theories. For one example, among many, Brookey and Westerfelhaus examine the "intratextual" effects that can come from the interaction of the primary text, the film or TV show, and what they call "extra text" materials such as DVD extras that are imbedded in the experience of watching these texts at home in an interactive mode. These approaches might have application here (23).

Overall, this book situates itself in an interesting position, drawing on, yet challenging, such areas as traditional historiography, postmodernism, media studies, and others by "theorizing

the experiential in an age of mass mediation" (177). As she states, "This book is meant as neither a celebration nor a critique of 'affective historiography', but it does insist that the experiential or affective mode, in conjunction with more explicitly cognitive modes, can play a role in the acquisition of historical knowledge" (10). Readers from a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from History to Film Studies to Art, will all find interesting aspects in Landsberg's work. More emphasis, however, could be given to the area of "historical consciousness," with more discussion on the direct relationship between the experiential engagement with the texts she analyzes and actual social or political action. While still recognizing that there is work to be done in the area of applying Affect Theory and while attempting to address concerns that media can never do anything but oversimplify the past, the book is an interesting and needed counter-argument to the way academic history has approached, or rather failed to approach, media.

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Review

Samantha Burgess

Laine, Tarja. *Bodies in Pain: Emotion and the Cinema of Darren Aronofsky.* New York:

Berghahn Books, 2015. 194 pp. $90.00. Cloth.

T arja Laine's third published book, *Bodies in Pain*, continues her study of the embodied film experience, or the phenomenon of experiencing film with the entire body. Laine's particular attention to sensual feeling and its internal emotional consequences harkens from her previous works, *Shame and Desire: Emotion, Intersubjectivity, Cinema* (2007) and *Feeling Cinema: Emotional Dynamics in Film Studies* (2011). *Bodies in Pain* houses her first application of what she calls "seeing feelingly" to the works of one auteur (7). She could not have chosen a more suitable subject that Aronofsky, whose films are tediously manipulating probes with no respect for the viewer's personal space. One would have to sleep through an Aronofsly film in order to escape the experience without feeling some degree of personal violation or discomfort.

The book is categorized into seven sections. The first and last are the introduction and conclusion. The middle chapters each focus on one of the five Aronofsky films and the predominant "feeling" each leaves in the spectating body. She then proceeds, with extensive detail, to describe the way in which the affective-aesthetic system of each work engages and entangles the viewer's corporeal body with both the physical bodies and mental states of the characters. However, Laine's personification of the film as a living organism with both mind and body that are as much subject to violation as the mind and body of the spectator heightens her criticism in that it identifies a third actor in the author-spectator dynamic: the film itself. Laine

expounds in depth on the film mind and body theory in the chapters on *Pi* and *Requiem for a Dream*.

Particularly poignant is Laine's resolve that filmmaking is a co-creative relationship between author and spectator, in which the author may manipulate the film in such a way that he or she has the ability to dictate the sensuous experience of the spectator through an affective-aesthetic relationship. At the same time, the spectator projects his or her own body onto the bodies of the film and its characters, establishing the co-creative relationship. Aronofsky's works are particularly effective in making one's skin crawl, and Laine attributes his ability to create this effect to a meticulously detailed arrangement of the cinematic elements that addresses all five senses of the spectating body, while the body itself willingly allows its five senses to be used by the film as points of engagement.

The first two sections address noise in *Pi* and rhythm in *Requiem for a Dream*. What Laine has to say about these first films, as well as the fourth section on *The Wrestler,* is certainly interesting but somewhat obvious. For example, in *Pi* she asserts that main character, Max, has a semi-sexual relationship with the machine he builds in his apartment that is a result of his inability to have a fulfilling sexual relationship with another human. Her research is deep and expansive and certainly theoretically sound, but her theories for these three films lack the authority and vivaciousness of her work on *The Fountain* and *Black Swan*. It may be intentional or it may be the result of her own personal style, but Laine treats each Aronofsky film in the same way the film treats the viewer: as meat ready for the carving. One is as emotionally and intellectually depleted at the end of her chapters as one is at the end of *Black Swan*. *Bodies in Pain* is not a work that can be ingested in one gulp.

In *Pi*, she identifies the obsession with mathematical order that controls the film's main character, Max, and divides the various noises on the film track into two competing forces: organized and unorganized noise. She focuses on this binary in not only the character and plot development, but also in the grueling audio-manifestation of physical pain and mental deterioration perceived primarily through the film's aggressive soundtrack. According to Laine, while Max experiences the debilitating migraines resulting from increasing anxiety, the brain of the film itself, as a personified being, is subject to spasms of shooting pain through the jarring hand-held camera, unnatural camera angels, and French-New-Wave-esque cut sequences. The viewer, as the gazing participant in the subsequent throbbing, experiences the same pain-driven paranoia and anxiety towards the reliability of the film as a depiction of reality.

From *Requiem of a Dream*, Laine argues that the rhythmic progression of the characters on a predictable but inevitable "emotionally exhausting descent" creates "waves of tension and release" that engage the physical body of the spectator without providing the cathartic experience of final reconciliation (Laine 45-46). The cyclical patterns of the film create the expectation that those patterns will carry themselves out to completion. However, the film deliberately interrupts those rhythms in order to refuse the spectator any relief from the exhausting ebb and flow of its tragic descent and, furthermore, to accuse the viewer of participating in the disastrous events with the active power of the gaze. Much like the brain of the film itself suffered from migraines in *Pi*, the brain and body of *Requiem for a Dream* suffers from a debilitating heroin addiction. The overall effect of this, and the point Laine emphasizes, is that the film, through its promise of cyclical balance and subsequent betrayal of cathartic resolve, acts upon the spectator as heroin acts upon the addicted brain. It is the destructive mechanism by which the spectator is robbed of

the agency to complete the rhythm and is lost, like the characters in the movie, to a never-ending winter.

The chapter on *The Wrestler* Laine titles "Masochism." Here, Laine focuses mostly on the ethical ramifications of spectating and accuses the audience as being the instigators of a tremendous amount of physical pain. Lain focuses particularly on the gaze as the means by which the spectator both participates in and creates distance from the pain of the main character, that character's physical body and mind, and the physical bodies of the crowd, both diegetic and non-diegetic. Laine's dichotomy of proximately versus distance is, again, interesting and relevant, but not her most compelling of arguments in *Bodies in Pain*.

The remaining two sections focus on *The Fountain* and *Black Swan*. Both not only make Laine's affective, aesthetic thesis more compelling, but also address the intense physical experience of the films in such a way as to articulate the same grief, horror, and insanity that the films themselves do. The chapter dedicated to *The Fountain,* entitled "Grief," is arguably Laine's most theoretically complex. This is perhaps the reason that it so accurately addresses the complicated nature of grief above the other "feelings" she discusses. Laine's criticism here is focused more on the core structure of the film than on the stylistic cinematic choices of Aronofsky's filmmaking, although she does spend significant time utilizing those elements as evidence for her structural theory.

Parting from previous critiques of this film as a binary opposition of the finite and the infinite, Laine unites her thesis with the overall theme of embodied cinema by identify the co-inhabiting stories of the film, three in total, as "a set of membraneous interfaces analogous to the three layers of human skin," (80). The basic structure of these layers is what she calls, "the emotional core of pathological grief" (75). Laine's argument is that simplifying the film's theme

into clearly established opposites undermines the complexity of loss, as anyone who has grieved well knows. In grief, opposites are, in fact, interdependent forces, layered on top of each other, so that no one force can be identified as more true or real than any other. Each layer has to be worked through internally and externally for resolution to be achieved. In the same way, the main character, embodied in three personas, has to work through the plot of each storyline to overcome his loss. The feeling of grieving, although emotional, is manifested physically in the lived body—in the skin—of both the film and the viewer.

Working from these principles, Laine utilizes the elements of the film, particularly its character and plot development, in exacting detail. Unlike the film itself, which received only mediocre reviews from both critics and the public, Laine's chapter on *The Fountain* and her following work on *Black Swan* are the most well-thought out, engaging, and mobilizing for her theory of cinematic embodiment and the co-creative process.

Not only is *Black Swan* the most noted of Aronofsky's films, it is the one that most affectively inhabits the physical skin of the viewer. The fact that Laine establishes her theory on the presence of an uncanny "other" is not surprising, as this theme arises with any work containing a double or doppelganger. What is particularly compelling about her critique is the way she molds Nina's insanity, not into a dichotomy of flesh versus spirit, but into a complex polygon of representations of Nina reflecting the mind-boggling complexity of the film itself.

The "uncanny sublime," which serves as the title of the chapter on *Black Swan,* addresses the duplicity of beauty, which in ballet is perceived as something that is pure, innate, and innocent, but in reality must be, as Laine puts it, "smashed in order to achieve the aesthetic ideal" (133). The mutilation of Nina's perfect flesh, through her various masochistic tendencies, symbolizes to Laine the mutilation of the boundary between self and the world in the search for

beautification. Simultaneously, the film's aesthetic affective style replicates the same loss of boundary for the viewer, who begins to utilize his or her own skin as a seeing organ, Laine argues, that perceives the dissolving boundary between the physical and the sublime as a dissolving boundary between the film and the spectating body. Capitalizing on the horrifying close-ups paired alongside grueling ripping, scratching and sprouting noises, Laine quite accurately claims that the film "directly scratches, even wounds the spectators skin" (140). The style of her analysis on *Black Swan* is so harassingly similar that it brings about the same embodied gooseflesh in her reader. The entirety of *Bodies in Pain,* although rich in other areas, may be worth the production of this single chapter.

Visceral films such as Aronofsky's often draw criticism from the common moviegoer as disgusting, brutally intimate, and inappropriate portrayals of human pain. However, as Laine notes in her introduction, the relationship between the author and the spectator is co-creative. *Bodies in Pain* calls its reader to recognize that participation in the film body is a co-creative process. The book will be most appreciated by those with an established knowledge base of film terms and theories, as Laine takes little to no time to expound on her references to long-established vocabulary or theories, such as gaze theory. Written for fellow scholars and students, her criticism may be lost on the average casual Aronofsky fan with no film education.

In her conclusion, Laine draws back on active viewing theory, where meaning is "made possible by affective, sensuous fluctuation between the spectator's body and the cinematic body" (161). Laine argues that the genius or fault of a viewing experience is shared over a relationship between the author and the spectator that is mutually agreed upon when the spectator walks into the theatre. As viewers, *Bodies in Pain* serves to remind us that we are not being robbed of

control over our bodies when we view films but willingly allowing them to be donated to the will of the film experience.

Poetry

Amy Haupt

The Dying Man

Time ticked.
Sleep slip slipper slipping when the sun rose.
The wrinkles stirred slowly, suddenly
Awake.

White, worn.

Clean cold sheets.
More room to stretch out,
Less space to feel.
A room unchanged for 48 years,
Since they were seventeen.
Back then it was,
Love was,
Steady, steadfast, safe.

Empty.
It once smelled sweet, smooth,

Buttermilk and Honeysuckle.
Like her.

They said it would be his heart that killed him,
How right they were.

Time ticked.
Waiting, fading.
Wanting.

Gone.

Poetry

Ryan Lally

I Spoke of Travels

Would you have me
Talk of the weather?
Now that's tiring, I know,
I know you're tired
Of that crackling antiphon.

I would have waited,
Waited to quiver with the ribald jowls of old age,
To spend our days
Staring off the porches
We built, mouths brimmed with the sweat of ghosts.

We should reflect—
Remember that far first date.
Together we drove, drove past
Two raccoons squelched on the shoulder,
They could have been holding hands.

They told me you would want me—
Confidence and road kill.
Such truth is like an umbilical noose;
It is a cold
It is a cold room you left me in
To scratch at your photographs with eye-soaked hands,
Fumbling for a touch
That precious ink wouldn't give.

Yes, you were not my mother;
Be still, and go.
I know that feeling
Of waving you off
On my first day of school, knowing
That I did not know.

Oh love, I did not know.

Poetry

Ryan Lally

A Screened Porch

A baffling sunset dresses
Clouds in the comforts of receding warmth,
Pulling a crumbling orb of borrowed splendor into focus,
Stirring cicadas to chilled movement—
The paths were walked, giving
Way to their new declamations that dance in the dark.

From this balcony I can see
All of human history
Before me;
I can see you withering past the screen
Already, fading like pressure from empty hands.
And from the corners of the porch,
Strands of web like human hairs cling to last year's hope.

I have seen the faces of many an uncounted lover
That mourn frosted glass and enfeeble closed-curtained windows.
Here—there is an education in sight
And a knife to sever our infant fuses.

Hear what is the apparition of a past dearness:
You? You are an empty wire hanger
And I am the coarseness
Of a rag
Left out to blanch in the sun.
I, a pilgrim against the plow, seeking
A place to hoist my flag;
A spot to unfurl
On that lonely, sustained body.

The spiders surely must have thought
Those are tired, tired eyes
Whose glimpsing vision glazes your shrinking shadow.
Such a peripheral suggests the clarity of Achilles
As he stared upon the swollen stars.

What is that half-sleep sensation?
To grasp at blankets
Where your warmth has frosted
Into stillness—the sensation
That scalds my diurnal sufferings.

You bled into darkness, and I am
Awake in my tower. While stiller minds nestle in absence
I long to move the path that water takes
As I caress the memory of glimmering darkness.

Short Fiction

Bailey Doyle

Cold Feet

It's been eight days since they found me on what was left of the charred, kitchen floor. What a waste of a pretty, little kitchen. I wish I cooked more. I wish I were like one of those women with red lips and a tiny waist. You know, the ones on the front of thick, French cookbooks that collects dust instead of cooking stains. Instead of Allure, I had day old, cheap mascara and unshaved legs. I was working on my thesis paper for graduate school, which meant showers weren't high on the daily "to-do" list and neither were men, but they didn't seem too interested in me either. My mother used to tell me it was because intelligent women intimidated men. I always thought it was the whole shaving thing. I didn't really care to find out. Anywho, along with updated mascara and a daily shower, cooking was most certainly out of the question. It was hardly worth all that effort anyways. Not to mention there was no one around to eat it. *You really should bake more; it will make you smell like brown sugar and cinnamon. Men like that you know*—mother used to tell me every time we talked on the phone, which was too often in my opinion. Well, look where your advice got me, mother. I finish my fall semester, disappear into the mountains, I even try baking those stupid cookies, and here I am, burnt to a crisp. I did meet a man though. A *doctor*, might I add. He works in a morgue. He comes to visit me everyday from eight thirty to four. He always brings a hot cup of coffee, which replaces the stench, which at first I couldn't place but I'm starting to think it's me—mixed with his sweet Mocha Java. We've been spending most of our time together. He's the first friend I've had in awhile. We haven't known each other for that long. Like I said before, it's been eight days, but he still doesn't know my name. Granted, I can't really remember it either. The kitchen fire must've burned that part of my brain alongside my face. The man says to his coworkers that I'm "unrecognizable." It's true. I know I'm not much to look at, and I respect his honesty. You know, it's not that bad here. I haven't rested this much since the tenth grade. I think I could be quite happy staying here. I would love some socks though, my feet are a little cold.

Short Fiction

Amy Haupt

A Wave Knocks You Into The Ocean

You feel water fill your mouth and sting your eyes and, for a second, your lungs feel like they're collapsing. It seems like all the air that was moments ago so accessible the salt salty solution has soaked straight out of your chest. Quickly, you gather your bearings. But not quick enough because seconds later another wave hits you and this time you feel it just a little more. You get drawn a little bit further down into the shallow depths and your knees scrape against the coarse sandy bottom. The water makes it into your lungs and when you scratch your way to the surface you spend the next thirteen seconds coughing and sputtering, blinded by the salt water, unable to recover before the next wave hits you. This one knocks your feet out from under you sending your face and chest against the abusive bottom dragging you back and forth, back and forth. At this point, you are living and breathing salt water. The surf and salt steal the vision you have for your next move and, for just a second, you consider giving up. You think that maybe succumbing to the waves would be easier, better even. But then, someone grabs you under your shoulders and pulls you up. They squeeze you tight, forcing the poison out of your chest. They drag you to dry sand and remind you how to breathe.

A few months later you find yourself with your toes in the same water that once made you its victim. It is a cool, cloudy day. The waves look beautiful: dark blue and black against a grey sky. They speak a language that flows brilliantly from their rhythm to your soul. They make you feel good, alive. Like you once felt. Soon their draw pulls you in and those toes become ankles, and those ankles become knees. You have goosebumps on your arms; you didn't realize how cold it would be. Knees become waist and then—

Eventually you won't care that you've forgotten how to breathe.

Short Fiction

Anne Howard

Ice

This is how the world is.

She picks up a rock. This is how the world is: soft things break.

It arcs through the silence, hits the lake with a crack. She pitches again, harder, but she can't beat the crust of ice still clinging to the shore. Her fingers sting where a dozen rocks have scrubbed the skin new, pink and raw.

In town, looks handle her like a baby bird. *Poor thing, so young, it was too soon, be gentle.* They hide the whispers behind hot casserole and words she wants to slap out of the air, slap off their faces full of sidelong eyes and smiles flimsier than aluminum pans. She isn't breaking *(wind up)* she hates them *(throw)* she doesn't have glass for bones *(crack).*

Her boots creak as she kicks the next rock all the way out, into the water black with cold. On that part of the shoreline they skipped stones, that oak she climbed laughing to drown out his jokes about broken limbs.

Nobody follows her here now. This corner of the woods, stark and frozen, is just hers. She leans down, picks up another stone—rough, cold, grey. The world is anything but gentle.

Wind up. Throw. Crack.

Short Fiction

Kiani Yiu

On Sundays

When I was six years old my father left me in Ronny's Toy Store while he went to look at suits he might want to buy next door. I'll be close, he said to me, and then left me in the stuffed animal aisle.

On our days together we often went to the mall and walked around its circle of stores two or three times or until my legs hurt and he had to carry me the rest of the way. He loved to hold me and kiss me and call me his baby while he still could. I remember how he would smile with just his lips, and the corners of his eyes would fold like a loose rug as he looked at me and held out his arms, expecting me to run to him. Then whenever I crossed my arms and hugged myself instead, his brows would furrow and his stubbly mustache would droop. Still, he would cling to me, and I would accept his hugs like sour cherry medicine.

Every time we went out he told me to buy something. "Don't buy it because it's cheap, buy it because you're proud of it," he would say. It was his principle: he always bought the things he was proud of.

When the toy shelves were overcrowded, I used my time to put the scattered things back in their places; it was something my mother had taught me to do. I positioned each animal staring straight forward with paws in their laps and tails tucked under their legs. I noticed the price tags clipped on each of their ears; *too expensive*, I thought. Not worth the buy. Around me trains screamed on their tracks and plastic dolls chatted in loud voices, but I tried to be as quiet as I could while the line of stuffed creatures looked at me and I looked at them. And each time I met their black, glassy eyes, I tried to smile like my father.

The emptiness snuck up behind me like the sharp chill before snow, and I could feel its frozen fingertips on my back. *He should be back by now,* I thought, and shivered as I crumpled each finger into my palms one by one, gripping them until they turned splotchy white. I stopped myself from looking up and stared down at my shoes. The shelves above my head were too big for me, and in my mind they became the walls of a cave; I was alone, and I couldn't get out. I climbed up in between the creatures on the shelf, right between the zebra and the bear who stared with their nonsense eyes and smiled with the lipless curve of a mouth. I laid back against the cold metal shelf and secured one of the stuffed animals in my arms, its fur poking my face like grass. I hugged it tight until I felt like it was hugging me back, and again, I tried to smile like my father.

A lady with a kind smile and a greying nest of hair found me. I heard her say "come off the shelf, darling," and she held out her hand and asked me where in the world were my parents. I said that my father had left me to look at suits but he was coming back. She looked around the store for him, running her hands through her hair like she was washing it, asking if somebody had lost a little girl. She circled the store twice before she came back. She crouched in front of me in her wrinkled tan slacks, bent so that I could see straight into her eyes. She stretched out her thin arms to me, and I fell into her hug.

The grey lady took me to the mall security office where they called my father and told him where I was and that he should come claim me soon if he would like because the mall would be closing. I wish I could've talked to him, told him that I was okay and these people were nice and not to worry about coming soon if he was busy; I didn't want to cause him any trouble. I glanced at the old black and white clock mounted on the wall, its face so scratched that it was hard to read the numbers. All we had to go by was the ticking. I imagined all the lights going out and me staying there in the security office with the lost shoes and wallets until the next morning when he would have time to collect me. I heard the lady speaking to the officer while I sat across the room from them, listening. He shook his head at her words and scribbled some notes on the sheet of paper in front of him as I swung my legs back and forth to the ticking of the damaged clock.

When my father walked through the door, I was sitting in the chair eating a peppermint the grey lady had given me. He smiled at us all with his lips and looked confused as he signed the paper on the desk that I'd tried to read but couldn't. When he was done, he took my hand, thanked the security officer and the lady who muttered something about keeping better watch over your things, and guided me out the door.

We were passing through the mall exit when he asked me what I had done to end up in the mall security office of all places. "I was just sitting on a shelf, that's all," I said. We exited through the sliding doors in silence. I remembered the papers he'd signed in the office.

"Did you have to pay to get me back?" I asked.

But my father just stared forward, the creases in the middle of his brow growing deeper as he shook his head no and gripped my hand tighter and tighter.

Contributors

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Keya Kraft is Assistant Professor of English at Samford University. She regularly teaches courses in Romanticism and Victorian literature and is currently writing a book titled *The Gothic Novel of Property and the Modern British State, 1790-1895*. She also directs the BACHE Visiting Writers' Series.

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Laura Ann Prickett is a senior University Fellow studying Political Science and English. Having served as the President of the Student Government Association, she hopes to use her undergraduate academic and extracurricular experiences to pursue a career in education policy and administration.

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