Athenaeum Review

Issue 1 • Fall 2018
$10.95

Brooke Allen on Adam Smith and David Hume

James M. Scott on democracy promotion

Adam Briggle on Frankenstein

Journal of the SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
and THE EDITH O'DONNELL INSTITUTE of ART HISTORY
at THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

Athenaeum Review
Issue 1
Fall 2018

Athenaeum Review publishes essays, reviews, and interviews by leading scholars in the arts and humanities. Devoting serious critical attention to the arts in Dallas and Fort Worth, we also consider books and ideas of national and international significance.

Athenaeum Review is a publication of the School of Arts and Humanities and the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History at the University of Texas at Dallas.

School of Arts and Humanities
The University of Texas at Dallas
800 West Campbell Rd. JO 31
Richardson, TX 75080-3021

contact@athenaeumreview.org
athenaeumreview.org

ISSN: 2578-5168 (Print)
E-ISSN: 2578-5176 (Online)

Front Cover: Lorraine Tady, *Octagon Vibration Series/ Event Horizon after Monks Mound Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site*, IL, 2017. Acrylic and archival ink on canvas, 48 x 36 inches. Copyright © 2017 Lorraine Tady. Courtesy of the artist and Barry Whistler Gallery.

Read our interview with Lorraine Tady online at *athenaeumreview.org*.

1

Introduction

2

Current Affairs

3

The Past is Present

4

Folio

5

Senses of Place

6

Sciences and Arts

Contributors

Brooke Allen has written for many magazines and journals, including *The New Criterion, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times Book Review, Atlantic, The Hudson Review, The Nation,* and *The Wilson Quarterly*. Two collections of her essays and reviews have been published: *Twentieth-Century Attitudes: Literary Powers in Uncertain Times* (2003) and *Artistic License: Three Centuries of Good Writing and Bad Behavior* (2004). She is also the author of *Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers* (2006), *The Other Side of the Mirror: An American Travels in Syria* (2011) and *Benazir Bhutto: Favored Daughter* (2016). She is a contributing editor at *The Hudson Review* and writes a film column for the journal. Since 2011 she has taught Literature at Bennington College. She also teaches in the Bennington Prison Education Initiative.

Bruce Brasington received his undergraduate degree in History from Oklahoma State University, a MA from SMU, directed by the late Jeremy DuQuesnay. Adams and a second MA and PhD from UCLA. He joined the faculty at West Texas A&M University in 1990. His research primarily concerns medieval Roman and canon law prior to the thirteenth century. In addition to over fifty articles and book chapters, he has authored or co-authored several books, most recently *Order in the Court. Medieval Procedural Treatises in Translation*, published by Brill in 2016. He teaches a wide variety of courses, from introductory Amerian History to graduate seminars in pre-modern European History, as well as Latin tutorials. He also has been a visiting professor at the Technische Universität Dresden on several occasions, where he has taught various colloquia and seminars on topics such as medieval latin codicology and legal history. He has received several honors in recent years, notably Regents' Professor of the Texas A&M System and a Minnie Stevens Piper Professorship.

Richard R. Brettell is among the foremost authorities in the world on Impressionism and French Painting of the period 1830-1930. With three degrees from Yale University, he has taught at the University of Texas, Northwestern University, The University of Chicago, Yale University, and Harvard University. He is currently Vice-Provost of the University of Texas at Dallas as well as Margaret McDermott Distinguished Chair of Art and Aesthetics Studies in the Interdisciplinary Program in Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas and the Founding Director of the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History, which is housed at the University of Texas at Dallas and the Dallas Museum of Art. He is also an international museum consultant with projects in Europe, Asia, and the United States. Dr. Brettell has also been appointed the Director of the Paul Gauguin Catalogue Raisonné for the Wildenstein Institute in Paris and was named Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture for the work he accomplished within FRAME (French Regional/American Museum Exchange). Since 2015, he is the Art critic for the Dallas Morning News. His name was recently attached to an important award *The Brettell Award in the Arts*. The first recipient of the award of $150,000, made possible by the generosity of Mrs. Margaret McDermott, is the famous landscape architect Peter Walker. This award recognizes a lifetime of excellence in the arts in all fields and will be given biennially.

Kenneth L. Brewer is a Clinical Associate Professor in Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas. He received his Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature at Stanford University, and has taught at the City University of New York and the University of California, Santa Barbara. At UTD, his teaching has focused on British Literature from the Romantic period to the present as well as a course on the history of the horror film. His research explores theories of aesthetic taste, and his current project is an account of judgments of taste in the area of fashion from Immanuel Kant to the present.

Adam Briggle is an Associate Professor and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Texas. His teaching and research focus on the intersections of science, technology, ethics, and politics. He is the author of *A Field Philosopher's Guide to Fracking*, *A Rich Bioethics: Public Policy, Biotechnology, and the Kass Council*, and, with Robert Frodeman, *Socrates Tenured: The Institutions of 21st Century.* He also serves on the Human Rights Campaign's National Parents for Transgender Equality Council.

Meaghan Emery, Associate Professor of French at the University of Vermont, specializes in 20th- and 21st-century French and Francophone literature, cinema, and culture. Her most recent research, and the subject of a monograph, focuses on the legacy of Albert Camus and the philosophical paradigms of resistance and revolution used by contemporary authors, and filmmakers when speaking about the still controversial and hitherto state-censored events of the Algerian War. Her past works, analyses of literature written under the German occupation and of the political history of the French Republic and specifically state initiatives to facilitate the integration of non-Western and primarily Muslim immigrants into French society, have been published in *French Historical Studies*, *French Cultural Studies*, and *Contemporary French Civilization*. Her research interests have also led her to delve into the thorny issues surrounding free speech as a democratic principle and hate speech as a pop culture vehicle for subversive discourse and/or form of populist political rhetoric, particularly as they pertain to political cartoons appearing in the controversial French weekly *Charlie Hebdo*.

Richard Leo Enos is Professor and Holder of The Lillian B. Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition in the Department of English at Texas Christian University and a participating faculty member of the Classical Studies Program. He currently serves on the Managing Committee of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens. He is a past president of The Rhetoric Society of America and has served on the Honors and Awards Committee for the Modern Language Association. He was selected by The College Board to help design and test both the curriculum guidelines (middle school through high school) and the reading/writing components for the 2005 SAT examination. In 2006, Professor Enos was presented with the George E. Yoos Distinguished Service Award by the Rhetoric Society of American and inducted as an RSA Fellow. He received the 2007 Deans' Research and Creative Activity Award from Texas Christian University, was the recipient of "The Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Achievement as a Creative Teacher and Scholar" in 2008, and was named a 2009 Piper Professor for the State of Texas.

Bryan Florentin's work has been exhibited at various venues nationally including FotoFest in Houston and the Center for Fine Art Photography in Fort Collins, Colorado. As a member of the Society for Photographic Education (SPE), he was Chair of the South Central Chapter (2013-2018) and has served on various national and chapter conference committees. Bryan is Assistant Professor of Practice and Photography Area Coordinator at the University of Texas at Arlington. He is a member of the graduate faculty and teaches undergraduate courses in photography, photo history, and the history of LGBTQ art. He holds an MFA in photography from the University of North Texas (1998) and a BA in art and performance from the University of Texas at Dallas (1993). He is represented by Kirk Hopper Fine Art in Dallas.

Paul Galvez is a research fellow at EODIAH and coordinator of the Institute's new Master's Program in Art History. A historian of modern art from the nineteenth century to the present, his research interests range broadly from realist painting to the Russian avant-garde to contemporary abstraction. His current book project, *Gustave Courbet and the Origins of Painting*, is forthcoming in 2020 from Yale University Press. As a curator and critic, he has organized numerous exhibitions, most recently *Jay DeFeo: Object Lessons* at galerie Frank Elbaz in Dallas in 2018.

Ming Dong Gu is Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is the author of *Sinologism: An Alternative to Orientalism and Post-colonialism* (Routledge, 2013); *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing* (SUNY Press 2005), *Chinese Theories of Fiction* (SUNY Press 2006), and *Anxiety of Originality* (Nanjing University Press, 2009). He is the editor of *Translating China for Western Readers* (SUNY Press, 2014), *Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters* (Routledge 2018), and *Routledge Handbook of Modern Chinese Literature* (expected, 2018), and co-editor of *Nobel Prize Winners on Literary Creation* (Peking University Press, 1987), and *Collected Essays on the Critical Inquiry of Sinologism* (China Social Science Press, 2017). He has published numerous articles in journals, including *New Literary History, Poetics Today, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Diacritics, Narrative, Journal of Narrative Theory, Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Modern Language Quarterly, Journal of Aesthetic Education, Literature and Psychology, Comparative Literature, Comparative Literature Studies, Canadian Review of Comparative, Interdisciplinary Literary Studies, Translation Review, Philosophy East & West; Journal of Asian Studies, Asian Philosophy, Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy, Journal of Chinese Philosophy, Journal of Oriental Studies, Monumenta Serica, Literary Review* and many others.

Luke Harnden is a multidisciplinary artist working in painting, sculpture, and video installation. His acrylic linear abstractions synthesize methodologies by blending photography, printmaking and painterly techniques. His sculptures utilize stacks of carved paper, which have been reorganized to allow the forms to be doubled, merged, and multiplied while remaining decidedly material. His video installations involve mechanical apparatus that augment feedback loops projected into a space combining physical presence and mechanical animation with modern means of disseminating moving imagery. Using representational and abstract imagery in tandem with conceptual processes, Harnden negotiates his own subjectivity through direct and mediated gestures, which investigate authorship, identity formation, technology, psychology, ecstatic material exploration. He is currently an MFA candidate at The California Institute of the Arts and is represented in Dallas by the Barry Whistler Gallery.

Angela Kallus makes paintings of "roses" that look like many things, including (but not limited to) frosted cakes, prosthetics, and sculptural friezes, but she assures you they are made strictly of paint, one rose at a time. She also makes drawings that resemble old paintings, using for models mass-market, paperback booklets—twentieth century relics produced before the dominion of the screen subsumed the collective literary imagination and turned everyone into the star of their own miniseries. She earned her MFA from UNLV in 2003, and has since been asked countless times "Do you know Dave Hickey?" Yes, that's why she moved to Las Vegas: she found his discourse on beauty to be as persuasive then as now. She values craft highly, and readily claims that while her stratagems may be outré at the moment—her work is neither post-skill, nor post-studio, nor can it be construed as "social practice"—she believes that everything comes back around eventually.

James Kierstead is Senior Lecturer in Classics at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, where his research and teaching focuses on ancient Greek democracy. He has published a number of scholarly articles and reviews on that topic, and is currently working on a book under the title *Associations and Democracy in Classical Athens* for Edinburgh University Press, a reworking of the Stanford doctoral thesis that he wrote under the supervision of Professor Josiah Ober. He has also contributed essays on ancient and modern democracy to magazines such as *n+1*, *Quadrant*, and *Tricycle.* His Twitter handle is the presumptuous @Kleisthenes2.

Dennis M. Kratz is Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities and Ignacy and Celina Rockover Professor of Humanities at The University of Texas at Dallas. Prior to his appointment in 1997 as Dean of Arts and Humanities, he served as the University's Dean of Undergraduate Education. His research emphasizes the continuation and transformation of the western "heroic" tradition from classical antiquity through medieval and modern literature. He studies the ways in which artists seek both to maintain the essential qualities of that inheritance and to make it a vehicle for the expression of values more appropriate and meaningful for a contemporary audience. He has published four books, as well as numerous articles and reviews on subjects including epic poetry and the changing nature of heroism to translation, translation theory, and fantasy and science fiction, Dr. Kratz was co-editor of the journal *Translation Review* from 1980-2017 and has served as President of the American Literary Translators Association. Dr. Kratz received his BA *magna cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth College (1963). He received the MA in Classical Philology (1964) and PhD in Medieval Latin (1970), both from Harvard University.

Hyrum Lewis is a Professor of History at BYU-Idaho. He grew up in Eugene, Oregon, spent two years in Chile, and then received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Brigham Young University. After tiring of public accounting, Professor Lewis studied history and philosophy at the University of Southern California, receiving a PhD in 2007. He has previously held positions at Skidmore College and Stanford University. His research interests include the history of ideology and the intersection of political and intellectual culture. At BYU-I, he teaches courses on early American history, historical method, and film in American culture. Professor Lewis has published articles on the evolution of American conservatism, historical pedagogy, and cultural conflict in the American West, and has published books on American politics and the place of religion in the 21st century. Professor Lewis currently resides in Rexburg, Idaho with his wife, Sundee, and their five children. He enjoys cycling, watching movies, following sports (he's particularly fanatic about NFL and college football), and exploring the outdoors in nearby Yellowstone and Teton National Parks.

Darren J. N. Middleton was educated at the Universities of Manchester, Oxford, and Glasgow before teaching in Memphis, and in Fort Worth where he has been since 1998. Currently, he serves as the John F. Weatherly Professor of Religion at Texas Christian University. In addition, he directs TCU's Master of Liberal Arts Program. He has published ten books, the most recent of which is *Rastafari and the Arts: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2015).

Anastasia Pease is a scholar and an award-winning teacher. She loves working as a Senior Lecturer in English at Union College in Schenectady, NY. Officially a specialist in American literature, she also studies and teaches many other subjects; for instance, her two most recent publications focus on the life and works of Oscar Wilde. Moreover, Anastasia has an educated-native proficiency in Russian, so she regularly teaches intermediate and advanced Russian courses. Her many other interests include science literacy education, second-language acquisition, linguistics, literary translation, poetry, science fiction, and world literature. A long-time fan and scholar of the works of the late Ursula K. Le Guin, Anastasia dedicates her essay in this volume to Le Guin's memory.

John G. Peters, a University Distinguished Research Professor at the University of North Texas, is past President of the Joseph Conrad Society of America and current General Editor of *Conradiana*. His books include *Joseph Conrad's Critical Reception* (Cambridge 2013), *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad* (2006), *Conrad and Impressionism* (Cambridge 2001), *A Historical Guide to Joseph Conrad* (2010), volume 2 of *Joseph Conrad*: *Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge 2012), and the Norton critical edition of Conrad's *The Secret Sharer and Other Stories* (2015). His articles have appeared in such journals as *Philosophy and Literature*, *College Literature*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, and *English Language Notes*. He has also translated the Japanese poet Takamura Kōtarō's book *The Chieko Poems* (Green Integer 2007).

Diane Purkiss is Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford, and fellow and tutor at Keble College. She holds a doctoral degree from Merton College Oxford, and an honours degree in English and History from the University of Queensland. She has published widely on the English Civil War, and on witchcraft and the supernatural in the early modern period. She is completing a history of English food for William Collins, and is also working on a study of the writing process and writer's block from Homer to David Foster Wallace.

Thomas Riccio is Professor of Performance and Aesthetic Studies, University of Texas at Dallas. Artistic Director of the Dead White Zombies, a post-disciplinary performance group, Dallas. Previous

positions include: Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks where he directed Tuma Theatre, an Alaska Native performance group; Artistic Director, Organic Theater, Chicago; Resident Director/Dramaturg, Cleveland Play House; Associate Literary director, American Repertory Theatre, Harvard. He works in the area of ritual, shamanism, and indigenous performance, teaching, conducting field research, and creating performances in Alaska, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania, Korea, India, Nepal, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Brazil, and Ethiopia. Visiting Professorships: University of Dar es Salam, Tanzania; Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia; University of Pondicherry, India; Korean National University for the Arts, Seoul; and Jishou University, China. His current ethnography project is with the Miao of southwest China. The Republic of Sakha (Siberia) declared him a "Cultural Hero" for his cultural revitalization work. He is a narrative consultant and Creative Director for Hanson Robotics, Hong Kong. He has published two books; his academic writings have appeared in numerous international journals. See www.deadwhitezombies.com and www.thomasriccio.com.

Sarah Ruffing Robbins is Lorraine Sherley Professor at TCU, where she teaches courses on 19th- and 20th-century American studies, gender studies, transatlanticism, popular culture, writing and authorship. A faculty affiliate in both Women and Gender Studies and Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, she has published nine academic books. The most recent of these is *Learning Legacies: Archive to Action through Women's Cross-cultural Teaching*. She is also author of *The Cambridge Introduction to Harriet Beecher Stowe* and of *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*, winner of a Choice Book Award from the American Library Association. With historian Ann Pullen, she published the award-winning critical edition of *Nellie Arnott's Writings on Angola, 1905-1913: Missionary Narratives Linking Africa and America*. Other books are connected to her leadership of NEH-funded public humanities initiatives, such as the Making American Literatures and the Keeping and Creating American Communities programs, both of which involved sustained collaboration with K-12 educators. Sarah's professional website (https://sarahruffingrobbins.com) includes regular blog postings where she links her academic study of American culture with questions about current social justice issues.

James C. Scott is Herman Brown Chair and Professor of Political Science at Texas Christian University. He specializes in foreign policy analysis and international relations, with particular emphasis on U.S. foreign policymaking. He is author or editor of two scholarly books, two scholarly edited volumes, 10 editions of two successful textbooks, 46 peer-reviewed articles, chapters and essays in highly reputable outlets, and more than 100 review essays, chapters, conference papers and other works. He is a two-time winner of the Klingberg Award for Outstanding Faculty Paper at the ISA Midwest Annual Meeting and the recipient of the 2012 Quincy Wright Distinguished Scholar from the International Studies Association-Midwest. From 2005-2014 he was director of the *Democracy, Interdependence and World Politics Summer Research Program*, a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates. He has been president of both the Foreign Policy Analysis section of the International Studies Association and the International Studies Association-Midwest, and he served as associate editor of *Foreign Policy Analysis* from 2009-2015, and co-editor of *Political Research Quarterly* from 2015-2018.

Lorraine Tady's seventh solo show with Barry Whistler Gallery, "Sparklines," follows national and international exhibitions of her paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints since receiving her MFA from Southern Methodist University in 1991. She was awarded both the Kimbrough Award (1993) and the Dozier Travel Grant (2015) from the Dallas Museum of Art, as well as the Chenven Foundation Award in 2010 in New York City. She has been on the Arts faculty at UT Dallas since 2004. Her website is lorrainetady.blogspot.com.

Charissa N. Terranova is a writer and educator. Terranova researches complex biological systems from a cultural purview, focusing on the history of evolutionary theory, biology, and biocentrism in art, architecture, and design. She is author of *Art as Organism: Biology and the Evolution of the Digital Image* (2016) and *Automotive Prosthetic: Technological Mediation and the Car in Conceptual Art* (2014), and coeditor with Meredith Tromble of *The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture* (2016). Terranova is currently coediting with Ellen K. Levy *D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's Generative Influences in Art, Design, and Architecture: From Forces to Forms*, forthcoming from Bloomsbury Press, 2019, and writing a monograph titled *Biology in the British Bauhaus: Morphogenic Modernism in Art, Science, and Design.* Associate Professor of Aesthetic Studies, she lectures and teaches seminars at the University of Texas at Dallas on modern and contemporary art and architectural history and theory, the history of biology in art and architecture, and media and new media art and theory.

Liz Trosper is an artist, scholar and curator living and working in Dallas. She has an MFA from UT Dallas and was a graduate resident at CentralTrak: The UT Dallas Artist's Residency from 2013 to 2015. Trosper is represented by Barry Whistler Gallery in Dallas. Her work has been shown in art spaces such as CentralTrak, The Dallas Contemporary, Lawndale Art Center in Houston, Richland College, UT Dallas, Academic Gallery in New York, and many other galleries and exhibition spaces. Her current work explores the intersection of contemporary painting and the digital image.

1 INTRODUCTION

To Enlighten and Annoy

Dennis M. Kratz

Dean, School of Arts and Humanities
Ignacy and Celina Rockover Professor
University of Texas at Dallas

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Athenaeum Review*, a journal sponsored jointly by the School of Arts and Humanities and the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History at The University of Texas at Dallas. This initiative reflects and advances the commitment of our School to education that not only transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries but also seeks to create productive connections between the humanities and the creative arts, the arts and humanities with the natural sciences, and the university with the greater community.

What is the focus of *Athenaeum Review*? A reasonable place to start is with Albert Einstein, the scientist/artist/humanist who radically changed the way we think about the universe. Exactly one hundred years ago, in remarks celebrating the physicist Max Planck's 60th birthday, Einstein suggested that every human being constructs "a simplified and intelligible picture of the world" and then "tries to some extent to substitute this constructed cosmos for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it." This, he argued, is an urge common to "the painter, the poet, the speculative philosopher, and the natural scientist." Later thinkers have provided alternate versions of the same basic idea—that each person creates a personal frame for interpretation that deeply influences how we experience and invest life with meaning. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz described humans as animals "suspended in webs of significance that we ourselves have spun." For Geertz, the fabric composed of these webs is the "culture" (or cultures) in which we live. The contemporary philosopher Charles Taylor called the fabric formed by these webs the "social imaginary."

The term, as I understand it, refers to a process that involves imagination and assumption more than thought and theory. Stories, shared memories, history and self-congratulatory "mythistory" play a large role in determining "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others…the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations." America today is characterized by a conflict of social imaginaries—or perhaps by people inhabiting different conceptual universes. The divergent bordering on violent opinions concerning statues and memorials dedicated to recalling the Civil War (or, viewed through a different frame, the War Between the States) serves as a local case in point.

Einstein's formulation suggests another implication of this "imagined" cosmos that guides our behavior, expectations and interpretations. He wrote elsewhere that "all religions, arts and sciences aspiring to ennoble human existence are branches from the same tree." All three emerge from the same innate human yearning for life to make sense. In other words, the cosmos we create and the webs that we weave result from a convergence of all three ways of making sense of experience. While those engaged in each of the three grand branches of human understanding (the arts, humanities and science) seek to create a picture of the world, each branch is inadequate by itself to make our experience both intelligible and meaningful.

Athenaeum Review is dedicated, then, to exploring the dynamic interaction of the humanities, arts and sciences that creates these various frames for interpretation. The content of each issue will be diverse and wide-ranging. The current issue includes articles and book reviews on politics, food, the interaction of science and art, science fiction, Christian historical fiction, the Chautauqua Movement, and the worldview of indigenous peoples. We are not writing primarily for specialists or other academics. Our goal is to present ideas of importance to readers who are educated, inquisitive, and perhaps skeptical of what takes place at universities. What matters is that they share our fascination with the ways that human beings create individual versions of the cosmos, spin webs of significance, and create the "social imaginaries" that shape their response to life.

It is our expectation that a diversity of subjects, perspectives and readers will generate new insights and ideas. As the historian William McNeill noted, historically the most profound cultural developments have resulted from interactions with strangers who possess new and unfamiliar skills, knowledge, and perspectives. My colleague Rainer Schulte pioneered the use of literary translation as a model for cross-cultural communication, that is, communication across any barrier to understanding—not just language but also age, gender, time, or academic discipline. He insisted that his workshops on

the practice of literary translation include participants working on at least three different languages. Discussions in single-language workshops, he had learned, inevitably devolve into minor, often obscure points. As a participant, I was forced to explain my translation choices to others not expert in the language. I was more likely, as a result, to see them in larger, more significant literary and cultural contexts. Think of *Athenaeum Review* as an extension of that model.

2018, being the centennial of Einstein's observation, strikes me as an especially auspicious year and The University of Texas at Dallas an ideal place to create such a journal. I admit, "auspicious" may seem an overly optimistic interpretation of the current situation—especially in light of the increasing fragmentation of society and the current dominance of discipline-specific education that emphasizes the acquisition of immediately marketable skills and economic "success" at the expense of broad-based knowledge and the elusive goal of "wisdom." UT Dallas, moreover, since its founding in 1969, has emphasized research and education in the collection of fields known as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The reputation of the University for excellence in STEM fields has obscured public awareness of the quality of our programs in the creative arts and humanities.

Despite these obstacles, the condition of the educational cosmos, at least as I imagine it, is not as dire as it seems. There are encouraging signs that the balance of educational emphasis—now tilted dangerously away from the liberal arts—is beginning to shift. The most encouraging support has come from an unexpected quarter: Earlier this year the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine jointly published a report urging education that integrates the sciences, engineering, and mathematics with the arts and humanities. That report takes its title—"Branches from the Same Tree"—from the statement by Einstein that I cited earlier. I see signs of a growing recognition that individuals and organizations must integrate the three great processes of understanding—scientific, artistic, and humanistic—if individuals and organizations are to respond adequately, creatively and ethically to the possibilities and problems of the twenty-first century.

UT Dallas is, in fact, an ideal place to launch a journal designed to connect the university with a larger community of learners. A university dedicated to scientific discovery and technological innovation has a corollary obligation to examine the ethical and cultural implications of those discoveries and inventions. The School of Arts and Humanities has sought to fulfill that obligation through its interdisciplinary curriculum, through the cultural events that it offers to the public, and through the Centers/Institutes housed within the School:

- Center for Translation Studies
  translation.utdallas.edu
- Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies
  utdallas.edu/ackerman
- Center for Values in Medicine, Science and Technology
  utdallas.edu/c4v
- Confucius Institute
  utdallas.edu/ah/confucius
- Edith O'Donnell Institute for Art History
  utdallas.edu/arthistory
- Center for United States-Latin America Initiatives
  utdallas.edu/ah/cuslai

The *Athenaeum Review* owes its existence to the support of these six interdisciplinary Centers/Institutes. Each has succeeded independently in gaining international recognition and attracting external funding. Each has collaborated successfully with the others. Each provides opportunities for advanced research by both undergraduates and graduate students. In 2017 the Directors gathered to discuss ways to build on that success, strengthen their interaction, and increase awareness of the benefits that engagement with the arts and humanities brings to the education of every individual. Among the results was the decision to reach beyond the boundaries of the campus by sponsoring a new journal, with the Dean and Directors serving as the editorial board. The name *Athenaeum Review* was adopted unanimously, since we regarded the journal as a natural complement to the bold ambition emerging from the founding of the Edith O'Donnell Institute for Art History to establish an Athenaeum (see "Whither Athenaeum?" by Dr. Brettell) on campus as a major step toward making the university a major force in cultural education and outreach.

We view this initiative as a stage in the continuing evolution of UT Dallas. It will enable us to extend the essential message of higher education to a larger audience: No idea, assumption or interpretation should ever be allowed (as the physicist Wolfgang Rindler has said of scientific theories) "to stagnate in complacency." I hope that each reader encounters in every issue of *Athenaeum Review* reasons to be enlightened and annoyed. *A*

Sources

Readers will find more information about the ideas and quotations in this editorial are encouraged to consult the following:

Yehuda Elkana, "Einstein and God," In Peter L. Galison et al., eds., *Einstein for the 21st Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): pp.35-47

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

Wolfgang Rindler, *Essential Relativity: Revised Second Edition* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977)

Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004)

Branches From the Same Tree: The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2018)

Whither *Athenaeum*?

Rick Brettell

Founding Director, Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History
Margaret McDermott Distinguished Chair of Aesthetic Studies
University of Texas at Dallas

With their roots in classical antiquity and particularly in the "Hellenic" revival of the Romans under Emperor Hadrian in the second century, Athenaea were revived again in the 18th century and built throughout the world in the 19th and early 20th centuries. One finds them in Latin America and Spain, in Asia (particularly in formerly colonial cities), and throughout Europe and the U.S. No two are alike, and all but one are private intellectual clubs with libraries, collections of works of art, scientific instruments, and rooms for eating, drinking (not always alcohol), studying, and discussing.

Despite being truly global in their reach, they are part of the long tradition of European Mediterranean culture and its progeny. What they *are* about is less what they own—art, books, furniture, and space—than what is done, written, and said in them. They are places where people meditate individually and communicate collectively about subjects which reach from history to the present, from arithmetic to astrophysics, from Plato to Peirce, from sculpture to holograms.

In them, reading groups meet for discussion, chamber music or jazz is performed, plays and poetry are read aloud, ideas are discussed, lectures are held, and classes—many created informally to deal with issues of contemporary relevance—are given. In many ways, they extend the enquiries started in universities into the ordinary lives of modern citizens. Above all, they are intimate—the opposite of mass culture, the spectacle, and the metrics of the digital era.

There is only one Athenaeum at a university—that at the California Institute of Technology, which is, for all practical purposes, a faculty club with a fancy name. Thus, it is not our model for creating what will be called an Athenaeum. It is, rather, to the superb private Athenaea in cities like Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, and La Jolla that we turn to for inspiration for what we hope to be a path-breaking institution for UT Dallas—the W. Ray Wallace Athenaeum. With a

$10,000,000 matching gift from Mrs. W. Ray Wallace in memory of her late husband, we have private funding to launch our efforts.

In it, our students, staff, faculty, and members from the larger Dallas community will find a unique and highly important collection of European paintings, a world-class library of the history of world art, headquarters of the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History and possibly other centers and institutes at UT Dallas, as well as classrooms, reading rooms, nooks and crannies for discussion and informal meeting, and, in the fullness of time, a restaurant, a coffee house, and spaces for special university collections.

We hope to be directly across from (and possibly connected physically to) the McDermott Library, and eventually will have performance spaces as well as the headquarters for the Wildenthal Honors College, possibly along with completely new student- and faculty-driven clubs or groups interested in our larger mission. We also envision three walled gardens, one each devoted to the great garden traditions of Europe (a cloister garden), India (a Mughal garden) and Asia (a Chinese garden with its own pavilion).

The Atheneaum will function as a bridge between the UT Dallas community and the highly intelligent and varied populations of North Dallas and the northern suburbs of Dallas. With the explosive growth of Plano, Frisco, McKinney, Allen, and beyond, there is a hunger for access to culture, a hunger which is difficult for the distant Arts District to fill and which will be made easily accessible at UT Dallas because of the George Bush Expressway, the Dallas North Tollway and U.S. Highway 75.

Because of the importance of the Asian and Asian-American cultures of UT Dallas and the northern suburbs, we have entered into productive conversations with the Crow Collection of Asian Art, whose varied and fascinating collection of Asian art is largely stored in warehouses, inaccessible to the public. To bring Asian cultures together with Euro-American cultures will be a long-term goal of the Athenaeum, giving it a global mission appropriate for our increasingly global city and culture.

The *Athenaeum Review* will take all the intellectual energy and ambition of what will be the Wallace Athenaeum and give it periodic and temporary form. Indeed, it will stake out the large territories of the mind that will be embodied by the Wallace Athenaeum. None of us who are working to conceive and fund the Wallace Athenaeum will be able to predict the range of activities it will foster on campus, but we can create a beautiful environment for the intellectual and aesthetic ambitions it will encourage.

The *Athenaeum Review* comes first, a clarion to herald the arrival of the Wallace Athenaeum at UT Dallas, and we hope it will spread the word well beyond our beautiful campus. A

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Avoiding an Unforced Error

Advice to the Trump Administration from the Empirical Study of U.S. Democracy Assistance

James M. Scott

Herman Brown Chair and Professor
Department of Political Science
Texas Christian University

Since his surprise election victory in 2016, Donald Trump has pursued a broad, often controversial agenda to reverse the course of current policies in many arenas, both domestic and international. In the foreign policy arena, for example, the Trump administration has departed from decades of bipartisan commitment to free trade, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and support for the European Union, and it has abandoned the established practice of restraint regarding recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, to name just a few examples. Its inconsistent, even self-contradictory approaches to Russia, China, and other important states have generated uncertainty at home and abroad. Some critics fear that President Trump's pursuit of a muscular nationalism "seems determined to challenge the policies and practices that have cemented America's vast power and influence in the 20th and 21st centuries," as Stephen Sestanovich wrote in the spring of 2017.[1] President Trump did little to allay such fears when, in a July 20, 2017 meeting with key foreign advisors reported on by the *New York Times*, he asserted that the postwar international order, which all presidents since Harry Truman have been committed to building and sustaining, is "not working at all."[2]

In this context, the Trump administration has targeted U.S. democracy assistance—an element of U.S. foreign aid policy—for dramatic reduction, reversing more than three decades of expansion to this program by his predecessors from both political parties. Specifically, for example, in its first budget proposal in early 2017, the Trump administration proposed to cut U.S. foreign aid by more than thirty percent across the board, with even greater reductions to U.S.

1 Stephen Sestanovich, "The brilliant incoherence of Donald Trump's foreign policy. *The Atlantic*. May 2017 (at https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/05/the-brilliant-incoherence-of-trumps-foreign-policy/521430/).

2 Mark Landler, "Trump, the insurgent, breaks with 70 years of American foreign policy." *New York Times*. December 28, 2017 (at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/28/us/politics/trump-world-diplomacy.html).

democracy aid part of the plan. In early 2018, the administration doubled down on this plan and proposed even more drastic cuts to foreign aid programs, including those for democracy aid and human rights programs. Its 2017 plans to restructure the U.S. Department of State specifically involved downsizing human rights and democracy promotion, while at the same time the State Department's 2018-2022 strategic plan significantly reduced and downgraded democracy and human rights as goals. In late 2017, the administration's first National Security Strategy departed from decades of bipartisan practice and avoided commitments to advance and support democracy in the world, while also refraining from the use of the term "human rights" almost entirely. In early 2018, reports indicated further diminution of democracy and human rights was on tap, with the annual State Department report on human rights reportedly downplaying the matter generally, while taking specific actions to remove language on women's rights, discrimination, and other matters.[3]

Actions and proposals such as these were also accompanied by a notable shift in public diplomacy from administration officials, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and President Trump, who regularly downplayed democracy and human rights as U.S. foreign policy goals. President Trump himself also reflected the reversal of direction with his unusually warm engagement with authoritarian leaders around the world, accompanied by often-pointed criticism of America's democratic allies and friends. As one watchdog organization concerned with democracy and freedom noted:

> [President Trump's] trips abroad rarely featured any mention of the word "democracy." Indeed, the American leader expressed feelings of admiration and even personal friendship for some of the world's most loathsome strongmen and dictators.[4]

Of course, American foreign policy must change and adapt to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in shifting foreign policy environments. American foreign policymakers should also avoid reflexive commitment to existing initiatives that no longer serve important purposes or that prove ineffective or unsuccessful. Is that the case for U.S. democracy aid? Is the reversal of several decades of U.S. democracy assistance policy a wise and prudential response to changing circumstances or obsolete/ineffective policies, or is it a case of ill-considered pursuit of "nationalism" that actually works against American national interests, security, and prosperity?

Consider a radical premise: Such decisions *should* reflect careful assessment of policy and context prior to decision. In that light, might the empirical study of U.S. democracy assistance provide lessons and guidance for President Trump, his advisors, and the U.S. Congress on what to do? What does *the evidence* suggest for the Trump administration's proposals and plans vis-à-vis U.S. democracy assistance?

3 See, for example, Nahal Toosi, "State Department report will trim language on women's rights, discrimination." *Politico*. February 21, 2018 (at https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/21/department-women-rights-abortion-420361).

4 Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis*. At https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018.

The following paragraphs offer guidance for the administration drawn from the empirical study of democracy aid policy. I focus on a stream of my own studies, supplemented by key works of others as well. After describing the nature and trends of U.S. democracy aid over the past four decades or so, I outline a number of key findings about its effects. I then consider some salient aspects of the foreign policy context and conclude with summary policy advice for President Trump. The bottom line: The evidence on decades of U.S. democracy aid and its results strongly suggest that, by abandoning democracy assistance in its foreign policy, the current administration is headed toward an unforced error that unnecessarily sacrifices American interests and effective policy.

Context: Democracy Aid in U.S. Foreign Policy

Democracy aid is a sub-type of foreign aid and a part of a broader array of policies to support and promote democracy. For the U.S., the Agency for International Development (USAID)—a part of the U.S. Department of State—administers most U.S. democracy assistance through targeted programs supporting democratic institutions, processes and participation, the rule of law, and human rights. USAID channels democracy aid through political institutions such as legislatures, courts, and political parties and through grassroots civil society and civic education organizations, other non-governmental organizations, and the media.[5] About a third of such aid bypasses recipient governments to channel support directly to grassroots organizations.[6] These targeted packages of assistance attempt to empower individuals, groups, and institutions within the recipient state and tend to be smaller, more focused, and more nimble and agile than other types of foreign assistance. In the two decades after 1990, democracy aid averaged about 13% of U.S. foreign aid, making it a significant element of U.S. foreign policy strategies. In Fiscal Year 2010, of the roughly $33 billion in U.S. foreign aid (non-military), about $5 billion went to democracy promotion, an amount greater than or roughly equal to that allocated for health initiatives, agriculture, emergency response, and other aid priorities.[7]

Ideational goals such as promoting democracy and human rights have a long history in American foreign policy. For example, Woodrow Wilson embraced democracy as a means to a safer; more cooperative world, Franklin Delano Roosevelt championed "four freedoms" essential for any person around the world; Jimmy Carter placed human rights in the spotlight of his foreign policy; and Ronald Reagan advocated for a "crusade for freedom" to spread and support democracy around the world. However, it was only after 1989 that post-Cold War presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama turned to democracy aid as a key strategy to achieve

5 Stephen Collins, "Can America finance freedom? Assessing U.S. democracy promotion via economic statecraft." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5 (2009): 367-389.

6 Timothy Peterson and James M. Scott, "The democracy aid calculus: regimes, political opponents, and the allocation of US democracy assistance, 1981-2009." *International Interactions* 44:2 (2018): 268-293.

7 James M. Scott and Ralph G. Carter, "Distributing dollars for democracy: changing foreign policy contexts and the determinants of US democracy aid, 1975-2010." *Journal of International Relations and Development* (Published Online November 12, 2017; DOI: 10.1057/s41268-017-0118-9).

the spread of democracy.[8] According to Graham Allison and Robert Beschel, Jr., "the democratic revolutions of 1989, coupled with the retreat of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and parts of Asia and Africa, prompted a resurgence of interest throughout the U.S. government and society at large in promoting democracy."[9] As Michael Cox et al. concluded, democracy promotion "rather neatly filled the missionary gap left behind by the collapse of international communism."[10]

The first President Bush established special democracy aid programs through region-specific initiatives such as the 1990 Support for Eastern European Democracy (SEED) Act and the 1992 Freedom Support Act (FSA, for the republics of the former Soviet Union). President Clinton subsequently established an explicit "Democracy and Governance" aid initiative globally, and George W. Bush and Barack Obama continued and expanded those efforts. As Table 1 indicates, such aid surged from less than two percent to nearly fourteen percent of U.S. foreign aid.

Table 1: Democracy Assistance as a Proportion of Total U.S. Assistance[11]

Time Period	Proportion of U.S. Aid
Cold War (1975-1989)	1.9%
Post-Cold War (1990-2000)	12.8%
Global War on Terror (2002-2010)	13.9%

The broad rationale for democracy aid has been consistent across Republican and Democratic administrations since 1989, combining ideational and interest-based factors. As Robert Art summarized, "The reasons to support democracy abroad are simple and powerful: democracy is the best form of governance; it is the best guarantee for the protection of human rights and for the prevention of mass murder and genocide; it facilitates economic growth; and it aids the cause of peace."[12] Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all justified democracy assistance as a means to peace, good governance, protection of U.S. political and security interests, and as a strategy to combat terrorism. Contributing to democratic transition and change generally has positive implications for other U.S. interests as well, with positive impact on peaceful interaction and commerce. The "democratic peace," by which democracies tend to avoid war with each other, refrain from threatening to use force against each other, seek peaceful resolution of disputes, and join together in alliances and security communities underlies these positive outcomes.[13] Overall, a broad consensus has long agreed that a more democratic world is one more favorable to U.S. policy preferences and interests and improves the possibilities that conflicts can be solved via peaceful mechanisms rather than by force.[14]

8 James M. Scott and Ralph G. Carter, "From Cold War to Arab Spring: mapping the effects of paradigm shifts on the nature and dynamics of U.S. democracy assistance to the Middle East and North Africa." *Democratization*, 22:4 (2015), 738-763. Also, see, for example, William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. Washington, DC: White House, 1995); George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC: The White House, 2002.

9 Graham Allison and Robert Beschel Jr. "Can the United States promote democracy?" *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (1992), p. 81.

10 Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi (eds.). American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 5-6.

11 Peterson and Scott, "Democracy aid calculus," p. 273.

12 Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 69.

13 See, for example, Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; Jon Oneal and Bruce Russett, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.

14 Scott and Carter, "Distributing dollars"; Peterson and Scott, "Democracy aid calculus."

This broad consensus and the accelerating trajectory of democracy aid over the past four decades beg the question: Why abandon this policy now? Has the foreign policy context changed sufficiently to make it unnecessary? Has it proved ineffective? Evidence from the study of democracy promotion and democracy aid indicates that the answer to both of these questions is a decisive "no."

The Empirical Record: The Impact of Democracy Aid

Is it past time for democracy aid policy? Empirical evidence on the policy context of democracy assistance demonstrates its continued relevance. Indeed, global developments not only indicate continued need for democracy aid, they suggest *greater* need. According to Freedom House's annual study of democracy in the world, global democracy is in crisis, facing twelve years of stagnation and decline. As Freedom House put it:

> Political rights and civil liberties around the world deteriorated to their lowest point in more than a decade in 2017, extending a period characterized by emboldened autocrats, beleaguered democracies, and the United States' withdrawal from its leadership role in the global struggle for human freedom.[15]

15 Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis*. At https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018.

Freedom House data shows seventy-one countries—more than a third of the world—experienced declines in democracy in 2017, driving the 12-year net decline to 113 countries, almost sixty percent of the world. These reversals reach countries in every region of the world, with notable growth in the antidemocratic influence of Russia and China a key part of the trend. At the same time, 35 countries were experiencing progress toward democracy, indicating further opportunity (and need) for help from the U.S. and others. These developments strongly indicate a growing, not declining, need for vigorous support and aid for democracies.

If the policy context does not provide evidence of the irrelevance of democracy aid, perhaps its effectiveness is the problem? Could it be that the Trump administration is abandoning an unproductive policy? Simply put, the answer is no. Here is where a stream of empirical studies of democracy aid offer important guidance for the Trump administration. These studies *clearly* indicate that the policy has delivered significant benefits—both direct and indirect—at a very efficient cost.

First and foremost, empirical studies of democracy show that it is an effective and cost-efficient means to promote democratization. For example, democracy aid allocations from 1988-2001 are associated with significant progress toward democracy in recipient states, even after controlling for a wide variety of other factors that might impact democratization. As Scott and Steele conclude, "$10 million in democracy aid is associated with about a one-point increase in

democracy score. Hence, aid packages of $40 million would result in a 4-point increase," a meaningful change that amounts to the difference between governance in Russia and Mexico in 2014.[16] Notably, other forms of economic assistance *do not* contribute to democratization, even in much greater aid amounts.[17] Furthermore, small packages of democracy aid are also effective in slowing or reversing "backsliding," situations in which countries in transition to democracy suffer anti-democratic reversals.[18]

Part of the success of democracy aid rests on its targeted nature: relatively small packages of assistance to support election processes, the development and growth of democratic institutions, and the empowerment of grassroots citizen organizations have proven to be more efficacious than larger aid packages without such targets.[19] Democracy aid is also nimble and agile, shifting to target and take advantage of need and opportunity. Thus, over time, democracy aid allocations shift from region to region, from state to state within a region, and, most importantly, among different targets (e.g., elections, institutions, citizen groups) with a given state to meet different circumstances, needs and opportunities.[20] Finally, the evidence indicates that democracy aid is successful because it is strategically allocated to places that are likely to be fertile fields for democracy. For example, democracy aid tends to go to places that exhibit some initial openings or movement toward democracy.[21] This also appears to be true for "hard cases" for democratization: Some initial evidence indicates that, when democracy aid is allocated to more authoritarian states, it tends to be targeted toward those with more accountable, proto-liberal institutions like multiparty systems, whose nascent institutions and greater openness hint at the promise of successful democratization.[22]

So, democracy aid is certainly not ineffective in its central aim: supporting and promoting democratization. The evidence indicating its successful contributions to democratization over the past several decades alone makes that clear. However, democracy aid has at least four additional positive effects that make it even more compelling. First, democracy aid has tangible benefits for quality of life and human security for residents of recipient countries. Recipients of U.S. democracy aid end up with improved human rights performance as well as progress toward democracy. According to one study, for example, each relatively modest democracy aid package of $10-20 million is associated with a 5-10% improvement in a country's human rights behavior, an impact that is not duplicated by other forms of foreign assistance in any amount.[23]

Additionally, democracy aid has important implications for conflict/war as well. Because democracy aid contributes to progress toward democracy, and democracies tend to be peaceful with each other, democracy aid makes indirect contributions to the cause of

16 James M. Scott and Carie Steele, "Sponsoring democracy: The United States and democracy aid to the developing world, 1988-2001." *International Studies Quarterly* 55 (2011): p. 62-63. See also Steven Finkel, Anibal Perez-Linan, and Mitchell A. Seligson, "The effects of U.S. foreign assistance on democracy-building, 1990–2003." *World Politics* 59 (2007), pp. 404–439.

17 Scott and Steele, "Sponsoring democracy." See also Steven Knack, "Does foreign aid promote democracy?" *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2004), pp. 251–266; Finkel et al., "The effects of US foreign assistance."

18 James M. Scott and Carie Steele, "Assisting democracy or resisting dictators? The nature and impact of democracy support by the National Endowment for Democracy, 1990-2000." *Democratization*, 12:4 (2005), pp. 439-460. See also Jorge Heine and Brigitte Weiffen, *21st Century Democracy Promotion in the Americas: Standing Up for the Polity.* New York: Routledge, 2015; Philip Levitz and Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Monitoring, money and migrants: countering post-accession backsliding in Bulgaria and Romania." *Europe-Asia Studies*. 62:3 (2010), pp. 461-479.

19 James M. Scott, "Funding freedom? The United States and US democracy aid in the developing world, 1988-2001." In *Liberal Interventionism and Democracy Promotion, edited by Dursun Peksen.* New York: Lexington/Rowman-Littlefield, 2012, pp. 13-36. See also Scott and Steele, "Sponsoring democracy."

20 James M. Scott and Ralph G. Carter, "Promoting democracy in Latin America: foreign policy change and US democracy assistance, 1975-2010." *Third World Quarterly.* 37:2 (2016), pp. 299-320; Scott and Carter, "From Cold War to Arab Spring."

peace. This, indeed, was a central foundation of the Clinton administration's expansion of democracy promotion and democracy aid as a foreign policy strategy twenty-five years ago, and one that his successors George W. Bush and Barack Obama also embraced. However, according to Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, while democracies tend toward peace with each other, countries in the process of transitioning to democracy are highly prone to violent conflict. In addition to the prospects for civil war during transition periods, in some cases, competition for power among elites in the uncertain transition environment prompts leaders to resort to war against an external enemy as a way to generate a "rally around the flag" reaction to gain support in the public. In other cases, the instability of the transition environment leads hostile neighbor states to try to take advantage of the situation and use force against what they deem a vulnerable target. In any case, what results is a "dangerous democratization" scenario.[24] However, other scholarly research shows that democratizing countries who receive democracy aid from the U.S. (and/or other democratic donor states) are far *less* likely to get engaged in violent conflict at home or abroad. Transitioning countries with democracy assistance are less likely to fall into internal civil conflict, to attack others, or to be attacked by opportunistic neighbors.[25]

Furthermore, the evidence indicates that democracy aid also appears to be an effective tool against terrorism as well. Research indicates that democracy assistance from the U.S. (and other democracies) significantly dampens terrorism in recipient countries, especially if those recipients are not involved in a civil war. Because democracy alters the political conditions of a country—namely by improving democracy and human rights behavior—the resulting reduction in grievances seems to translate directly into fewer incidents of terrorism.[26]

Moreover, evidence indicates that democracy aid has positive political/strategic effects for the U.S. in its foreign policy as well. Providing such aid to friendly countries appears to provide protection and deterrence for them against potential adversaries, who recognize the links to and commitment from the U.S.[27] At the same time, some initial evidence shows that democracy aid strengthens the relationship between the U.S. and the recipient, contributing to greater affinities, common interests, and mutually beneficial trade as well.[28] Since democracy tends to "travel" through regional diffusion mechanisms, democracy aid to one country in a region has a high likelihood of contributing to a "contagion" effect that helps to spread it to other neighboring countries as well.[29]

Democracy aid therefore appears to be a highly effective and efficient policy. Not only does the evidence indicate that it achieves its main purpose—maintenance and expansion of democracy—but it also contributes significantly to a cluster of desirable outcomes that

21 Peterson and Scott, "Democracy aid calculus"; Scott and Carter, "Distributing dollar"s; Scott and Steele, "Sponsoring democracy"; See also James M. Scott, Charles M. Rowling and Timothy Jones. *Democratic Openings and Country Visibility: Media Attention and the Allocation of US Democracy Aid*, 1975-2010. Paper Presented at the International Studies Association-Midwest Annual Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, November 17-18, 2017.

22 James M. Scott and Ralph G. Carter. *Changing Channels: Non-Democratic Regime Conditions and the Allocation of US Democracy Assistance*, 1975-2010. Paper presented at the Pan-European Conference on International Relations, European International Studies Association Conference. Barcelona, Spain. September 13-16, 2017.

23 Scott, "Funding freedom."

24 See Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the danger of war." *International Security* 20:1 (1995), pp. 5-38; Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War.* Boston: MIT Press, 2007.

25 Burcu Savun and Daniel Tirone, "Foreign aid, democratization, and civil conflict: how does democracy aid affect civil conflict?" *American Journal of Political Science* 55:2 (2011), pp. 233-246. See also James M. Scott, *Building the Democratic Peace: Democracy Promotion and Dangerous Democratization.* Paper presented at the 2009 International Studies Association Conference, New York, February 15-18, 2009.

strengthen the security, political influence, and prosperity of the U.S. The evidence is in: the policy of democracy aid is both relevant to the time, and effective in its practice.

The Bottom Line: Advice for the President

The Trump administration's hostility toward democracy aid appears to be highly misguided, and its plans and proposals to slash democracy assistance funds and programs are unforced errors that detract from effective American foreign policy and harm longstanding American interests that have been embraced by past presidents, Republican and Democrats alike. And these are, indeed unforced errors. The empirical evidence makes plain the foundations, rationale and trajectory of U.S. democracy aid policy. It demonstrates its continued relevance in the current context. It reveals its salutary effects, direct and indirect, for a variety of important foreign policy goals. To abandon the policy and forego its benefits willfully disregards the historical trajectory and empirical evidence. The lessons and guidance for President Trump, his advisors, and the U.S. Congress appear to be clear. As a component of U.S. foreign policy, democracy aid offers significant "bang for the buck." To put it in terms likely to resonate with the current president, democracy aid's return on investment (ROI) is high. Heeding the evidence means preserving democracy aid and continuing efforts to build the democratic peace. To do otherwise is to err…unless supporting, sustaining and spreading democracy and its tangible benefits for U.S. relations with other states, good governance and human rights abroad, and peace and prosperity for the U.S and others are not what the administration seeks. *A*

26 Burcu Savun and Daniel Tirone, "Foreign aid as a counterterrorism tool: more liberty, less terror?" Forthcoming, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Published online May 5, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717704952). See also James M. Scott, *Combatting Terrorism by Supporting Democracy? The Reciprocal Effects of Terrorism and U.S. Democracy Assistance in the Developing World*, 1975-2010. Paper presented at the 2015 American Political Science Association Annual Conference, San Francisco, California, September 2-6, 2015.

27 Peter Rudloff, James M. Scott and Tyra Blew, "Countering adversaries and cultivating friends: indirect rivalry factors and foreign aid allocation." *Cooperation and Conflict* 48:3 (2013), 401-423; Peterson and Scott, "Democracy aid calculus."

28 See James M. Scott, "Cultivating friends: the political payoffs of US democracy aid, 1975-2010," unpublished manuscript. See also Timothy Peterson, "US disaster aid and bilateral trade growth." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 13:1 (2017), pp. 93-111.

29 David Brinks and Michael Coppedge, "Diffusion is no Illusion: neighbor emulation in the third wave of democracy." *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(4), pp. 463-489.

The University in Flux

Richard Leo Enos

Piper Professor and Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition
Texas Christian University

After 45 years as a professor at three very different types of universities, after serving on an array of committees (including with the College Board) and holding academic offices, I found myself in agreement with virtually all the observations and claims made by Cathy N. Davidson in this engaging book, *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*. As I was gathering my thoughts and my notes for this essay I soon discovered that predominantly these were not my thoughts at all but really an exercise in paraphrasing what Davidson was saying in an affirmative manner. For the record, it is not that I am unfamiliar with the genre of book reviews. I have done scores of such reviews over the years and even had a stint as a book review editor. It is just that it is difficult for me to add to a work that is so thorough. It is difficult for me to criticize a work that I so fully agree with. Finally, it is difficult for me to offer any new insights since the author has anticipated every "new" idea that I was going to offer to complement her book. The data that I cite is drawn from this meticulous, detailed work. I say this not to head off charges of plagiarism, but rather as offering the highest form of approval; that is, my desire to capture what this work offers in a way that will encourage readers to read the entire work for themselves. I am aware that I cannot do justice to the merits of this book, let alone capture the depth of Davidson's insights, in a few thousand words, but I do think I can make enough points sufficiently to warrant why readers should commit themselves to examining this volume, sharing it with others, and most importantly help to enact changes in higher education offered in this work.

While we may not be able to tell a book by its cover, we usually can tell a lot by its title! After all, a title is the author's way of directing the minds of readers both to the subject and, in some cases, how readers ought to be viewing the subject. Davidson's title *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux* is both old and new. *The New Education*, ironically, is the old part. Davidson took the title from the work done by the former President of Harvard University, Charles William Eliot. Almost 150 years ago, at the dawning of the 20th Century, Eliot believed that Harvard had out-used its design, its mission and (most importantly) its vision. Harvard had been established to educate ministers and genteel learned men for polite society. Eliot correctly recognized that the population of his day had other needs and, to that end, he radically re-envisioned Harvard. Eliot created many features that not only persist today at Harvard, but have been modeled by most colleges and universities in America into the twenty-first century.

When Eliot began his educational career, Harvard was a Puritan college designed for the clergy and the elite aristocracy of American wealth. In 1869, Eliot wrote "The New Education" calling for a total

transformation of higher education and, to that end, he enacted his vision when he eventually became President of Harvard. Eliot did his homework. He went to Europe to study models and types of universities, discovering that, for the most part, the European universities also catered to the wealthy and religious. However, Eliot was impressed by the pragmatic and vocational orientation of the Humboldt University of Berlin, which seemed to Eliot more responsive to the social needs of the day than the traditional orientation of most universities had been. Eliot saw the need to redirect and to expand American higher education toward vocations and careers in response to the tremendous social changes that were taking place in America after the Civil War.

It is difficult for me to criticize a work that I so fully agree with.

Eliot transformed Harvard, Davidson observed, from a Puritan college to a modern university. He did so not just by copying Humboldt but by applying the organization and management principles of non-academic institutions. Eliot was impressed with the emerging "scientific methods" that innovators such as Frederick Winslow Taylor introduced to factories, where, under constant scrutiny, productivity was measured in units, graded, compartmentalized, sectioned into departments, reviewed and evaluated. Enamored by the "new" science of business management and production, Eliot re-conceptualized Harvard as an educational "factory" in an effort to meet the needs of his day. That is, he changed Harvard in some of the following ways: departments, credit hours, grading in a standardized fashion that moved from oral formative grading to summative (letter) grading. Components were introduced that provided vocational training, professionalism, credential awarding, and accreditation procedures inspired by what Eliot saw being done in highly productive factories.

Eliot was not alone in his desire to modernize universities. He was in contact with other university leaders, both public (the University of Michigan) and private (Stanford, Chicago) who also wanted to change higher education. Such changes not only transformed Harvard, but also other universities who followed in step, since Harvard was regarded as the pinnacle and therefore their paradigm. This infatuation with "Harvardization" extended even in the case of public universities such as the University of Virginia, which had always seen and characterized itself as an elite university… proving that ivy really does grow in the South! Interestingly, Eliot purposefully ignored "land-grant universities" in his plans, since they were too new following the Morrill Acts to be seriously considered. The result was a huge success. Harvard became the model for what a modern university "ought" to be and others, as mentioned earlier, followed in step. To this day, in fact, some public universities like to call themselves "Public Ivies."

As Davidson says, Eliot's university had a good long run. Even the American factory, however, is not what it was 100 years ago, nor is American society for that matter, let alone the universities that educate within it. As Davidson accurately points out, however, there are constraints to change and adaptation. Many American universities by and large pride themselves on not changing, of preserving their time-tested methods despite the world changing around them. This stagnation has come, Davidson argues, at a high cost, a

cost that means even more than the debt-generated tuition that is paid by the students and their families. It is a cost, as Davidson points out, that directly and often negatively impacts American society in many ways and, unless changed, will continue to do so.

Davidson's *The New Education* is an effort to do nation-wide what Eliot did a century ago when he wrote his "The New Education" essay to transform Harvard from a Puritan college to a model, national university. That is the focus of the book title following the colon: *How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*. Davidson is advocating the same sort of transformation but for higher education itself and that actually began with herself. That is, Davidson's own career has been a personal effort to "re-invent" the education that she came to see as essential for American society. She introduced and participated in many expansive and innovative programs at Duke University where for thirty years she served as both a professor and an administrator. Now at the City University of New York, she currently teaches and serves as the Director of the Futures Initiative program there. Her current work crosses the twenty-four CUNY campuses. In fact, many of the suggestions that she offers in *The New Education* are not just ideas but rather programs and practices that she has implemented over the years. Davidson is trying to change higher education and she is backing up her words with her actions; she left a prestigious Methodist-based "Southern Ivy" to take on the challenge of an urban-based public giant. Regardless of whether the road map Davidson unfolds for us in this book is the one we want to follow or not, we have to respect someone who lives out a dream. And this is a good place to make note that Davidson does not merely critique American education but offers many positive solutions—both for teachers and for institutions—to the problems that she exposes, which alone makes the reading of her work essential.

What are the realities of Davidson's dream for higher education? First, she asks us to stop and re-examine our views about the presumptions or starting points for higher education itself and how we go about re-conceptualizing the very idea of higher education. For example, college (in some form) should be available for everyone—the "top 100%" as she presents it—and the best illustration of that availability is our community college system in America. Community colleges are designed to take the top 100% of high school graduates. They are, with intent, not constructed to be a watered-down four-year model but rather an alternative to post-secondary education. They are, with intent, not intended for the professional-managerial model but to serve other more immediate needs facing many Americans, often inner-city and cultural outsiders. Here, Davidson argues, good teaching counts and inventive plans combine to help disenfranchised students. Subway passes enabling poorer students to get to school, study cohorts for group support, bridge loans to meet daily expenses are all innovative ways to help address such needs. We could learn a great deal from community colleges, Davidson points out, and she is absolutely correct.

Davidson also warns about two extremes that "harm in both directions": technophobia and technophilia. For example, MOOC (massive open online courses) were heralded as the savior of higher education in 2012 but now have virtually disappeared from the conversation and are all but forgotten. The failure of the MOOC education movement exposed that the need for direct, interactive

The virtual university cannot cross over to the dynamic reality of genuine social human interaction any more than a simulated combat video game can possibility hope to duplicate the horrors and trauma of real warfare.

communication remains essential to higher education. Technology is, as Davidson reminds us, epistemology and the new mentalities are not being recognized or utilized well enough in higher education. Why? Because although technology shapes our mentalities, they do not satisfy the needs of the whole person. Davidson believes that online learning is here to stay, but will never replace brick-and-mortar universities. The "virtual" university will be of help but will not replace the "real" university, because the virtual university cannot cross over to the dynamic reality of genuine social human interaction any more than a simulated combat video game can possibility hope to duplicate the horrors and trauma of real warfare. We need to benefit from technology but not see it as the solution itself. The solution is to have technology work *with* the arts and humanities and not be seen as their replacement. Love or fear of technology errors when in the extreme; technology with human interaction is the sort of symbiotic unity that benefits the student.

As should be apparent, there are no sacred cows in Davidson's *The New Education*: all educational axioms and presumptions are under scrutiny. For example, students often do not see how all of their courses "fit" together. We often leave it for students to somehow figure out how all the moving parts work together or at least are supposed to synchronize in harmony. Some universities, however, are not dumping that responsibility onto the students. Rather, they are shifting the burden from the students and taking charge in transforming their curricula in order to have education make sense, and to lay out a clearer roadmap. For example, STEM programs have often been given a free pass because the skills they teach are marketable. However, no AI or technology program covers all that students need. To be sure, as Davidson points out, universities need STEM. But STEM also needs the humanities, the arts, and the social sciences, because students need to learn about human judgment, talent, empathy, persuasion, leadership, and all the careers that require the "human touch"—from surgeons to creative writers. In short, they need to learn how all of these moving parts work together to form a clear big picture of their dreams. Believe it or not, some universities are at the forefront of making such integrative syntheses a reality. According to Davidson, Arizona State University should be recognized as an example of a major university that consciously works hard to leave behind the narrow-minded skills approach to jobs and helps (yes, actually *helps*) students find real, meaningful careers that blend technology with the humanities and arts into a coherent whole. In all of these new programs, communication—speaking and writing skills—are essential. Knowledge, devoid of clear and meaningful expression, is next to useless. Davidson takes time to praise the innovative work of Andrea Lunsford of Stanford University for making such unifying skills possible for her students. You would think that these movements are grassroots—and some indeed are—but

credit some visionary university presidents, such as Arizona State's Michael Crow, for utilizing his power to make the dream a reality.

One of the best features of Davidson's book is showing the true cost of higher education. By that I mean not only the financial debt, but also the social consequences of the abysmal way we have financed higher education in America. One of the great costs is paid by the students (and their families) who take out student loans and never graduate. According to Davidson, out of 100 high school students, only about 70 will graduate, 49 will enter college, and about 25 will earn a college degree. One of the worst consequences, besides the staggering high school dropout rate, of course, is that those who fail to earn a degree have taken on debt with no benefits of a degree to show for it. As of 2017, according to Davidson, 42 million Americans collectively owe over 1.3 trillion dollars in student debts! Little wonder, when you think about it, because the average annual cost of college is approaching $50,000, even though half of all courses are taught by adjuncts, which is a polite way of saying underpaid part-time instructors who have no benefits and no job security, a number that has risen 30% since 1975.

"Who profits from the massive student loans that parents and students must pay?" We should ask ourselves such questions. From 1993 to 2008, student loans were turned over to Wall Street and for-profit loan agencies. Even the Department of Education reaped the benefits, some years earning 20% on loans! Of course, there is a history of political contempt for students that leads to government officials not caring about student debt. Past President Ronald Reagan called students "freeloaders" and "tax eaters" and even the very Secretary of Education William Bennet called them "deadbeats." Some medical students amass a debt, sometimes in excess of $400,000, in order to become a doctor. I am sure these "freeloaders" and "tax eaters" would not appreciate being called such derogatory terms for trying to make their dream of helping to heal others become a reality. Of course, the argument is that financial problems arose when the GI Bill opened higher education to minorities, including Blacks, Italians, Greeks, Roman Catholics, who willingly took on greater debt in an effort to break the cycle of poverty by providing the hope of a better life through education. Even for those groups, few, such as Black GIs who expressed a desire to go to college (43%), were still financially able to attend (12%) and take an advantage of this "benefit." In short, while we made it possible to borrow money to make the American dream of a college education a reality, we did so in a way that mortgaged the future to a level so high that it created a problem unto itself.

What are the solutions to the snowballing cost of higher education? What do Sweden, Brazil, Germany, Finland, France, Norway, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Iceland all have in common? For their students, college tuition is free. In America, elementary, middle school, and high school all have public school options that are tuition-free . . . but not our public colleges. That said, we have taken small but positive steps toward providing a better option. Some community colleges, such as in San Francisco, are trying to move to becoming tuition-free, similar to when California State colleges in the 1960s were tuition-free for tax-payers, and much like we think of elementary and high schools being tuition-free. Some universities used to be tuition-free (e.g., Rice University and Cooper Union) and a few still are. Many years ago, and before I came to TCU, I heard an administrator from another institution say that he wanted to raise tuition at his university because to be more expensive

would put that university in the same category with elite universities. To be sure, there is opposition to reducing or eliminating tuition. Many would not want to see this profit-generating system replaced, for it would mean the removal of a major source of revenue and endowment-building—even if it means that the benefits for the few would be at the cost of the many. In other words, a "good buy" was the last thing some schools wanted to be known for being! Obviously, this summary illustrates the devastating social consequences of a debt-carrying society where we now have not only the ever-growing numbers of "have nots" but the small in number, but financially significant and growing, "haves and wants more." In short, entry into the present system is, for many, gained only by amassing years of debt.

One of the costs driving up tuition is underscored by Davidson: universities and colleges have become administratively and staff top-heavy. She is correct. Don't believe me? Go to the media guide of your favorite college intercollegiate sports program and count the number of staff and administrators for this extracurricular activity. To be sure, the growth of sports programs as an entity unto themselves is not the sole contributor to the management explosion in higher education and, for some universities, athletics even can be a financial gain and is often a real alumni/ae pleaser. Universities have evolved in management from many directions. Generally, and not surprisingly, about forty years ago the number of faculty used to be roughly twice the number of administrators, but now faculty are outnumbered by the self-justifying bureaucracy. While administrators make up the ever-growing general staff, the faculty member is the soldier in the trenches.

Davidson also compels her readers to question basic starting points of higher education regarding the performance of students within Eliot's century-old system, such as "How do we measure students?" Everything in higher education is standardized, evaluated, automated, and graded in a summative fashion. It is all about selectivity, and the more selective the better. This is the sort of mentality that presumes that we all want admission into the "country club" that rejects everyone else save the special few! We have chosen to determine this selectivity by departing from a formative system to a unitized summative rank-grading system and numerical scoring of student performance. In 1897, Mount Holyoke was the first institution of higher education to create and implement a system of letter grades. During World War I, the IQ test was implemented by Robert Yerkes and Edward Thorndike, to determine who would be "officer material" for our armed forces. Unfortunately, both Yerkes and Thorndike were eugenicists and the IQ test was constructed to support the belief that native-born Anglo-Saxons were intellectually superior to Jews, Italians, Irish, African-Americans, etc. However, even these early unitized tests were not without criticism and fear. As early as 1913, there were concerns that our students were being reduced to test scores, letter grades, numbers and statistical averages. Yet, such performance-ranking practices continued. For example, in 1914 Kansas State Teachers College invented the multiple-choice test based on the presumption of "the one, best answer." Even Eliot himself changed from

Forty years ago the number of faculty used to be roughly twice the number of administrators, but now faculty are outnumbered.

the Harvard oral exam practice to written exams. These measures soon because so popular, Davidson points out, that summative (i.e. "scientific") grading replaced formative evaluations. These same concerns were carried over to standardized tests and continue to this day, such as the SAT and the ACT examinations. Some universities have decided to oppose this college-entrance system to the extent that they no longer require such tests. Do colleges any longer interview high school students for admission? Smaller schools may, but I doubt that would happen for general admission purposes at the Ohio State University or the University of Texas, traditionally two of the largest public universities in America!

Perhaps these systematic measures of students are done because faculty simply do not have the time for formative, personalized systems of evaluation. The average faculty member works 61 hours a week annually and the hardest workers of the faculty are the full professors. There is a criticism that faculty not only no longer know their own students, and that some faculty don't think that they should have to know their students personally as a part of their responsibilities, since the student is just a unit-number in a large lecture class. I have taught at two large public institutions and I recall how thrilled students were that I remembered them to the extent that I could write a letter of recommendation (a formative type of evaluation that still lingers)! Clearly, Davidson advocates change from a tried-and-used-to-be-true system that is now so engrained in our higher education that it would be hard to imagine an alternative and yet, she makes clear, we must if we wish to teach an ever-diverse population of students in order to meet their and our social needs.

Does our future look bleak? Davidson paints a clear and representative picture of higher education in America but she, as mentioned above, also offers solutions. Of course, it all starts with recognizing the problems that she has pointed out and, of equal importance, a commitment to solve those problems. In short, we must do what Eliot did 150 years ago. We must (mentally) tour universities at home and abroad and "cherry-pick" those innovative programs that are responsive to the needs of our society and especially to those of our students. We need to rethink higher education just as Eliot had the courage to do. As Davidson pointed out, what was innovative and daring 150 years ago are now impediments to be overcome. The first step is to recognize that condition by admitting our problems, as Davidson has done so well in this book. Davidson contributes to the solution. She ends her book with tips for students getting the most out of college in our present system and also tips for transforming our classrooms to active student-learning centers. These may be baby steps and short-term solutions, but they are going in the right direction, for we are also changing the mentality of what higher education is, who benefits from it, and how can it contribute in a flexible way to the ever-changing society that we are experiencing, and will be experiencing, in the foreseeable future. This is the foot-hold for creating long-term solutions. We have much to thank Davidson for achieving, for with this book she not only exposed our problems, she pointed us toward our solutions. Eliot would have been proud of her! Let the "revolution" she calls for so earnestly begin!

Cathy N. Davidson, *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*. Basic Books, 336pp, $28 cloth.

Between Nature and History

Hyrum Lewis

Professor of History
Brigham Young University–Idaho

Eighty-one years ago, a diminutive German Jew named Leo Strauss fled the rise of fascism in Germany, took a series of academic positions in the United States, and changed the landscape of American political philosophy forever. Not only was Strauss himself uber-influential, but he surrounded himself with a number of disciples who themselves became academics and trained more students in "Straussian" ideas and methods. Thus was created an extended "family"—now in its fifth generations—of Straussian political theorists.

There has been plenty written about Leo Strauss and plenty written about the Straussians as a group, but what has been lacking are examinations of individual students of Strauss and their contributions to political theory. Steven Hayward helps fill that void by plucking two major figures from the Straussian family tree—Harry Jaffa and Walter Berns—and presenting their ideas in an interesting and lively way.

But even though Hayward has written a fine book, he hasn't written the book indicated by the title. Let's start with *Patriotism is Not Enough*. The theme of patriotism only shows up intermittently, and, when it does, there is no indication of its inadequacies or insufficiency. The book has less to do with patriotism, and more to do with the common and enduring Straussian themes that were also central to Jaffa and Burns: confronting the political problems of modernity and the quest to ground right in nature rather than in history.

Both Jaffa and Berns studied directly with Strauss and shared with their master a view that European philosophy, typified by Heidegger, had gone terribly wrong. While Heidegger wanted to focus on *dasein*—being itself—which gave priority to resoluteness (Sartre—Heidegger's great popularizer—would frame his ethics in terms of authenticity vs. bad faith), Strauss wanted to focus on *phroneses*—practical wisdom and virtue. Since European philosophy was historicist, relativist, and positivist, the remedy was for philosophers to come to the rescue and turn back the tide of nihilism by basing the polis in something higher than the empty promises of modern life. Readers would do well to overlook the title and see Hayward's new book as a well-written introduction to these basic themes of Straussian thought.

But the subtitle is equally misleading. The book purports to examine the ideas of Harry Jaffa and Walter Berns, but Berns turns out to be a minor character in the story, showing up only slightly more than

some of Jaffa's other intellectual sparring partners—e.g., Garry Wills, Richard Hofstadter, and Willmoore Kendall. Hayward clearly has the greater reverence for Jaffa (naturally since he studied with him at Claremont Graduate School back in the eighties) and this shows in the disproportionate attention he gives him. Hayward would have been better served simply changing the title to *An Intellectual Biography of Harry Jaffa*.

Jaffa's great contribution to intellectual history was his Americanizing of Strauss's philosophy by applying the Straussian method to the Declaration of Independence and, especially, to the greatest of all American statesmen—Abraham Lincoln. For Jaffa, statesmanship was a bridge between political theory and practice. Lincoln embodied this best—his speeches (Jaffa was a world expert on the Lincoln-Douglas debates) were masterpieces of enlightened political understanding that showed how to relate the enduring principles of the American founding to changing circumstances.

indeterminate. Indeed, history could lead us to totalitarianism and on what grounds, if "history" is our only standard of right, could we oppose it? Jaffa found that Lincoln could become an ally in the defense of natural right against historicism. As a graduate student in New York, Jaffa stumbled across a bound copy of the Lincoln-Douglas debates at a used bookstore and decided to use these as a framing device for explicating his Strauss-inspired approach to political philosophy. In Lincoln, Jaffa found a politician who well-articulated the timeless principles of the American founding and applied them fruitfully to new historical challenges.

Hayward clearly reveres Jaffa, but at times this emotional commitment to his subject makes the book less of an intellectual history and more of a polemic. A memoir of Jaffa might have been a more appropriate vehicle for the ideas Hayward is trying to present since he lacks the critical distance from his subject to effectively critique, rather than simply restate, Jaffa's ideas. Similarly, Jaffa (like virtually all Americans) lacked the

Jaffa's great contribution to intellectual history was his Americanizing of Strauss's philosophy by applying the Straussian method the greatest of all American statesmen—Abraham Lincoln.

The contest between nature and history was also central to Jaffa's thought and, in this, he continued the project begun by Strauss himself in his masterwork, *Natural Right and History*. The ancients, said Strauss, generally thought in terms of eternal verities (nature) while the moderns generally think in terms of changing truths (history). If all principles of right are contingent upon history, then nihilism must result, for history is unstable and

critical distance from the sixteenth president to effectively challenge the popular image of Lincoln as a model political philosopher or Commander in Chief.

A cynic might say that Jaffa was simply using Lincoln for rhetorical purposes. Knowing that Lincoln is perhaps the only American president who is above reproach—he is revered by virtually all Americans across racial, ideological, gender, religious, party, and class lines—Jaffa could make Lincoln the

spokesman for his own values and thus avoid pushback. Who, after all, is willing to take on the Great Emancipator? At some point, scholars will allow reason to triumph over emotion and see that Lincoln had major flaws as a president, particularly in his conduct of the Civil War. As long as the Jaffas and Haywards of the world continue to make Lincoln an icon rather than a human with failings, we will continue to avoid giving Lincoln the same critical treatment that we give to all other figures of the past. Ultimately, historical understanding will suffer.

Since Lincoln, according to Jaffa, based his actions (such as the emancipation of slaves) on natural right, he is at odds with the common historicist view that permeates modern intellectual life. Straussian opposition to historicism usually took the form of criticizing the fact-value distinction that was dominant in the academy during 1950s when Strauss and his first generation of disciples were writing. Jaffa, like Strauss, believed that combatting this value-free relativism was necessary to prevent an American lapse into the totalitarianism that had overtaken Europe in the 1940s.

It is their fear of totalitarianism that largely explains why Straussians are viewed with such suspicion and even hatred today. Until 2003, few outside academic political science departments had even heard the name Leo Strauss, but the Iraq War quickly changed that. During the George W. Bush administration, Straussian became synonymous with "neoconservative" and Straussians—such as William Kristol and Paul Wolfowitz—were blamed for the hawkish turn in American foreign policy. Kristol, a "third generation" Straussian who completed a Ph.D. at Harvard with Strauss's student Harvey Mansfield, spearheaded the Project for a New American Century, a group that advocated bringing democracy to the Middle East through military force. Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Bush Administration, studied with Straussian Allan Bloom at Cornell before heading to the University of Chicago for graduate study with Strauss himself and is generally seen as one of the foremost advocates of the Iraq War. Figures like these caused Strauss and Straussianism to be associated (perhaps unfairly) with the projection of American military force around the world.

While many of us view military invasions to spread democracy as reckless and misguided, certain Straussians have justified them by pointing to the fragility of liberal democracy. If philosophical nihilism could lead to totalitarianism in the most advanced, modern, scientific nations in Western Europe in the early 20th century, why couldn't the same happen in the U.S. in the early 21st century? Having seen western civilization descend into barbarism once, Strauss believed it could happen again and his disciples determined that radical actions, such as pre-emptive wars, were a small price to pay to ensure the continuation of the free American regime.

Many of us who opposed the Iraq War lament the Straussian involvement in politics for the same reason that we lament Marxist involvement in politics. Theories are, by definition, simplifications of reality and when applied to the human realm, they can have terrible, unanticipated consequences. This was the case in trying to create utopia through state control of the means of production (as Marx's disciples have tried to do) or in trying to bring democracy to the Middle East through American military invasion (as Strauss's disciples have tried to do).

And yet, as Hayward shows, the invasion of Iraq was not the first time Straussians had inserted themselves into politics. Jaffa was deeply involved in Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign. Whereas previous Straussians (and Strauss himself)

The biggest failing of historians of ideology today is assuming that their subjects ("liberalism" or "conservatism") have some meaning independent of history. They don't.

had mostly kept the philosopher's distance from day-to-day political issues and controversies, Jaffa not only advised the Goldwater campaign, but also penned the Arizona Senator's infamous "extremism in the defense of liberty" line delivered at the 1964 Republican National Convention. In Hayward's telling, Jaffa was not only a major influence on American academic life, but on American political life as well.

Here Hayward is overstating things. A typical sin of intellectual historians, who are themselves intellectuals, is to inflate the importance of their subjects as a strange form of self-flattery (and I say this as an intellectual historian myself who is equally guilty of this sin). Jaffa and Berns ascribed too much importance to themselves and Hayward ascribes too much importance to them. The Bush administration likely would have invaded Iraq, with or without the lobbying of Wolfowitz and Kristol, and Hayward even admits that Goldwater was destined to lose the 1964 election, regardless of the ill-advised Jaffa line.

It is also overstating things to claim that the debate between Jaffa and Berns somehow "redefined American conservatism" as the title indicates. Who outside certain conservative intellectual circles even knows of their ideas and what major figures of the right today have been influenced by them? Totalitarianism, Strauss and his disciples believe, is a philosophical problem that requires a philosophical solution, but let's not kid ourselves that philosophy is driving the conservative movement today. It is far more a product of Sean Hannity, Ann Coulter, Rush Limbaugh, and Donald Trump than it is Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, or Leo Strauss.

That last part of the title, "the arguments that redefined American conservatism," held the most promise and therefore caused me the most disappointment when Hayward didn't deliver. The biggest failing of historians of ideology today is assuming that their subjects ("liberalism" or "conservatism") have some meaning independent of history. They don't. Charting the ways that conservatism has been defined and redefined across the decades through mutations and selection pressures should be the central task of historians such as Hayward, and yet despite promising to do exactly that, he rests his book on the same old fallacious, essentialist assumptions that have plagued nearly every history of conservatism of the last fifty years.

To Hayward, heroic conservatives have combatted villainous liberals from the beginning of the modern era. Lacking is any understanding of the variegated, incoherent, and even self-contradictory nature of these ideologies. An accurate (and more historically objective) approach to conservatism and liberalism would see that they are mixed bags of many competing impulses, tendencies, and ideas of varying value. It's self-evidently false that conservatism is entirely good and liberalism entirely bad simply because they have both taken on thousands of different and contradictory meanings over the years. There isn't a transcendent conservatism that persists throughout space and time,

only different bundles of political positions called "conservative" at a given moment because of their temporary attachment to the conservative tribe. Conservatism, in certain contexts, means commitment to free trade (i.e., Milton Friedman); in other contexts, conservatism means opposition to free trade (i.e., Donald Trump and William McKinley). Since these opposite positions have been considered "conservative" at different times and both can't be correct, then conservatism can't be inherently correct. Declaring *a priori* (as ideologues do) that one side of the political spectrum has a monopoly on truth is demonstrably false and sadly dogmatic.

Of course, essentializing ideologies also leads historians such as Hayward into fruitless and meaningless attempts to recruit the heroes of history to their own ideological teams. Naturally, both sides want to go after the greatest historical trophy of all—Abraham Lincoln. Hayward claims that Lincoln's patriotism and commitment to the principle of natural right makes him one of the great "conservative" figures of American history, but why can't we all just let Lincoln be Lincoln without trying to stuff him into our narrow ideological boxes? Lincoln's views simply do not fit neatly into today's political categories. Depending on how one defines "left" and "right" (and everyone offers different definitions) we can turn anyone we like into a "conservative" or "progressive" through a kind of baptism of the dead, but this is ex-post storytelling of the most presentist kind. Until historians such as Hayward treat ideologies as contingent, changing products of circumstance, their works will be more misleading than informative. Cheerleading history, like the one Hayward has given us here, only re-inscribes the false paradigm of left-right essentialism that is responsible for so much tribalism and political confusion in both the past and present.

Although the debate between Jaffa and Burns did not "redefine American conservatism," it did represent a fissure within Straussianism itself. "West Coast" and "East Coast" schools of Straussians have long contended over the questions of freedom vs. virtue and rights vs. duties, but this debate is not confined to the political right. The left-wing tribe is currently becoming redefined as well. Campus radicals, certain of their own absolute virtue, reject longstanding liberal principles of free speech in the name of excising evils such as racism and sexism from the university. Until recently, commitment to free speech was seen as an essential, defining characteristic of "liberalism" and was employed with particular force against Senator McCarthy and anti-communist zealots during the early years of the Cold War. Willmoore Kendall's belief that campuses should forbid certain unpopular opinions was once considered "radically right-wing," but oh, how times change and how quickly our ideologies flip-flop in meaning. The exact arguments used by McCarthyites of the right against the left in the 1950s (e.g., "Some ideas are so dangerous, they must be out of bounds," "Free speech is just a cover for totalitarianism") are now used by the left against the right. While the principle of free speech remains, the tribe that adopts the principle changes.

Perhaps the best evidence that ideologies evolve is the shift in foreign policy hawkishness from a left-wing to a right-wing cause. Hayward notes that Strauss, Jaffa, Berns, and others considered themselves liberals and Democrats all the way through the 1950s for the primary reason that liberal Democrats were more likely to use military force against foreign totalitarianism (à la Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman) while conservative Republicans were more likely to retreat into

isolationism (à la Robert Taft). Of course, by 2005 the ideologies had switched places. Conservatism had become the ideology of foreign policy hawkishness and liberalism had become the ideology of isolation. The Straussians were important agents in bringing about this mutation in conservatism, and Hayward might have profitably applied this evolutionary lens to understanding his subjects. We typically think of neoconservatives as those who moved from left to right, but more often than not, neoconservatives didn't change, conservatism did.

Hayward also suggests that conservatives have always fought for "small government," but this is manifestly false in both the past and present. Until the early 20th century, commitment to limited government was considered liberal, not conservative, and even today it's not clear that "conservatives" want to roll back government. Despite all of their rhetoric, government has grown more under conservative Republicans (such as George W. Bush) than under liberal or even progressive Democrats (such as Clinton or Obama). It's true that conservatives are committed to cutting taxes—and back up their words with actions—but cutting taxes has an inverse relationship to smaller government (the public actually demands more public services when tax rates are lower since government spending feels "free"). Moderates, such as Bill Clinton and Dwight Eisenhower, have as a matter of historical fact done far more in the way of cutting government than have conservatives such as George W. Bush.

Perhaps conservatism and limited government had a strong connection at the time of Goldwater's candidacy, but that moment is long gone and conservatism has evolved into an ideology committed in practice to nationalism, immigration restriction, and tax cutting. Even the hawkishness that seemed so central to conservatism just a decade ago now appears to be fading (in polls, self-described conservatives are now much more likely than liberals to say that America "should mind its own business in the world"—a complete reversal from 2005).

Committed conservative that he is, Hayward also has little patience for moderates. To him, they are losers with names like Romney, McCain, and Dole. Staunch right-wingers like George W. Bush, on the other hand, win elections. And yet if Hayward really believes in limited government, why would he want "big government conservatives" like Bush in office? Those truly committed to limiting the size, scope, and spending of the federal government should challenge, rather than celebrate, right wing policies which have led to statism in practice. But, in his commitment to conservative essentialism, Hayward ignores this inconvenient fact and continues to cheerlead for "the right" even if their ideology works against principles he claims to uphold.

Instead of engaging in the futile attempt to identify "true conservatives" and "true conservatism" over the course of American history, historians like Hayward would do much better to expose the contingency and instability of our ideologies. The freedom that Hayward believes he is fighting for would be much better served by exposing the spurious connection between "right wing" fascism and "right wing" libertarianism—they are opposites—but as long as we see the world in terms of a unidimensional political spectrum, we will continue to confuse one for the other. If we can let conservatism evolve, then we can see that it has undergone a major transformation from Goldwater's time to now. Hayward's commitment to some undefined and imaginary "true conservatism" blinds him to this crucial historical reality.

While adherence to ideological essentialism is Hayward's greatest weakness, his clear, accessible writing is his greatest strength. Most intellectual historians seem incapable of writing without jargon and pretense, but Hayward makes the reader feel as if he is having an enjoyable conversation with a pleasant, intelligent friend. In contradistinction to Strauss and most of his disciples and interpreters, Hayward presents his material in a way that is meant to be enjoyed rather than simply endured. While most Straussian writing seems intentionally designed to weed out readers, Hayward's writing seems intentionally designed to draw them in. Many academics are intentionally obscure, fearing that clarity would expose the shallowness of their ideas, but smart writers like Hayward have no need to hide a lack of intelligence behind jargon.

Of course, a conversational style can have its downsides too. Like a voluble raconteur, Hayward often veers off into tangents and repetition. In a longer book, this might be forgivable, but in a book of 300 pages, it comes off as undisciplined. It often seems as if he is using Jaffa as a mere jumping-off point to introduce some of his own free-floating ideas. For instance, a whole chapter covers Hayward's hobbyhorse of conservative jurisprudence and there is hardly a mention of Jaffa or Berns. This was interesting, but had little to do with the subject of the book and felt forced. The repetition in Hayward's conversational writing is also made worse by his constant calling attention to it by using phrases such as, "as we shall see" and "as mentioned previously." A meandering work of intellectual history may be more fun than a more tightly structured one, but it also appears less serious.

But if the reader can look past the unfulfilled promises of the title and appreciate this book for what it is—an informal look at various elements of conservative history through the lens of Harry Jaffa—they will be richly rewarded. Jaffa and Berns were not redefining conservatism, nor were they saving the world from totalitarianism, but they were advancing interesting arguments that are worth reading about. Hayward has done an admirable job presenting and interpreting these ideas in this insightful book. A

Steven F. Hayward, *Patriotism is Not Enough: Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, and the Arguments That Redefined American Conservatism*. Encounter Books, 304pp., $26 cloth.

3 THE PAST IS PRESENT

The Best Books on Athenian Democracy

James Kierstead

Senior Lecturer in Classics
Victoria University of Wellington

Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, edited and translated with an introduction by P. J. Rhodes. Penguin Classics, 208pp.

Nobody would claim that the treatise on the Athenian constitution written by Aristotle or one of his students is the most entertaining contemporary source for Athenian democracy, or the most philosophically insightful. For a raunchy, no-holds-barred sidelight on the democracy, we can turn to Aristophanes—though his zany humour makes using his plays as a historical source a complicated endeavour. For a beautifully-crafted historical narrative (and some editorializing from one of history's great cynics), we have Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. But no text that survives deals with the democracy as fully or as directly as the Aristotelian one, written sometime in the late 4th century BC; when it was pulled out of the sands of Egypt in 1879, it increased our knowledge of the workings of the Athenian system at a stroke. About half of the text is a chronological overview of the various stages of the Athenian constitution; the other half is a detailed description of the Athenian democracy's various institutions and officials. Packed with detail, it's an unrivalled source for how the Athenian democracy worked on a day to day basis—and for anyone with an interest in popular rule, that should be excitement enough.

Moses I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, revised edition. Rutgers University Press, 208pp.

Midway through the nineteenth century, the English banker George Grote published a twelve-volume *History of Greece* in which he dared to depict the Athenian democracy in a positive light. More than a hundred years after Grote broke with the anti-democratic tradition that had previously reigned supreme in the study of ancient democracy, the topic was still not getting the attention it deserved. Moses Finley's book went some way towards changing that. Finley was an American who was expelled from his home country during the McCarthy era on the basis that he was a member of the Communist Party. His book contains a number of short, sharp essays (originally lectures), often aimed at scholarly misconceptions about Athenian popular rule. One classic chapter, for example, explained how the much-maligned 'demagogues' were in fact part and parcel of the Athenian democratic system; and went on to point out the strangeness of the conventional view that classical Athens produced one of the greatest cultural flowerings of human history under the worst political system ever conceived. At this stage (1973), drawing attention to some of the inconsistencies of the conventional view of Athenian democracy as mob rule was still an important task, one that Finley carried out with élan.

Mogens Herman Hansen, *Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Bristol Classical Press, 464pp.

Much of what we know about Athenian democracy has been built up over time by detailed and painstaking studies of institutions and procedure. One of the great masters of this type of work is the Danish scholar Mogens Herman Hansen, who has published dozens of hard-nosed, empirically-minded books and articles, most recently as head of the Copenhagen Polis Centre. This book, which appeared in 1991, is a distillation of the great mass of technical work that had been done on Athenian institutions up to that point, both by Hansen himself and by others. Assuming no knowledge of Greek, the book provides a clear and accessible overview to the workings of the Assembly, the Council, the courts, and much else besides, all while sticking close to the ancient sources. Ferociously well-informed of the scholarship and yet mindful of how to present material to newcomers, it remains unsurpassed as an introductory textbook on the topic. And it closes with a list of theses on Athenian democracy that continues to be a fertile source of controversy within the field.

Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People*. Princeton University Press, 408pp.

Josh Ober has been one of the most influential and audacious scholars of Athenian democracy over the last thirty years. With such a range of important contributions, from the historical essays in the 1996 volume *The Athenian Revolution* to the social scientific analysis in 2008's *Democracy and Knowledge,* it's hard to decide which individual work to single out. But this book, which appeared only two years after Hansen's, helped mark a watershed in the study of Athenian democracy. While Hansen's volume helped introduce students to the nuts and bolts of the Athenian system, Ober's took a different, bolder tack, turning to sociological approaches for new ways of characterizing Athenian popular rule. Ober took issue with the sociologist Robert Michels' iron law of oligarchy, according to which all societies were run by an elite. For Ober, the Athenian case falsified Michels' hypothesis, since though Athens did have a social elite, it did not rule. Instead, the people did; and it is the insistence that the masses really were in charge in classical Athens that has had a lasting legacy, even if the way Ober went about showing this (through an analysis of the way elite politicians shaped their speeches to conform with democratic ideology) has worn less well.

Loren J. Samons II, *What's Wrong with Democracy? From Athenian Practice to American Worship*. University of California Press, 328pp.

When Grote published his monumental history, almost nobody believed that the ancient Athenian system was anything more than mob rule. Almost two centuries later, thanks to the careful work of Finley, Hansen, Ober, and many other scholars besides, we now see ancient democracy in a different light. But the danger now is that our view of Athenian popular rule has become uncritically adulatory. This is what makes Loren Samons' 2007 intervention so valuable. Samons is author of a number of specialist works on technical aspects of Athenian history (notably imperial finances), but here he turns his hand to a more accessible style of writing. The result is a vigorous and sometimes polemical

critique of much current work in the field. Though most readers will find something to disagree with here (and some readers will find a lot to disagree with), Samons' writing is always clear, and his arguments always considered. Curiously enough, perhaps the most lasting impression left by this book is the interest and importance of the Athenian democratic experience and the resources it can offer for projects of widely different political casts. *A*

A Philosophical Friendship

Brooke Allen

Professor of Literature
Bennington College

There have been many famous philosophical friendships. Political scientist Dennis C. Rasmussen lists some of the most important: Socrates and Plato; Plato and Aristotle; Bentham and Mill; Erasmus and More; Heidegger and Arendt; Marx and Engels; Sartre and de Beauvoir; Whitehead and Russell; Emerson and Thoreau. (He might have added Rousseau and Diderot, though that one ended badly.) But as Rasmussen points out, the great age gap between Plato and Socrates, and between Plato and Aristotle, made these relationships closer to those of mentor and protégé than to friendships between equals. In terms of influence, depth of thought and true intimacy between the two parties, Rasmussen posits that the alliance between David Hume (1711-76) and Adam Smith (1723-90), the two greatest figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, was the most momentous of all philosophical friendships, and he celebrates the two men's interconnectedness and the joint impact they made on the modern world in his intelligent and beautifully written new book, *The Infidel and the Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship That Shaped Modern Thought*.

The claim implicitly made in the book's subtitle could be challenged. Hume and Smith *helped* to shape modern thought, certainly, but did they shape it on their own? Plenty of their contemporaries and near-contemporaries can fairly be said to have had a hand in this shaping, including Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Franklin, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Madison. But Hume and Smith, both individually and through their joint attempt to create a new, all-inclusive "science of man," can be seen to have lit fires that still burn vigorously. Jürgen Habermas claimed that the Enlightenment is an unfinished project, and that statement is never more true than when applied to the works of these two thinkers. Hume, widely believed to be the greatest philosopher to have written in English, is still read by many, and with great pleasure—the fact that he wrote before philosophy (thought) gave way to "philosophy" (an academic discipline with a professional jargon that is largely opaque to the general reader) has much to do with his continuing popularity. But his radically skeptical position, when taken to its logical extension, is terrifying; indeed, it terrified even him, rendering him "affrighted and confounded" when he first followed its logic

in his youth, while engaged on his *Treatise of Human Nature*. There exists no "I," he concluded, no coherent self, certainly no "soul" in the Christian sense of the term; all we can really claim to be is a series of perceptions. Nor is there any reason, other than wishful thinking, to believe that there is a God. While not defining himself as an atheist—he said he was too skeptical to take that dogmatic position—neither was he a theist of any description. Obviously, these two existential absences, the absence of a God and of a self, are frightening. Therefore, while paying lip service to Hume's intelligence and his mastery of Augustan prose, most of his readers have stopped short of the final abyss; they entertain his speculations while remaining safely within their own belief systems, which tend to include a metaphysical or at least "spiritual" element and a firm belief in the reality, and even the significance, of their own identities.

and the historian William Robertson agreed: "your Book must necessarily become a Political or Commercial Code to all Europe." In the next century, an eminent historian judged that "looking at its ultimate results, [it] is probably the most important book that has ever been written." A modern author has given his opinion that *Wealth of Nations* "may be the one book between Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* that actually, substantially, and almost immediately started improving the quality of human life and thought."

But in 1776 there was no such discipline as economics. Smith, like Hume, classified himself under the broad rubric of "philosopher," and like Hume he essayed throughout his career, from his early *Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries* (unpublished until after his death) to the 1759 landmark *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* to *Wealth of Nations*, to create a wide-ranging science of man, built

Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (published in 1776, the year of Hume's death) is perhaps the most lastingly influential book to come out of the Enlightenment.

Smith's intellectual career was strongly influenced by and closely allied with that of Hume, though he is now famous for something very different: he is best known as the father of economics. His *Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (published in 1776, the year of Hume's death) is perhaps the most lastingly influential book to come out of the Enlightenment. Smith's contemporaries were immediately aware of its importance, and correctly estimated its value to posterity. Scottish professor Hugh Blair wrote Smith that "your work ought to be, and I am perswaded will in some degree become, the Commercial Code of Nations,"

on empirical Lockean principles. As a professor in Edinburgh he lectured on subjects as various as ethics, jurisprudence, and rhetoric, and wrote essays on the development of language and the history of astronomy; later, moving to the University of Glasgow, he occupied first a chair in logic, then, for twelve years, in moral philosophy. The social sciences as we know them today had not yet been defined; there were no chairs in psychology, sociology, anthropology, or economics—it was all philosophy. The age of specialization was just beginning to dawn, and both Hume and Smith were engines of its arrival. In their own time they were what was then known

as moral philosophers. To posterity they would be, respectively, a philosopher and an economist. If Hume had been born a couple of centuries later, indeed, he might have decided to go into psychology rather than academic philosophy, for like John Locke before him he was particularly fascinated by the workings of the human mind.

Smith and Hume were intellectual equals, in other words, and they were like-minded. Hume was the elder by twelve years, and he began his writing career early in life, so that by the time Smith was a student at Oxford (1740-46) he was already a confirmed Humean, though the two men were not to meet until 1749. Like many of his contemporaries, Smith was not impressed by the education on offer at Oxford: universities, he later wrote (always excepting his beloved Glasgow) were often "sanctuaries in which exploded systems and obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection, after they had been hunted out of every other corner of the world." (I must admit that when I attended graduate school in the late twentieth century, it exactly fit this description.) True to academic narrow-mindedness, outraged dons stormed the young Smith's room as he sat engrossed in Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, and confiscated the godless volume.

The work Smith himself composed at Oxford, *The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries* (three related essays), was very much in sympathy with Hume's ideas as laid out in the *Treatise*. Like Hume, he downplayed the role of reason in human behavior, and stressed the importance of habit, custom, and the passions. Like Hume, he showed suspicion of intellectual "systems." And again like Hume, he treated religion and its rise in anthropological rather than metaphysical terms. Like *The Wealth of Nations* decades later, *Principles* was an uncommonly secular treatise. "Nothing that Smith says rules out the possibility of there actually being an ordered world or an intelligent designer, of course," Rasumussen remarks, "but the whole work has a distinctly deflationary character, providing unflattering psychological and sociological explanations for beliefs that were widely assumed to emanate from reason if not from God himself."

It might be appropriate here to point out the significance of Rasmussen's title, *The Infidel and the Professor*. Hume, of course, was the Infidel—"the Great Infidel," as he came to be called. He quickly recovered from the affright and confoundment of his early glimpse at a godless world, and began to revel in his infidelity, thoroughly enjoying his power to offend the pious, for whom he entertained scant respect. He was also well aware that the success of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, his *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, and his tremendously popular six-volume *History of England*—which would stand for more than a century as the standard history of the nation—had something to do with the religious skepticism manifested, and often flaunted, throughout his works. He once told a friend that a "Tincture of Deism" often served to increase sales of a book since "the Clamor, which it raises, commonly excites Curiosity, & quickens the Demand. The Book is much rail'd at and much read." His chapter on miracles in the *Enquiry*, his essays "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" and "The Immortality of the Soul," *The Natural History of Religion*—all these became bywords for scandalous impiety. An attempt was even made to excommunicate Hume from the Scottish Kirk (even though he was not actually a member of it). The *History of England* had made Hume a rich man, and from the security of his independent position: he railed cheerfully at what he considered the intellectual fraud inherent in religious systems of every description. "Examine the religious principles, which have, in fact, prevailed in the world," he

An atheist in the eighteenth century was regarded with something like the horror that a sexual predator garners in the twenty-first.

wrote at the end of *The Natural History of Religion*. "You will scarcely be persuaded, that they are any thing but sick men's dreams: Or perhaps will regard them more as the playsome whimsies of monkies in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being, who dignifies himself with the name of rational."

An atheist in the eighteenth century was regarded with something like the horror that a sexual predator garners in the twenty-first. It was a very brave man who was willing to declare himself an atheist. A number of the radical French *philosophes* were eager to do so—in those salons, in fact, atheism was quite the fashion, despite the fact that the Catholic Church exercised a much tighter stranglehold on France than the Church of England did on England or the Presbyterian Kirk on Scotland. By contrast, Anglo-Saxons, with hardly any exceptions, were reluctant to destroy their reputation with the public, or their chances at political power, social influence, academic employment and nearly every other good thing in life. While Hume claimed he was not an atheist, it's clear that he judged the probability of there being a God to be very, very slim. Other closet atheists of the period, I suspect, were Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. (Hume got on very well with Franklin, unsurprisingly.) And Adam Smith, the Professor, is another possibility—though he was far too discreet and far too dependent on academic appointments to air such dangerous views publicly. He also, unlike Hume, feared notoriety.

Smith went to considerable pains to protect his private papers from the gaze of posterity. He instructed his executors to burn them after his death, which they did, and he was not a prolific letter-writer in any case: though Hume was his "dearest friend" (an epithet each man used when writing to the other, but to no one else), only fifteen letters from Smith to Hume survive, as opposed to forty-one in the other direction. Nor do any other very personal communications remain: Smith was a bachelor who lived with his mother until her death only six years before his own, and he is not known even to have had any significant amorous interludes. As Rasmussen says, "Smith's biographers frequently lament that he seems to have gone out of his way to make things difficult for them." And it's highly likely that he did just that.

"Long reflection on Smith's friendship with Hume cannot help but push one's interpretation [of his religious beliefs] toward the skeptical end of the spectrum," Rasmussen concludes. For one thing, there's the frequency with which Hume joked about religion in his letters to Smith, in a tone that would have surely offended Smith if he were likely to be offended by such things; but as there was never any real breach between the friends, he can't have been offended. Typical of this sort of banter is Hume's recommendation that Smith read Voltaire's newly published *Candide*: it "is full of Sprightliness and Impiety," he wrote, "and is indeed a Satyre upon Providence, under Pretext of criticizing the Leibnitian System." As Rasmussen points out, it is "noteworthy that Hume seems to suppose that *Candide*'s impiety would serve to recommend it to Smith." Such examples of Hume's apparent confidence that Smith would agree with him on these matters pop up frequently in his

letters. Noting that several bishops had voiced approval of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, for instance, Hume quipped that "you may conclude what Opinion true Philosophers will entertain of it, when these Retainers to Superstition praise it so highly."

And then there is *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* itself. As Rasmussen notes, the book, though Humean, takes religious positions slightly different from those of Hume. Hume thought that religious belief actually increased people's fears, while Smith allowed that it might alleviate them. Hume believed that religious belief made people worse, while Smith thought that religion might in fact support morality. In *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith "suggests that religious beliefs and hopes often spring from what is best in us rather than what is worst."

Still, it is a remarkably secular document for its time. In its pages Smith, like Hume before him, decides that morality derives from our senses rather than from reason, and certainly not from some inner, God-given set of absolute standards. Morality is essentially a set of *habits* that cause society to run smoothly and easily. Justice and peaceableness, to name only two moral virtues, are virtues because they are utilitarian; they promote the well-being of all men in society. "Vices" are not, as a Christian might judge them, sins; they are habits that are detrimental to society, such as theft and violence. The rule of law is established not to impose an abstract moral code but to make life safer and pleasanter. In *Wealth of Nations,* Smith would go further and state that the rule of law was imposed principally to protect those with property from those who had none. According to these standards, religious belief, if it is beneficial (a proposition that of course Hume would challenge) exists *because* it is beneficial—it improves society.

When Smith referred to the deity in the pages of *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he used a standard deist formulation: "the author of Nature." Such references are infrequent, though, and when he revised the text for its sixth edition just a few months before his death in 1790, he played down any discussion of a deity significantly, even adding a few faintly mocking references to religious belief. Rasmussen wonders whether the changes are due to increased skepticism or diminished caution. The latter reason seems an inevitable conclusion: Smith now was old, a rich man, no longer beholden to universities or patrons. He would soon be dead, and had no further fear of offending the Establishment.

Hume and Smith's friendship strengthened and deepened throughout Hume's life, in spite of the fact that they seldom found themselves in the same place at the same time and that Smith was such a poor correspondent. Hume frequently urged Smith to relocate to Edinburgh, but Smith deemed Edinburgh "a very dissolute town" and spent most of his career in Glasgow, at that time a cleaner and more elegant place; in his native village of Kirkcaldy, where he composed *Wealth of Nations*; and in London, where he saw his works through the press. He would not settle in Edinburgh, in fact, until after Hume's death. He visited it often enough, however, to take an active part in its cultural life, and in 1754 he and Hume were founding members of the famous Select Society, which would include luminaries of the period such as Allan Ramsay, Hugh Blair, Adam Ferguson, Lord Kames, and William Robertson.

The influence of Hume's ideas on Smith's masterpiece is evident. Hume had discussed commerce and commercial policy extensively in both his *Political Discourses* and the *History of England*. Rasmussen judges the single most important passage in *Wealth of Nations* to be Smith's claim that "commerce and manufactures gradually introduced order

and good government, and with them, the liberty and security of individuals, among the inhabitants of the country, who had before lived almost in a continual state of war with their neighbors, and of servile dependency on their superiors. This, though it has been the least observed, is by far the most important of all their effects." Smith went on to add that "Mr. Hume is the only writer who, so far as I know, has hitherto taken notice of it." Perhaps not quite the first—Voltaire's *Letters on England* implicitly make the same claim—but Hume's examination of the subject went to the heart of what Smith was expressing.

Not that he agreed with Smith on everything. As Rasmussen indicates, Smith saw, much more clearly than Hume did, the drawbacks of commercial society, particularly the inevitable division of society into haves and have-nots. "Whenever there is great property, there is great inequality. For one very rich man, there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few supposes the indigence of the many." Neither did Smith share Hume's enthusiasm for the merchant class, whose interests, he was quick to point out, were *not* those of the general public.

Smith's devastating attack on mercantilism, in which he echoed many points made by Hume in *Political Discourses*, has much to teach us today. The mercantilist system that had reigned in England for two centuries had operated under the assumption, Smith wrote, that nations' interest "consisted in beggaring all their neighbors." "The very fact that he set out to investigate the source of the wealth of *nations* (in the plural)," Rasmussen comments, "shows just how deeply his entire mind-set diverged from that of the mercantilists. For Smith, trade is not a zero-sum game: France's gain need not be Britain's loss. On the contrary, both nations can benefit by trading with one another."

Hume lived long enough to enjoy his friend's greatest success—*Wealth of Nations* was published March 9, 1776—but only just. He was already suffering from the disease (probably colon cancer) that would soon kill him. In April, he saw Smith and made a request that put the discreet Professor in a very uncomfortable position. Some twenty-five years earlier, Hume had penned a masterpiece of impiety, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and had been touching it up ever since. He had been in no hurry to get it to the press, as it was truly unpublishable in the climate of the time, at least under his own name. In it, he attacked the "argument from design," the idea that the order we see in the world implies a wise and beneficent creator, and the first cause argument, in which we can trace events backwards through a string of causes to a first cause—God. He also tackled the question of theodicy (the paradox of evil existing in a world ruled by a beneficent God) in what can only be called a godless manner, and expressed doubts about the moral benefits of belief.

Of course he had written on these subjects before, but this was something new: "the combination of all these issues," writes Rasmussen, "into a single devastating—and entertaining—package. While nearly everything Hume wrote bears on religion in one way or another, usually to its detriment, in his published writings he had always refrained from marshalling all of his skeptical challenges at once, thereby appearing to leave some kind of refuge for the devout…The uniqueness of the *Dialogues* lies in its comprehensiveness, which leaves the pious reader no way out, no safe haven."

Smith was Hume's literary executor, and Hume now made the request that Smith publish the *Dialogues* after his death, which would probably be very soon. This Smith was unwilling to do; he feared the hue and cry that would inevitably break out upon the publication, and the onus that would settle

on him were it known he had had anything to do with the publication. He voiced these objections to Hume, who reluctantly assigned the task to others. Later scholars have called Smith's refusal to perform this task as an act of cowardice, but Rasmussen very sensibly begs to differ: all of Hume's friends had urged him not to publish, he points out, and of course Hume himself had refrained from doing so for a quarter century, and did not plan for it to hit the presses until he himself was in the grave.

Hume's death, like that of Voltaire two years later, became something of a test case for whether an infidel could die peacefully. Would he not panic when the end came and return to the bosom of the church? But no; Hume approached death with scarcely a ripple of trepidation. "Poor David Hume is dying very fast," wrote Smith to a mutual friend, "but with great chearfulness and good humour and with more real resignation to the necessary course of things, than any Whining Christian ever dyed with pretended resignation to the will of God." (Rasmussen points out that this sentence alone should settle any uncertainty about Smith's religious views.) One assumes that the "chearfulness" was genuine, but of course Hume *had* to die cheerfully; if he had not done so, he would more or less have negated all he had written. By dying as cheerfully as he had lived, Hume was demonstrating that religion was unnecessary to a happy and virtuous life.

James Boswell, who himself was terrified at the prospect of death, visited Hume to ascertain whether what he'd heard about his easy resignation was true; it appeared to be, and the younger man spread his account of the visit through the London intelligentsia. Hume did his own part toward publicizing his philosophic death by writing a brief autobiography, a seven-page screed that Rasmussen includes as an appendix. In the last letter he ever wrote, Hume sent it to Smith and asked him to publish it—this piece of writing, he assured his friend, contained nothing objectionable—and gave him "entire liberty to make what Additions you please to the account of my Life." In this last communication of their long alliance, he signed off with "Adieu My dearest Friend." Two days later, on August 25, 1776, he was dead.

Smith now did something as brave as publishing the *Dialogues on Natural Religion* would have been; he composed a supplement to Hume's *My Own Life* in the form of a letter to William Strahan, its publisher, in which he described the last four month's of the philosopher's life (the autobiography ended in April). This document, now known to us as the *Letter to Strahan*, was, in its way, as provocative as the *Dialogues*. In it Smith confirmed reports of Hume's dying cheerfulness; he also inserted a facetious sally of Hume's that offended many readers. Hume had imagined trying to put off Charon, the ferryman to Hades, by telling him about how much he still had to achieve on earth. "I might still urge, 'Have a little patience, good Charon, I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition.' But Charon would then lose all temper and decency. 'You loitering rogue, that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instance, you lazy loitering rogue.'" This harmless jest infuriated Christian readers, but Rasmussen shows us that in fact Smith had already toned it down; Hume's original plaint to Charon had been "Good Charon, I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the people; have a little patience only till I have the pleasure of seeing their churches shut up, and the Clergy sent about their business."

Smith's greatest tribute to his friend, at the end, was also in the *Letter to Strahan*, and

it also enraged the pious. It is the letter's conclusion: "Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." As Smith's contemporaries, educated in the classics, would have recognized, this was a nod to Plato's epitaph on Socrates at the end of the *Phaedo*, and it was written for similar reasons: to absolve the departed philosopher, who had also been accused of refusing to recognize the gods recognized by the state, from allegations of corrupting the morals of the people. Smith's *apologia* created an uproar (one can read an amusing account of the indignation among Samuel Johnson's circle in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*); a vocal reaction against it was led by high churchmen. One writer on Scottish affairs tells us that the *Letter* made Smith "henceforth be regarded as an avowed sceptic, to the no small regret of many who revered his character and admired his writings."

Smith affected surprise at the brouhaha, claiming that "a single, and as, I thought a very harmless Sheet of paper, which I happened to Write concerning the death of our late friend Mr Hume, brought upon me ten times more abuse than the very violent attack I had made upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain [*Wealth of Nations*]." But he never retracted it, nor made any apology. The letter survives as the ultimate, heartfelt affirmation of one of the most productive friendships the world has ever known. ▲

Dennis C. Rasmussen, *The Infidel and the Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship That Shaped Modern Thought*. Princeton University Press, 336pp., $30 cloth.

The Palate of Nations

Diane Purkiss

Fellow and Tutor of Keble College, Oxford
Professor of English Literature,
University of Oxford

All individuals have their own food history: the fish and chips eaten in the rain on a Saturday night, the toast soldiers and soft-boiled egg that was supposed to be a cure for any human illness, the birthday cake shaped like Buzz Lightyear… And all such individual food histories are known to be part of larger food histories: the fish and chips understood as a traditional part of a seaside holiday; the soft-boiled egg the kind only grandma could make, from an egg from her own hens; the birthday cake that had to be capable of impressing those who had previously eaten similarly shaped cakes. However little we control, food is an area where we can exercise our wills and our desires, and also grab a little piece of our family history, our ethnic history, our planetary history.

Yet the notion that we choose freely what we eat is probably an illusion. The poor have never eaten well, having little choice but to devour food contaminated either with bacteria or with ingredients designed to increase the profits of those who made it, and the reason more people are eating badly now is rising poverty levels. All that has changed in the developed world is that the poor can now meet their daily calorie needs, though doing so usually involves not meeting other nutritional goals. And yet writers like Stephen Le and Michael Pollan still write of a world in which everybody ate like an Italian urban bourgeois gentleman. This never happened. During most of the past, the poor lurched from a diet in which they did not get enough fat or protein to one in which they got plenty of fat and plenty of calories, but not enough protein and far too much simple sugar. Even today, poor people can still dance from one such diet to another. Many reading this might say that it's cheaper to buy green beans than cookies; true, but even a pound of green beans will not meet daily calorie needs, and green beans cannot be eaten raw in vast quantities. They require a saucepan and heat source in order that the nutrients they provide can be adequately accessed. They require time. They require planning. Cookies are a convenience food; a pound of cookies will provide more than the calorie needs of an individual, and will provide them straightaway, without additional equipment or preparation. The poor are not stupid; they are making choices. Le's way of thinking has a long and tragic history. Just before the First World War, many kindly women did their best to get the English poor to prepare porridge instead of relying on bread. The problem was that the poor lacked a reliable heat source, a large saucepan, and the time required to watch the porridge boil; they also lacked milk, butter, cream, and sugar to make it palatable. One woman's husband told her that if she served him that slop again, he would throw it at her.

Like Michael Pollan, Le offers a series of rules based on evolutionary biology. These are devoid of surprises: keep moving, don't sit around watching television. Eat less meat and dairy when young, eat "traditional" cuisine, which turns out to mean the

Mediterranean diet, American southern, Japanese, or Australian aboriginal. Eat sustainably, and get safe germ and parasite exposure while cooking your food at low heat and thus avoiding the tasty, crispy markers of caramelization. Avoid Parmesan, too, and pancakes, and waffles, and cookies, and doughnuts, hamburgers, and soft drinks. No bacon. No sautéed tofu. But remember, fad diets don't work—except the fad that is being promulgated here.

Writers still write of a world in which everybody ate like an Italian urban bourgeois gentleman. This never happened.

It's probably no coincidence that these rules ensure that the relishes the poor use to liven up carbohydrates are the very things stigmatized as bad. It was ever thus: William Cobbett railed against tea as a wasteful sign of bad housekeeping. Le does acknowledge that his own brown rice diet in postgraduate days made him feel ill, but neglects to mention that it too was once seen as a cure for all ills. The trouble is that when you read the text it turns out that these rules are based on a series of theories about human evolution and biology, rather than certainties. Do we really have to eat acorns just because our ancestors did, given how difficult it is to prepare them? Do we have to eat durian, or should we in fact avoid them because they contain tryptophan—or should we note that turkey meat contains tryptophan, and is easier to produce and import than the durian? Are humans really hardwired to crave meat? If so, how can we explain the rise of vegetarianism and veganism in the past 50 years? And do these really endanger male reproductivity?

The underlying problem here is the assumption that our food choices are or should be dictated by health concerns. To be sure, this notion is as old as printed books and perhaps older. As Ken Albala revealed many years ago, Renaissance thinkers were also plagued by dietary advice: warm and bitter foods were vital for sexual prowess, while cucumbers would have a disastrously depressing effect on male libido. We laugh now, but there's every chance that in 500 years people will find our dietary rules just as comical. Moreover, there has never been much evidence that human beings do choose their foods as if they were patented medicines. Instead, most of us choose food from a repertoire made familiar to us through upbringing, and also choose novelties that we hope will give us pleasant surprises. It is unlikely that many people buying a box of doughnuts are under any illusion that this product is healthy. Telling them that it is not healthy is therefore very unlikely to change their behavior. One reason why such advice on its own seldom works is that evolution actually tells us that sugar is good for us.

An alternative kind of food culture is offered by *The Potlikker Papers*, in which the last 60 years of southern food are traced to the many ethnicities that contributed to them. Potlikker ("pot liquor") is the water left in part after greens or beans have been boiled in it. Science has caught up with folk wisdom, and it's now well understood that the vitamins and minerals are most likely left in the water, not in the solids. The author is in charge of the Southern Foodways Alliance, which magisterially seeks to advance the claims of southern food as a properly American cuisine, crafted from local and authentic materials, a rival to Milan. John T. Edge shows that conversations about food offer ways to

grasp the bigger truths about race and identity in the south. A particular highlight is his account of Georgia Gilmore, an unsung heroine of the Civil Rights movement, who baked cakes to raise money for the bus protests, baked goods that embodied freedom. Elsewhere, he points out that the association between black slave women and food was far from freeing. Black cooks were meant to work for love, including love of their white charges. They did indeed work for love; not love of white children, but of their own families.

This is really a book about race. When we get Dylann Roof and Paula Deen on the same page, we get it. (You can't go wrong in gourmet circles giving Paula Deen a poke in the eye. You can't go wrong in antiracist circles, either. She is a soft target, in every respect.) Many of Deen's dishes were really the creations of uncredited black cooks, Edge explains. Black men and women made food under economic duress even in the 21st century, in chicken houses and on killing floors. In the tomato fields of Florida, yearly wages were as low as $17,000, while a gourmet food culture was developing and mom-and-pop restaurants were disappearing in favour of white tablecloth versions of spruced-up traditional southern foods. The inequalities became more rather than less savage. The same effect is visible from Sean Brock's cookbook *Heritage*. Cosily headlining one recipe "My sister's chocolate éclair cake", Brock announces "the version I grew up on included store bought Graham crackers, Jell-O pudding mix, and Cool Whip… My version uses Anson Mills Graham flour and homemade vanilla pudding and whipped cream." Of course it does. The interesting question might be which is heritage? And for whom? As a Brit, I once hurt an American friend's feelings by saying that I loved the American culture of biscuits and chocolate gravy, and twenty foot tall concrete hotdog models. Clearly, I was meant to love Anson Mills Graham flour, and authenticate it as a proper European. But as a proper European, I'm wildly addicted to Biscoff spread and Hershey's butterscotch chips.

David Downie's A *Taste of Paris* overtly markets the American Paris story as a love affair with authenticity not usual in the United States. There is never any end to [this] Paris, as Hemingway almost said. But then things have declined, as they always have. Even Hemingway struggled to find the real Paris. In his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway wrote "we ate dinner at Madame Lecomte's restaurant on the far side of the island. It was crowded with Americans and we had to stand up and wait for a place. Some one had put it in the American Women's Club list as a quaint restaurant on the Paris quais as yet untouched by Americans, so we had to wait forty-five minutes for a table." So clearly we need Downie's help, or maybe the help of Patricia Wells or David Lebovitz or some memory of Hemingway eating oysters at Brasserie Lipp, but not actually Lipp now because it's a chain. What won me over to Paris—and Downie too, it seems—was the stubborn particularity of bistros like Ambassade d'Auvergne alongside the Gault-Millau 19-rated gourmet temples like Alain Ducasse. Downie wants to know what it is in Paris's history that allows it to be a temple of remarkable food to this day. He probably doesn't want to be told that it is the American Women's Club list.

He leaves few stones unturned; the book is a rollicking tour of the history of Paris from the Parisii and their Roman conquerors through trend-setting French monarchs like Marie de Medici and Louis XIV, and also looks at nineteenth-century gastronomy through the writings of Brillat-Savarin, Curnonsky and Careme. He is oddly concerned with the history of the food of the great, the 1%, when it's actually

the food of ordinary people that he loves. Careme is the very last person to explain why *blanquette de veau* is such an iconic dish in the bistros he adores. When he does find real bistros, he is chagrined to discover that they are full of Americans, who are also seeking the real Paris. Where are the Parisians? They are probably eating Moroccan or Vietnamese food rather than the bistro food that they could make at home. As always, the young are to blame somehow; Downie doesn't talk to many young, but my daughter's friend, a girl who attends a high school in the 5th *arrondissement*, says Parisians are still fanatic about good food, but much more interested in other ethnicities than in their own. (Just like Americans, in fact.) This continues an older pattern. Not long ago, everyone in Paris saw him- or herself as an immigrant from deep France. Immigrants from Normandy and Lyons and Nîmes brought their own foodways, and these were reinforced by the traditional Parisian trips back to deep France each year. Even inside the French gourmet tradition, deep France is a felt presence. At Michel Bras' restaurant in Aubrac, the *aligot* was made by his mother, then in her 80s. French haute cuisine is a crown atop a real princess. Parisians are also much more ferociously local than the tourists. On the Île Saint-Louis, there is a baker at each end of the island, and nobody ever dreamt of going somewhere other than their nearest. Why would you? It is this that keeps the food culture alive, the expectation that you are known, that you say *bonjour monsieur* on entry, and then greet the other customers. Roaming among the Roman masonry, Downie learns less than he might by standing in a local bakery for an hour talking to the baker about how and why good bread returned because an American called Steven Kaplan made it so. But Downie knows some things I don't. Next time I'm in the city of light, I'm off to St Eustache to see the charcuterie chapel.

Individuals as well as cities develop their own personal food cultures, and like cities, may move through different food cultures in a lifetime. Laura Shapiro investigates six women, showing just how upsetting individuated food can be. In theory, women own and control food, but in practice, their relationship with it is often difficult. Take Dorothy Wordsworth, the slender nature writer, who somehow became an obese and angry elderly woman. Dorothy moved from seeing food as something she prepared for others to a passionate greed for porridge. Often enough, food becomes a weapon in war between men and women, as it was in the Roosevelt White House. What better revenge could there be than constant servings of "Mexican eggs"—eggs on bananas atop cooked rice—to a wheelchair-bound man unable in those times to eat out? There was the shame, too, served up with the Mexican eggs. Understandably, guests complained, or left their food untouched. Eleanor's weapon in this war was the housekeeper, Mrs Nesbitt, punishing everyone with dried meat, cold gravy, and endless leftovers with white sauce, sometimes served on toast. Even that sounds wonderful once we have met Helen Gurley Brown, at war not with her family but with herself. "Dessert every night is that whole package of sugar-free diet Jell-O in one dish, with a dollop of peach, lemon, strawberry, or whatever, Dannon light yoghurt on top. 50 cals—heaven". When asked for a statement about feminism by Gloria Steinem, Helen tried her best: "I'm skinny!" she exclaimed.

Shapiro shows that food is about power, so it's interesting that Hitler and Lenin had a food taste in common: apple cake. In Anna von Bremzen's fascinating and terrifying parody of Julia Child's masterpiece, *Mastering the art of Soviet Cookery*, food involves a

series of compromises between hunger and the crushing dead hand of Soviet policy, in which food had to be utilitarian, mere fuel, bread alone—with one ounce of bread a day for the bourgeoisie. Like Hitler, Lenin paraded his own moderation, supposedly content with stale bread and weak tea, but his policies meant the loss of an entire food culture. Bourgeois chefs were replaced with people who could not cook at all. The Bolsheviks were urban, clueless about peasant realities, but they were good at making off with grain supplies and blaming their thefts on "greedy" peasants. They invented an entire class of tight-fisted peasants who could bear the brunt of official and popular disapproval, and named them kulaks.

The new regime branded the domestic kitchen reactionary. To eat as a family was "scientifically unsound." The daft policies weren't even efficient, except at killing. Five million people died in the famine of 1921, and worse was to come when a young Stalin launched his Five Year Plan for industrialisation. Collectivization was unleashed, and peasants were forced onto giant farms, which were meant to feed the new industrial proletariat. The farms were bitterly inefficient. The peasants fled to the towns in desperate search for food. By 1933, the Ukraine was in the grip of the worst man-made famine in history, causing the deaths of seven million people. There's now a word for it: the Holodomor. As desperate peasants tried to flee, government officials robbed their houses. The book kills appetite stone dead even while it rejoices in the absurdity and craziness of the people's creative ripostes. The best story is the one about the state *kobhka*, supposedly a Russian indigenous delicacy, but actually an imported frozen burger fried in oil, or the Eskimo pie, introduced as a Soviet creation, or German sausages rebranded as Soviet sausages, and, most incredible of all, Soviet *kornfleks*. Most of these were the creation of one Armenian businessman, a warm man whose sole failure was an effort to introduce a spicy aromatic condiment—ketchup—that could be kept in a home refrigerator. Stalin did not want people to buy refrigerators.

The Russians were to suffer even more when the Nazis invaded in 1941. The war in Leningrad made even pre-war conditions seem not too bad. Starving people ate bookbinding glue and the soil around sugar warehouses because it was sweet. To this city, von Bremzen's mother travelled to find her husband; for the rest of her life, she would eat like a starving wolf. All Russia got to know new kinds of food. *Balanda* was soup thickened with a handful of millet and flavoured with a horse bone. *Khleb* was a clay-like bread made from rye mixed with linseed cakes and sawdust. Tins of American pork were greeted like ambrosia. Soviet food policy was a failure in every way possible. It wasn't even successful in eradicating hierarchy; candies—cheap and nasty—became an incurable sign of status in a world where nothing tasted good. Gorbachev's efforts to discourage Russian vodka drinking struck similar snags in male enthusiasm and bonding. It's precisely when the cupboard is bare that everything that's left assumes vast importance.

What a relief to turn from the nightmare of Soviet cooking to the glorious thirteenth-century Syrian cookbook lovingly edited by Charles Perry. Post-classical cookbooks were first seen in Arab speaking lands in the tenth century. This one is not just a cookbook, but a meticulous record of meals consumed and rare ingredients imported: apricots, rose, clove, saffron, ambergris, quinces, barberries and tamarind; the names roll on like heady scents. There's so much to know and to savour, from the familiar *sambusak* pastries to the extraordinary recipe for a rotisserie chicken allowed to drip its juices onto a flat bread. But nowadays, I look sadly at my tin

of Aleppo spice because the souk where the ingredients were bought is ash. Nobody knows who wrote the thirteenth-century cookbook, but a good answer might be that it took a whole culture to create, though von Bremzen might remind us that such towering achievements can be sabotaged by really determined persecutions. We know how much the Syrians too have had to improvise of late. We don't know yet how many of them have died.

When a food culture has been taken from us, we can easily grow misty about its assembled integers. In her remarkable and searing *The Hungry Empire*, Lizzie Collingham reminds us of why this might be a mistake. For Collingham, the British Empire was a headlong hunting expedition, unsophisticated and primal. The British, like the Syrians, began by searching for spices, but there the resemblance ends. The Brits could not find the right routes through the oceans because the world was far bigger than they thought it was; instead, they stumbled across the Grand Banks, and then the coast of Massachusetts, and then the West Indies, gradually creating an empire made of sugar, cod, and eventually other shipped goods including tea and also grain from the American wheat belt. The national way of eating in Britain was made of the foods of others. In practice, what this meant was that the Kenyans were growing cash crops and not the food they themselves needed. When the Empire recognised this, they insisted that famine was simply normal for the primitive peoples they had colonised. The Bengal famine of 1943, in which Churchill left the Bengalis to starve, exemplified the policy that the British must be fed first. When Bisewar Chakrabati visited his home village in the Ganges Delta in 1943, the whole population seemed to be "moving silently towards death." In response, the government began rounding up the starving in Calcutta so that they could die out of sight in specialised camps, in an uncanny parallel to what other regimes were doing in Europe at the time. The poor in Bengal, in the Gambia, and across the Empire had given their food reserves to the mother country, which was to boast earsplittingly thereafter that it had stood alone against tyranny. The Empire's role in providing the British with cheap luxuries had a body count well before the Bengal famine, as Erika Rappaport's book *A Thirst for Empire* shows. Focusing solely on tea, and the use of profits from it to fund wars and fuel colonization, she also shows how the picture was completed by the promulgation of this innocuous drink as the natural beverage of English families. The British were seduced into giving passionate allegiance to a beverage made from a plant that could only grow in a climate completely unlike their own. Relentless marketing linked it to home, femininity, purity. Its image could also be spruced up to create a link to leisure and elegance. Its popularity is at last beginning to decline, though the tea plantations the British created are now sustained by demand from Indians, who under the Empire could not afford it.

All this is immensely informative, but it does rather take the pleasure out of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every story of food becomes a story of slavery, exploitation, famine, mass murder. This is entirely true, and it needs saying. But what are we to do? We have to go on eating. We cannot give up food as we might smoking. What can we eat without self-reproach? What can we drink without harm? While there are many experts eager to give us an answer based on health, what kind of answer can we give based on history?

I'm off to have lunch. Toasted home-made sourdough; Eric Kayser's recipe, flour from a local mill; English butter and Australian Vegemite. German silken tofu

and yoghurt, flavoured with Nielsen Massey Madagascan vanilla, now ridiculously expensive because Hersheys have begun using it, so combined with Seville orange juice and sucralose sweetener, topped with a sprinkling of home-made granola, made with honey and brown sugar and almonds and pumpkin seeds. It doesn't fit any food culture except my own. I don't think anybody else must eat this way or that it's a better way to eat. It's just what I happen to like. Ultimately, history leads us to taste and taste until we find what we love. ▲

Anya von Bremzen, *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing* (Broadway Books, 368pp., $16 paper)

Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* (Basic Books, 408pp., $32 cloth)

David Downie, *A Taste of Paris: A History of the Parisian Love Affair with Food* (St. Martin's Press, 304pp., $27 cloth)

John T. Edge, *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South* (Penguin, 384pp., $17 paper)

Stephen Le, *100 Million Years of Food: What Our Ancestors Ate and Why It Matters Today* (Picador, 320pp., $18 paper)

Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 568pp., $40 cloth)

Scents and Flavors: A Syrian Cookbook, ed. and trans. Charles Perry (NYU Press, 352pp., $30 cloth)

Laura Shapiro, *What She Ate: Six Remarkable Women and the Food That Tells Their Stories* (Viking, 320pp., $27 cloth)

The Virgin, the Dynamo, and the Tent*

The Redpath Chautauqua and Medievalism

In memory of Professor Jeremy Du Q. Adams

Bruce Brasington

Professor of History
West Texas A&M University

What motivated citizens of Colorado Springs in 1896 to build a "medieval-themed" float for their Sunflower Carnival?[1] Had they been inspired by romantic tales of chivalry and castles? No doubt. However, might there have been other reasons?

Perhaps they had visited a Chautauqua. From the 1870s to the 1920s, the Chautauqua's circuits of speakers and performers shaped mainstream American culture and society. While major cities like Chicago were sometimes destinations, it was generally in small and medium-sized American towns where the tents were pitched and church halls booked. Among the most successful was the Midwest's Redpath Chautauqua, whose posters and brochures have been digitized by the University of Iowa.[2] These display not only the picturesque Middle Ages suggested by our float, but also adaptations of medieval subjects for modern audiences advancing Progressive, unsentimental, agendas.

Having begun in the 1870s as a popular, but academically rigorous, alternative to university education, Chautauqua offered the opportunity for higher, and broader, education to the aspiring middle class. Medieval topics appear from time to time in its curriculum. The summer 1887 session of the "Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts" offered courses on "Beginning Old English," alongside "Elements of Hebrew," "Comparative Philology and Ancient (Classical Languages)," and "Beginning Sanskrit." Given the early connections of the Chautauqua with Methodism and seminary preparation, aspiring pastors and teachers likely would have eagerly attended such courses.

1 http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/25871/rec/7 accessed on 15 August 2016.

2 *Travelling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, at http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/tc/index.php accessed on 20 May 2016. Unless otherwise indicated, all examples in this essay come from this site.

H. S. Poley (Horace Swartley). Sunflower Carnival, Colorado Springs, El Paso County, Colorado. August 1896. Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, P-2324.

By the 1890s, the Chautauqua became less overtly academic. More and more it resembled a travelling circus, or perhaps better put, a secular revival, where participants could be enlightened and entertained. To reach a broader audience, the Chautauqua became more commercial and engaged with current events. The Middle Ages were Americanized. One speaker, Lee Francis Lybarger, railed against, among other things, the origins of indirect taxation and the tariff in the Middle Ages. Others worried that modern society, undermined by vices such as drinking, might be regressing back to the "Dark Ages." Among many moralizing prophets we encounter the Catholic priest and reformer, J.M. Cleary, who paired his lecture "The Folly of the Drink Habit: A Trip Through Europe" with "The Fifteenth Century" and "The Dark Ages."

Some speakers did go beyond passing references to the Middle Ages, and Dante proved a popular subject. James Freeman Jenness, a graduate of Stanford (as his advertisements proudly proclaim) lectured on Dante, "The Voice of Ten Silent Centuries." His stereopticon "illustrated with charts the conception of the universe that obtained in Dante's time." No doubt, he contrasted Dante's cosmos with a modern, scientific view. Such juxtaposition of the dark and modern ages would remain popular for decades to come. Among the more positive views of the Florentine poet was a lecture by Dr. D. F.

Fox, who spoke at Beloit College in 1909 on "Dante: The Torchbearer of the Middle Ages." He declared, "Dante owed his greatness to the fact that he was exiled and forced to wander, for stern necessity is the secret of success…Had Dante remained in Florence, he might have been a good alderman, but the world would probably not have had a Divine Comedy." Perhaps Dr. Fox saw Dante as a disciple of Roosevelt's "strenuous life." A few years later, Clarence Locke Miller could pair Dante with Shakespeare to illustrate "The Democracy of Achievement." One suspects Dante embodied the values of self-help, practicality, and boosterism soon to be mocked in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*.

Even more popular was Joan of Arc, easily the most beloved, and adaptable, medieval figure for American audiences. Dana C. Johnson's lecture impressed a reviewer who, writing in the Lafayette, Indiana *Morning Journal*, described "an intensely interesting recital of the tragic life of the warrior maiden of France." The reviewer added that "so tense was the interest of his auditors that they unconsciously leaned forward in their seats and at the climax a sympathetic sigh escaped." In a magic-lantern presentation, B. R. Baumgart took his audience "In the Footsteps of the Maid of Orleans." A particularly unusual offering came from DeWitt B. Lucas, "The Man who introduces you to yourself through your handwriting." A specialist in "graphology," which determined personality through handwriting analysis, Lucas lectured on various historical figures, among them Joan, whose signature revealed "a pure clairvoyant side to her nature and perception, which probably accounted for her 'voices.'"

On the other hand, some speakers devoted lectures either entirely or in part to Savonarola, hardly a medieval figure lending himself to romance. Perhaps the austere Florentine monk seemed instead a progressive before his time, a type of monastic muckraker challenging hidebound institutions and the ignorant masses. Edward Howard Griggs lectured on "Savonarola: The Moral Prophet of the Renaissance," along with St. Francis of Assisi, Erasmus, and Giordano Bruno, the last described as "The Martyr of Science." Like Renaissance Florence, Middle America could prove, however, a tough crowd. A rare, negative review informs us that "Reverend Frank W. Gunsaulus' morning sermon was greatly appreciated but his afternoon lecture on 'Savonarola' failed to hold the vast crowd."

We also cannot escape the subject of race. Orators traced in various ways the triumphant march of the Anglo-Saxons across the centuries. Louis J. Alber asked "Who Were the Angles and the Saxons?" The attorney and aspiring politician Sidney Tapp took an unapologetically Whig view of English legal history, both in his book, *The Story of Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, (1904) and later lecture "A Comparison of the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon Civilizations." To Tapp, the genius of the common law demonstrated racial superiority:

> The purpose of the writer has been to demonstrate from historical facts that the Anglo-Saxon race is the only race that has ever had a true conception of republican institutions or solved correctly the problem of self-government. In this connection, the writer has done his best to point out the oppressions of other schools of government, and at the same time to show, from historical information, the struggles of the people to dethrone the privileged classes and to obtain self-government, so that the American people may appreciate it in its original purity and simplicity.[3]

3 Sidney Tapp, *The Story of Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, preface. His treatment of the medieval period begins in earnest in chapter 7: "The Beginning of the Anglo-Saxon Ideas in England." *Magna Carta* had its own chapter (chapter 11).

Other speakers yoked the Middle Ages to eugenics. In 1911, Albert Edward Wiggan, "the Apostle of Efficiency," warned that that without "race improvement" either "Extermination or the Dark Ages await us." A decade later, David Starr Jordan, noted ichthyologist and president of Stanford, presented "The Inbred Descendants of Charlemagne."[4] While we do not know the lecture's contents, he did publish an article with the same title that traced the lineages of men such as Washington, Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee back to noble marriages in the early twelfth century. These medieval marriages, in turn, led back to Charlemagne and Alfred the Great, and their consequences for the twentieth century were profound:

4 A public intellectual, active in other causes such as the Sierra Club and the defense of Scopes in his 1925 trial, he had been president of Indiana University before coming to Stanford in 1891. He was, in every sense, the modern, Progressive. I thank Dr. Brian Ingrassia for helpful advice on Starr's career and influence.

> And every farmer of English lineage may boast of as much of the "germ plasm" of…Alfred, or Charlemagne as any royal household in Europe; reversedly (sic), plebian blood may be mingled with the "bluest", usually to the betterment of both. As a matter of fact, indeed, very few Englishmen or Americans of English origin are without royal blood; nor is it likely that the coat of arms of any king living does not conceal the bar sinister of the peasant.[5]

5 David Starr Jordan, "The Inbred Descendants of Charlemagne: A Glance at the Scientific Side of Geneology," *The Scientific Monthly* 13.6 (1921): 483.

Racial purity, not class, was what mattered. For all their differences in status and wealth, peasant and king came from the same stock; provided it remained pure, the beneficial effects of race cascaded down the centuries, from kings and nobles, to Theodore Roosevelt and your local grocer.

Speakers also enlisted Saint Joan in the cause of eugenics, contrasting her purity and noble character with modern decadence.[6] Edward Amherst Ott, "The Purposeful Orator," when not discussing "Why did congenital idiocy increase 150 percent in Norway in Ten Years?" could ponder "Why did Joan of Arc become a great military leader and the other French maidens stay at home?"

6 For example, Elisabeth Cocke, "Sex Hygiene," *The American Journal of Nursing* 12.5 (1912): 382–87 at 384, commends Joan as an example of steadfast chastity despite her military carerer.

The Middle Ages were also performed. Indeed, it is likely that artists outnumbered speakers along the Redpath Circuit. Some were truly unconventional, for example George E. Colby, who gave "chalk talks." Colby drew castles while telling "funny stories." In the 1930s, Dr. Harlan Tarbell, "world famous teacher of magicians," recounted the history of magic, including tales of medieval sorcerers.

The Middle Ages figured prominently in the Chautauquan theater. Everyman was a favorite. Perhaps audiences could identify with its emphasis on the individual's progress, in the face of worldly obstacles, towards a higher goal. We find a variety of performances, from dramatic readings to complete plays. The medieval morality play could also be adapted, like Joan of Arc and Savonarola, for modern audiences. For example, a woman could take the stage, a subversive take on the medieval story. This was the case with the recitals of *Everyman* by Maria Theresa Sheehan, whose performances for college and church audiences in the 1920s drew rave reviews. Reviewers particularly praised her elocution, though the local newspaper in Pontiac, Michigan also noted her ability to change "from grave to gay in the most accomplished manner." Whether or not she found a feminist response to her assumption of the medieval male protagonist we cannot say.

Even more contemporary was Walter Browne's *Everywoman*. While beset by many of the temptations that confronted her medieval male counterpart, Everywoman's goal, now set in the twentieth century, was no longer heaven but "her quest of love." Her modern adversaries were Flattery and "Nobody" (the latter, a male "Philosopher"), not Death; instead of Hell yawning before her, "The Great White Way" threatened her earthly ruin. As Browne explains:[7]

> It is not a sermon in disguise, neither is it a quixotic effort to elevate the stage. At the same time, it is hoped that the play may be found to contain some clean and wholesome moral lessons. Since the days of chivalry, when knights clashed steel for their lady-loves and went on crusades to prove their prowess, while they remained secluded in cloisters or in moated castles, womankind, of which the title role of this play is intended to be a type, has grown more self-assertive and more bold. To every woman who nowadays listens to flattery, goes in quest of love, and openly lays siege to the hearts of men, this play may provide a kindly warning.

Granted, such a search for romantic love was nothing if not conventional; at the same time, the privileging of a woman as the central character, combined with settings such as "New Year's Eve on Broadway," certainly made it relevant to its audiences.

Then there was Marjory Lacey:

> In presenting Miss Marjory Lacey in *Everywoman*, we feel that we are doubly fulfilling our obligation to the public; first in introducing an attractive, competent and worthy young artist; second, in providing a means by which the great masses of the people may listen to an artistic and forceful interpretation of the most wonderful play of the hour—a story that grips, that dispels the allurements of the stage and high life and one that every young person especially should hear.

7 Walter Browne, *Acting Version of Henry W. Savage's Everywoman. Her Pilgrimage in Quest of Love. A Modern Morality Play* (New York: H.H. Fly Company 1908), Introduction.. The play was subsequently filmed in 1919 by Paramount Pictures. See the *Internet Movie Database*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0010096/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 accessed on 16 September 2016.

Speaking to an age anxious about modernity and its vices, this version of *Everywoman* targets the youth. Its stage was the city, a dangerous place indeed. Based on the photographs in her brochure, Lackey's "interpretation" was certainly dramatic and earnest. Whether or not she ever suggested as well her personal understanding of romantic love—for she would eventually leave the stage to become the lifetime partner of Madesin Phillips, founder of the Business and Professional Women's Club of America—we do not know.

The Redpath's archives are filled with many more traces of the Middle Ages. Storytellers recounted fairy tales; we even hear of "Beowulf for Children." There are also extravagant theatrical productions like "The Miracle," which transformed the interior of a Chicago church into a medieval cathedral. Elsewhere, a dance troupe performed "The Dance of St. Francis." One wonders what parts of his life unfolded on the stage. Speakers also showed parents and teachers how their children could learn through "medieval games." Travelogues took Americans to places they would never visit; perhaps some, one hopes, held the castles and cathedrals in their memory and dreamed of a wider world. As late as the 1930s, puppet theaters, including one advertising its productions as "adult," a term with far different connotations then, regularly featured the life of Joan of Arc. One of my colleagues has asked me if her puppet would be burned at the end of every performance. I do not know. Finally, one can only speculate about what took place at the "Holy Grail Encampment" of a Chautauqua in rural Illinois.

In sum, most of the Redpath Chautauqua's medievalism, like the float in the Sunflower Carnival, was picturesque. As we have seen, however, it could also be moralizing and didactic, framing the medieval past in a glass darkened by racial prejudice, Social Darwinism, and scientism. These "uses" of the Middle Ages reflected the way Americans have long viewed the past, and still do today, when *Game of Thrones* has replaced the Chautauqua's podium and stage: either colorful but useless entertainment, or as an object lesson to praise or warn the present.

The heyday of the Chautauqua was also the age of Henry Adams's Dynamo, which he contrasted with the beautiful, but now seemingly irrelevant, stone Virgin of the medieval cathedral in his 1904 book *Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres*.[8] While I should like to think that at least a few visitors came away from the tents and meeting halls inspired to learn more, in a critical and scholarly way, about the medieval past, I am not sanguine.[9] Most of them likely welcomed their machine age, the triumph of the dynamo over the medieval Virgin, and did not yearn for the looming towers of Chartres. Now their Middle Ages seems, like the Chautauqua itself, no less distant and foreign: mere "cultural debris."[10] The smartphone has replaced the dynamo. The Virgin seems remote indeed.

8 Henry Adams, "The Dynamo and the Virgin (1909)," at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/HADAMS/eha25.html accessed on 20 May 2016. Adams' influence was considerable. For example, see Walter Henry MacPherson's Chautauqua lecture on "The Influence of the Virgin on the Glory of the Gothic," which he presented as part of a series of talks in the mid-1920s. 27 August 2016. MacPherson was a politically and socially active Universalist minister in Joliet, Illinois.

9 See Perry Miller, "The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines," in *The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 195-213.

10 A phrase taken from Russell Kirk, "Cultural Debris: A Mordant Last Word," in *The Intemperate Professor and Other Cultural Splenetics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 160-63.

That need not, however, be the final verdict. If the Redpath's lectures and performances of the Middle Ages strike moderns as quaint, unscholarly, and sometimes, downright repellent, at least culture came to the people. Why should that be any less true a century later? Yes, the orators and performers wanted to make a name and living, their impresarios and booking agents to gain a profit, the audiences, to experience moments of amusement and moral uplift; but at least culture, however distorted, came to the heartland. We should follow in their footsteps, not just with digital media but with community, performance, dialogue. Rather than lighting isolated screens, why not gather scholars and people together? Why not a new Redpath? Why not a medievalism freed from the prejudices of race, national glorification, and supposed progress? Perhaps such gatherings might even counter those would commodify the past, medieval or otherwise, and limit it to amusement. In doing that, we could express a view of humane learning centuries older than the Chautauqua, and already venerable when Hugh of St. Victor declared some eight centuries ago: "For not to know something is far different from not wanting to know something, since not to know is a weakness, but to detest knowledge is a perversion of the will." If the humanities are to shape, let alone survive, our distracted, despondent world, we would do well to both heed the advice of Hugh and, like our ancestors a century ago, leave the ivory tower, hit the road, and pitch our tents. Perhaps, then, Babbitt will not have the last word. And the Virgin will smile. A

The Best Books in Christian Historical Fiction

A fuller version of this essay, with additional references, is available on our website at athenaeumreview.org.

Darren J. N. Middleton

John F. Weatherly Professor of Religion
Texas Christian University

Johnny Cash, *Man in White: A Novel about the Apostle Paul*. HarperCollins, 226pp.

Originally published in 1986, after spending several years in a desk drawer, this Billy Graham-endorsed novel chronicles six years in the tumultuous, internally-divided life of Saul of Tarsus (c. 10 CE - c. 65). Cash follows the conventional portrait of Saul as a tenacious and murderously destructive pursuer of Jesus's early followers, those itinerant prophets and preachers who seemed desperate to keep Jesus's memory alive in the years immediately following his death. Part of this novel's strength lies in Cash's dexterous exploration of Saul's ardent ambition. He appears larger than life, like Cash himself, and, like Cash, he fights personal demons. Cash's interest in his other characters' motives—the hopes and fears of the aforesaid wandering charismatics, the Pharisees, High Priest Annas, as well as others in and around Jerusalem—also makes for an engaging and readable story. Life changes on the road to Damascus, however, and I think that Cash, the Man in Black, was drawn to Saul's illumination, because Saul's story stresses something Cash expressed in his life and art (certainly in *Cash: The Autobiography*) and this is the notion that even the 'worst' sinner can secure himself to heaven through Jesus of Nazareth, the Man in White.

Cash's drug-addled soul identified with the troubled Saul; and, Cash often described his own Damascene experience, which occurred in the fall of 1967 in Nickajack Cave on the Tennessee River, north of Chattanooga, in Pauline terms. This compelling novel not only delves into Saul's conversion, it draws on the theological language of Paul's later letters, showing how far and to what extent the Apostle to the Gentiles influenced (and continues to influence) Christianity's vocabulary of faith.

Jostein Gaarder, *Vita Brevis: A Letter to St. Augustine*. Phoenix House, 164pp.

Gaarder is a contemporary Norwegian writer, best known for *Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy*, and in *Vita Brevis* he impishly invites the reader to ponder the authenticity of a letter that he finds and then buys from a used bookstore in Argentina's capital city, Buenos Aires. Written in Latin, the enigmatic epistle purports to be from the fourth-century pen of Floria Aemiliathe, St. Augustine's discarded lover, yet Gaarder is initially skeptical, so he photocopies it before mailing the original to the Curia in Rome. Gaarder hopes the Catholic Church's scholars will scrutinize and then confirm the letter's contents. But the Vatican never replies. We are left, therefore, with Floria's

story, an impassioned rewriting of her relationship with the Bishop of Hippo (354-430), perhaps the most enduring theological influence on the Western, Latin-speaking church.

Floria emerges from her work as an intellectual. Her letter references Greco-Roman myths and philosophies, for example, and she seems intensely cognizant of the *Confessions*, Augustine's account of his early life. Augustine started his memoir in 391, and this ancient story of someone who wrestled incessantly with his own limitations still has something valuable to say to modern readers. *Confessions* is an enthralling book. It tracks the journey of a man with a restless intellect traversing different thought-terrains, like Manichaeism and Neo-Platonism, and it showcases a soul gifted to grasp its own tiny tale as illustrative of creation's much bigger story—the dramatic fall into disarray, and then the radical conversion to the love of God and return to harmony.

Floria's fascinating letter attests to Augustine's personal and cosmic narrative, and she sees her ex-lover as an example of faith's alliance with reason, yet Floria never flinches from asking Augustine to explain why he rejected her, and why he appeared to think a woman's body posed problems for, and made her subordinate to, men. Floria questions the gendering of Christian doctrine, in other words, and she mistrusts the usefulness of those thinkers—like Augustine—who blended the Gospel and Greek philosophy to form ideas about reason and rationality that reflected a bias against women, principally smart women like Floria. *Vita Brevis* hints at the need for Christians to work hard to transcend gendered hierarchies in the church, and I suspect it is fair to say that it gestures toward a proto-feminist theology that carries the potential to change the way we think as well as tell the other half of an important story.

Mary Sharratt, *Illuminations: A Novel of Hildegard von Bingen*. Mariner Books, 288pp.

A girl is playing with wooden dolls in her Bermersheim backyard when an orb floats out of the sunlight and catches her eye, yet it vanishes before she grasps it, like the butterfly escaping the killing jar. Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) is five years old. And her mother is horrified; good children do not see heavenly objects, she says, but the orbs repeatedly return, hurtling by Hildegard's head, thrumming with angelic music. God seldom spares Hildegard. The visions seldom go away. And the inventive theology as well as difficult life that proceeds out from such visions pulsates at the heart of Sharratt's celebrated story. The winner of the 2013 Nautilus Gold Award, *Illuminations* spirits us into the German mystic's troubled, twelfth-century environment, and, as an example of Christian historical fiction, it invites us to take notice, not so much of the orbs but of Hildegard's full-bodied, animated faith—the same faith that caught the eye of Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, when he named her a Doctor of the Church.

Hildegard was the tenth child born to a noble family, and tradition obliged her parents to offer Hildegard as a tithe to the church at an early age. *Illuminations* captures the heartbreak and loneliness that followed from this decision to render her an anchorite. Jutta von Sponheim, another religious recluse, shares a cell with Hildegard for thirty or so years, during which time Hildegard sharpens the skills that eventually set her apart as a polymath. Sharratt's heroine is never more herself than when she is at play in the fields of botany, theology, music, poetry, pharmacology, prayer, drama, vinification, financial management, and anti-patriarchal activism. The unusual visions of luminous

substances continue, with each occurrence becoming more intense than its antecedent, and Sharratt's provocative as well as descriptive prose renders Hildegard's ecstatic experience in ways both mysterious and terrifying, even if one senses that such revelations emphasize those dimensions of the divine character that should be brought into contemporary theological discussion.

Hildegard's revelations of the Feminine Divine, where God is imaged as a mother, together with multiple and different visions of divine immanence in the natural world, receive considerable coverage in this novel and, in the end, they empower Sharratt to compellingly recover and then reassert the link between God, creation care, and maternal kind-heartedness for those pushed out to life's edges. One finishes this story, then, and one senses that a future hope for women religious lies in mining the motherlode of the Christian past.

Douglas Bond, *Luther in Love*. Inkblots Press, 300pp.

Historical fiction often serves as an educational as well as imaginative point of entry into a particular period. *Luther in Love* is all this and more. Written in adroit prose and moving at a rapid, appealing pace, Bond's latest novel uses the ingenious device of a private memoir, penned by Martin Luther's wife, Katharina von Bora, as a way to engage our theological sensibilities and push them past dates, Diets, and papal Bulls. Flesh-and-blood characterization is Bond's specialty, and he has published at least six other novels in this genre, so it will come as no surprise that he never once flinches from a balanced or rounded portrait of the Reformation's principal architect. A former Augustinian friar and a professor of Holy Scripture at the University of Wittenberg, Luther (1483-1546) was an obdurate yet assiduous man, at war with his emotions before finding peace, like Augustine before him, in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Luther took from Paul the idea that salvation is free gift, not an effort, and that good works are not a requirement for redemption, but the result of loving God because God first loved humankind. Bond mines the many-layered details of Luther's troubled inner life, and he shows how Luther's battle cry—the demand for reform in head and number of the Roman Catholic Church—is inextricably tied to the story of how Paul's insight into God's saving grace reformed Luther's own soul.

Bond highlights some of the other characters who come to blows in the wider arena of church change at the sixteenth century's outset. Archbishop Albert of Mainz serves as Luther's main opponent, for example, and the Elector Frederick of Saxony, with whom Bond sympathizes, protects Luther, because Frederick frowns on Italian incursion into German matters. In the end, though, it is the tale of Katharina von Bora's marriage to Luther, set against the backdrop of continent-wide turmoil, that remains with this novel's readers. Marriage is a school of character, for Luther, and his marriage to Katharina also appears designed to highlight a higher love—Luther's love for Jesus. It is no small thing that Bond's novel features a link to a downloadable study guide for church ministers to use during premarital counseling sessions. Protestant Christians gathered late last October to mark the 500th anniversary of the year Luther made his ninety-five theses known, and this novel's 2017 publication was a timely one, even if Bond's novel repays close attention at any time. A

Paul Hourihan, *The Death of Thomas Merton: A Novel*. Vedantic Shores Press, 168pp.

Hourihan's stimulating story exemplifies a point I often make in my literature and theology classes at Texas Christian University: novels seldom function as neutral territory on which reasonable people stand and then agree to disagree; instead, novels frequently declare a war of the spirit on the battleground of ideas. Favorable accounts of Hourihan's tale led to a Northern California Publishing Award for Best Spiritual Book (2004), for example, and yet, perhaps representing others, Donald Grayston's review eviscerates the text: "This is a diatribe, a character assassination, a polemic, an angry screed, a pathetic exercise in projection, and an assault on the general consensus in the community of Merton scholars and readers about who Merton was and what he was about."

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was one of the most celebrated Catholic Christian monks of the last century. He was a Trappist whose prolific writings on everything from racial equality to social activism, from contemplative studies to literary criticism, have had an immense influence on the lives of his readers. After visiting Asia and then stopping off in Bangkok to participate in an interfaith council, Merton was accidentally electrocuted on December 10, 1968, in his cottage at the Red Cross Conference Center, close to Thailand's capital. Such details are crucial to the "general consensus" in the community of Merton readers, as they are in the imagination of the late Hourihan, and yet Hourihan, a onetime teacher of Indian Vedantic philosophy, offers a radical re-appraisal of Merton's premature end. His electrocution was no accident; it was made to look like one.

Hourihan characterizes Merton as something of a Hamlet-figure, wavering between Trappist austerity and Vedantic nondualism. Journeying through Asia fosters Merton's alienation from the Catholic Church, Hourihan's narrator reveals, and Merton struggles to conceal his self-disgust. Indian spirituality helps, we are told, even if Hourihan's Merton laments Vedanta's late appearance in his soul's formation. In this context, Bangkok becomes a crossroads moment: Should Merton return to his hermitage at the Abbey of Gethsemani, just outside Bardstown in Kentucky, and there resume his writerly duties, or should he leave the Catholic Church behind and commit to Vedanta? Hourihan's challenging novel insists that Merton would have been useless to himself if he had returned to the monastery, and useless to his Christian readers if he had become some kind of *sadhu*, so a staged suicide seemed to be the only solution to his existential problem. *The Death of Thomas Merton* is an ambitious historical novel, like the others mentioned in this survey, and while it amazes some folk, and vexes still more, it rarely leaves its readers unmoved. *A*

Memories Written on the Body

Save something from the time where we will never be again.
—Annie Ernaux

Meaghan Emery

Associate Professor of French,
University of Vermont

Les Années, a contemporary memoir by Annie Ernaux, has now come out in English translation, thanks to the careful work of Alison L. Strayer. In *The Years,* Ernaux—who has become an established and celebrated writer, with a style that evokes the frank confidence of a close friend—embarks on a new aesthetic journey. She has landed on a narrative form that captures not only the workings of memory (the "thousands of notes" we keep to ourselves) but also the manic mood and mechanics of our digital age, captured in layers of information, images, sayings, national and world events, arranged like overlapping windows on a screen. Ernaux moves through them seamlessly, as though closing them one by one until the last. At the end remain the most essential details, a list to "save," although their meaning is inaccessible to the reader and susceptible to being lost. The memoir begins in the same way, with a list of images that will disappear, words that will be deleted. How to save them is the question that permeates her thoughts and guides her writing, which moves between photos that capture the author in moments in time and the sensations she felt at these and other moments, forgotten and rediscovered after her divorce, as she writes:

> *Because in her refound solitude she discovers thoughts and feelings that married life had thrown into shadow, the idea has come to her to write 'a kind of woman's destiny,' set between 1940 and 1985. It would be something like Maupassant's* A Life *and convey the passage of time inside and outside of herself, in History, a 'total novel' that would end with her dispossession of people and things.*

The book goes well into the 2000s (up to 2007, according to the translator's note), and despite her fear "of losing herself in the profusion of objects," conveyed in the barrage of almanac-like detail, a self, long elusive to her, emerges from out of family and social history. This Annie in the photos comes through—from the chubby baby to the little girl on the pebble beach, to the teenager unsure of herself and not yet mastering her burgeoning desire, to the unhappy housewife numb to the world, to the middle-aged divorcée posing nude for a lover, to the single mom treating her grown sons and their girlfriends to a seaside

vacation on her teacher's salary, to the now retired grandmother with granddaughter on her lap. Her search for identity is not unique, she argues. At one time, who one was individually was not a topic worthy of reflection. Her parents and grandparents spoke in the collective "we." Yet, through her story of self-discovery, one follows the trajectory of the collective subject—"we," "one" or "people"—but also women living in Western culture through the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond, after which feminism fell out of fashion. In *The Years,* the subject's face reveals itself through the layers of culture and family memories, recovered and liberated through her words.

changed color before ceasing to flow. It is a life force that roots her in her physical being, her woman's body, and distracts her from the abstraction of books and scholarly ideas.

There is a tension in the book between the material and immaterial, between relationships, on which she barely touches, and the self-discovery that comes with solitude. Marriage was not a foregone conclusion for the university student, who could not reconcile the life of the mind with the toils and consumerist, object-filled life of a housewife. Nevertheless, in addition to encountering her in her mind and her body, the reader senses her desire for human contact, conjured through the

At one time, who one was individually was not a topic worthy of reflection. Her parents and grandparents spoke in the collective "we."

Her story of self-discovery began with the movies: the voluptuous Brigitte Bardot in *And God Created Woman* followed by Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*. Magazine articles instructed on how to achieve personal fulfillment; and women politicians, activists, Simone Veil, Simone de Beauvoir, and boys and girls clad in jeans, a visible sign of their equality, locking arms in a united front against France's male-dominated, conservative government, people her imagination just as they expanded her mind to grasp the possible then. Whether or not she herself had an abortion is not the subject here, but upon its legalization and government subvention, she expressly takes us into the doctor's office with its modern tools which replaced the kitchen table and improvised devices. Blood excreted vaginally is a regular leitmotiv. It is a sight that brings relief before birth control became available, and a sign of her feminine vitality when she is in her forties and even into her fifties, when it

oft-returning memory of nestling into the body of her lover or that of leaning against her mother while reading a book as a girl. Her desire for direct knowledge of the world comes through in her youthful exploration in defiance of Church teachings and the expectations of her family that reserved sexual relations for marriage. However, the carefree joy that accompanied her sexual liberation following divorce was short-lived, as the fear of AIDS replaced the earlier fear of becoming pregnant. AIDS did not get her, however. Breast cancer did. Sickness and death, normal and almost banal in the world of her childhood, had become so rare that they are perceived today as an "injustice," she reflects.

Her studies had estranged her from her working-class background early on. Yet, her political sympathies continue to lie with the workers, whom Socialist President François Mitterrand in the 1980s and later Prime Minister turned presidential contender

Lionel Jospin had betrayed. After conveying the reasons for the people's disillusionment with the political left, she admits their collective guilt for becoming indifferent—an indifference that allowed Jean-Marie Le Pen, a xenophobic, anti-immigrant candidate from the extreme right, to accede to the second round of France's presidential elections in 2002, surpassing Jospin in the first round to come in second behind the mainstream candidate of the right, Jacques Chirac. This was not corrected in time for the following election, and neither of Chirac's contending successors, whether Ségolène Royal or the electoral victor, Nicolas Sarkozy, succeeded in reviving the body politic, far too long neglected and too willing to be led. Ernaux holds back nothing in her criticism of the political class and of their distance from the people, an extension of her own physicality and experience in the world. Geopolitical problems, impacting populations from across the globe, had become too abstract, too far removed from one's basic experience and understanding.

With the same shock and awe she felt in 2001, she relays her reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attack against the World Trade Center, bringing down the twin towers within hours. All of a sudden, these seemingly backward people from far-away lands had proven their technological and strategical prowess against the United States, which since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had flexed its muscles like a tree's branches spreading across the globe. Its values, however, held up as an example to all the world, only served its own interests and those of its shareholders and corporate sponsors. With the same flare of resentment, she charges French state officials with ineptness before France's socioeconomic disintegration and the conflagration of the public housing neighborhoods in 2005. She adopts a broad "we" in her portrait of French xenophobia when evoking the politicians' appeal to "the [dyed in the wool] people of France," not inclusive of Muslim immigrants, and of generalized anti-Arab sentiment. The Algerian War figures large in *The Years*. However, Ernaux shares her generation's ignorance of this conflict. Their interests lay with newfound leisure activities and the advances provided by France's booming postwar economy. This war nevertheless shapes the experience of her generation, just as the world wars had done for her parents and the Franco-Prussian War for her grandparents. However, in their case, the war has not ended; the enemy are now the "savages" living within France's borders. They are descendants of colonial France, the same country that now rejects them as foreign bodies and as unwanted competition for dwindling employment opportunities.

A reader of contemporary French history and cultural criticism will recognize the rich philosophical and intellectual heritage given voice in the memoir. Her depiction of the hooded, unemployed, dark-skinned youths living on the outskirts of France's metropolitan centers reflects a whole body of literature and film dedicated to the subject. In this way, she identifies herself with France's intellectual elite. Although the writer's critical eye does not spare this elite group either—accusing France's postwar intellectuals of their generalized complicity with Stalinism—she does pay tribute to France's influential thinkers: in addition to Beauvoir, she cites Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Their deaths serve as time markers in her own life and in the life of her generation, and as a reminder of what is lost when writers die: the full cultural weight of their words. Her thoughts on digital media and culture particularly evoke the writings of Jean Baudrillard and Régis Debray. However,

even more than the ceaseless barrage of promotional advertisements and of spectacular images transmitted across the globe through the press, even more than the monthly or weekly crises that suspend our thought processes and the confounding predominance of opinion surveys and mindless statistics, the computer age holds something uniquely menacing but also tantalizing.

Everything on the Web is in the present. The language of this new world of hand-held devices, the internet, and search engines obstructs communication, including with her own sons. She could adapt to the *verlan* slang of the new generation shaped by France's new immigrant population, but what of this new online world, a world where images do not vanish, where slogans, names, and sayings can be saved and reopened to unknowing eyes in the present? Like a data base,

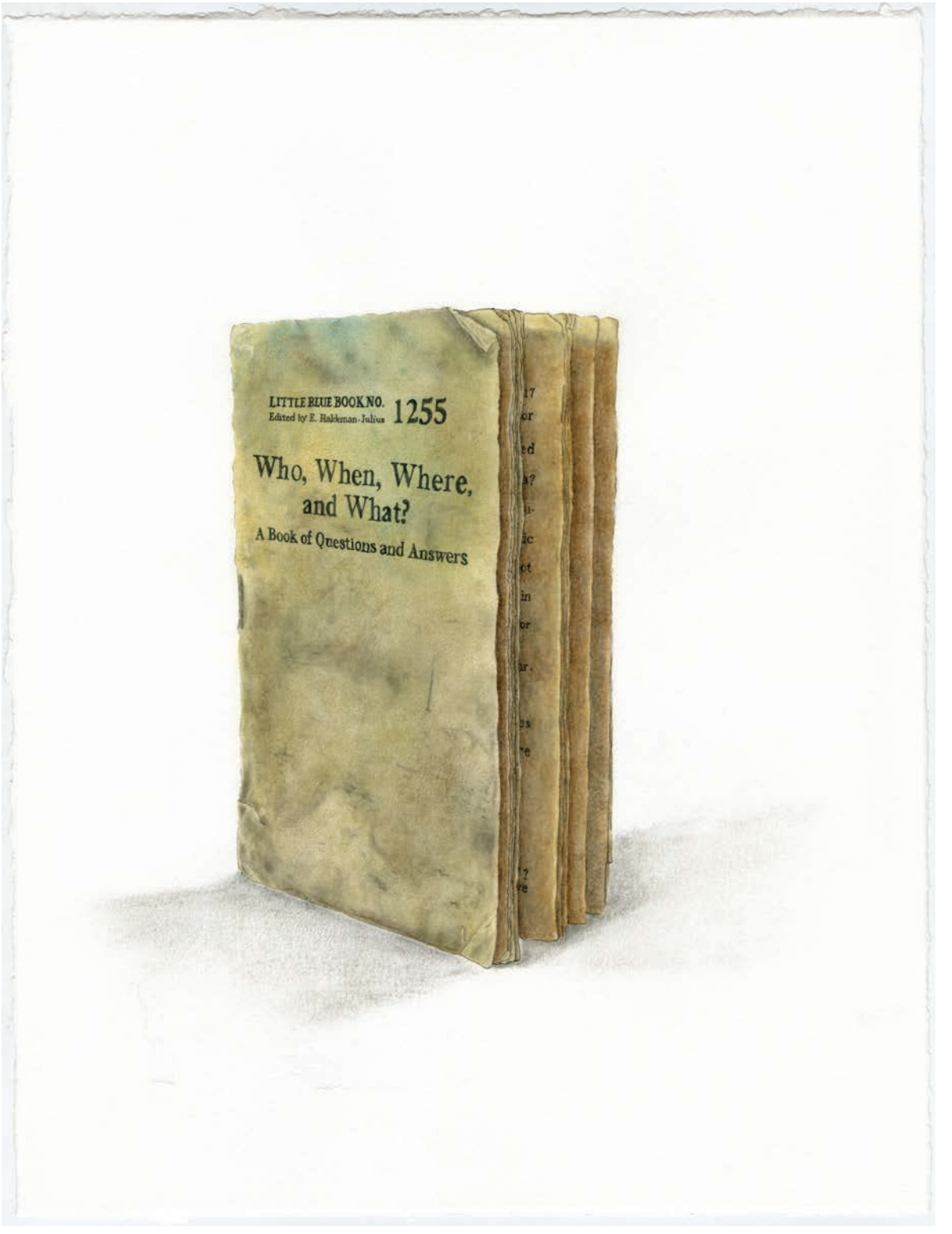
> *She will go within herself only to retrieve the world, the memory and imagination of its bygone days, grasp the changes in ideas, beliefs, and sensibility, the transformation of people and the subject that she has seen -- perhaps nothing compared to those her granddaughter will see, as will all beings who are alive in 2070.*

As she states, she will provide the "light from before" to illuminate those faces, those conversations, and the partaking of food, from the past.

With *The Years* Annie Ernaux has done just that. More than an almanac or a time capsule, she has left to her granddaughter's world a treasure trove of expressions (especially in the original French), of impressions, of sensations, and also of history, hers and that of an entire generation. *A*

Annie Ernaux. *The Years*. Trans. Alison L. Strayer. Seven Stories Press, 256pp., $20 paper.

4 ARTWORKS



Angela Kallus, *W,W,W,W: A Book Of Questions and Answers*. 2017. Ink, pastel and watercolor washes, chalk pastel, and graphite on paper, 15 x 11.5 inches. Copyright © 2017 Angela Kallus.

Read our interview with Angela Kallus at *athenaeumreview.org*.

Liz Trosper, *baldessari in blue*, 2017. UV ink on canvas, 96 x 74 inches.

Read our interview with Liz Trosper at *athenaeumreview.org*.

Luke Harnden, *Bay*. 2017. Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 48 inches.
 Photo by Kevin Todora.

Read our interview with Luke Harnden at *athenaeumreview.org*.

Bryan Florentin, *Scene in a Library 3 (After Talbot)*, 2017. Inkjet print, 35 x 36 inches. Copyright © 2017 Bryan Florentin. Courtesy the artist and Kirk Hopper Fine Art.

Read our interview with Bryan Florentin at *athenaeumreview.org*.

5 SENSES OF PLACE

Africa, Agency and the Anthropocene

Thomas Riccio

Professor of Performance and Aesthetic Studies
University of Texas at Dallas

Welcome to the Anthropocene, our epoch, one characterized by human activities that have become so dominant they are now a planetary force. The Anthropocene is the "great acceleration," a way to mark the sharp rise in destructive environmental effects of humans since the second half of the twentieth century. It is a human-centric, planet-wide social and cultural phenomenon in which we are increasingly self-aware participatory actors in an unprecedented emerging reality. The Anthropocene has incited apprehension, instability, and reevaluation. It has affected every aspect of human endeavor: the social, cultural, economic, political, and personal. It has re-drawn boundaries and definitions of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religious belief, time, space, fiction and reality. We are acutely aware of the biological-technological-geological co-evolution that is swirling around us. We pay closer, better attention to the interdependence of human and nonhuman landscapes and beings, aware and attuned to multi-species entanglements and complexity that pulsates around us. We are awake and anxious to the fragility of our moment which sits on a precipice poised to slip into a cascade of unimaginable ruination.

Moving into the ever deepening and complex terra incognita in which we find ourselves is a cause for skepticism, apprehension, and opportunity. Some wholeheartedly insist on hope and the promise of a glowing world of egalitarian, political, economic, and technological wonders. Others see this as the last moments of our species slipping into extinction. Others still are in denial, and seek the certainty of traditional forms of religion, politics, and ethnicity for solace. Some resort to momentary and sensual comforts, consumerism, medications, religious fundamentalism, sports, entertainments, reactionary politics—escapism of every form and variety. Others respond as best they can to the overwhelming environmental devastation, animal extinctions, overpopulation, refugee crisis, food, water and resource shortages. Larger, accumulating currents move around us, and we are

helpless disconnected witnesses to the slow steady disintegration of liberal democracy, the rise of a global oligarchy, the corporatization and monetization of the world, and the standardization, dehumanization, and reclassification of humanity as a datafied technological entity in service of a larger algorithmic system.

Our species at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century is facing a global-wide predicament. We are in an overwhelming, complex, and incomprehensible situation sifting through like archeologist amidst the fragments trying to figure out what happened and why. Like ghosts among ghosts, we consider how and what we can do to shape an emerging, new kind of consciousness.

Past is prelude. Like our ancient hunting-gathering forebears, we adapt or perish. Limits are being met and adjustments, out of stark necessity, are taking place accordingly. In the world we are moving into, everything must be reconsidered and reevaluated in terms of how best to survive. The systems of the past—political, economic, social, and cultural—are the resource for the reimaging of an interconnected life on and with our planet. Humans do not own or control the planet, for they are only a part of and responsible to a larger system of being.

Humans are the earth's most enabled creatures, its greatest beneficiaries, who, in the name of progress, have taken so much without giving back. Our kind do not own or control the planet, we are not especially privileged, but rather reckless barbaric rapist exploiters, willfully negligent, abusive, and ignorant of the larger system of cyclical life and death of which we are a part. We have convinced ourselves of our mastery by removing ourselves from existing cycles of the planet, postponing and using every device and strategy to immune ourselves from an inevitable outcome from which we cannot be exempted. For we, too, are food in a life cycle beyond our imagining.

> The urgent task, then, is not in deciding, which is deepest, spirituality of politics, religion or theater, but learning how to nurture such an attitude of interconnectedness that we are no longer the aliens on the earth. We human creatures have always tended to levitate off the planet. By thinking, emoting, imaging, calculating, and inventing, we rarify ourselves into the ether, fancying that we are not food. But if we cannot learn to be food, our species will become a dead-end branch on the evolutionary tree. So, the question is how to ground ourselves, admit that we are food, and become the animals we are.[1]

1 Ronald Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), 154.

That the juggernaut of Western cultural influence has shaped our historical moment and the world, for better and worse, is a given. A litany of western cultural exploitations, manipulations and innumerous social, cultural, and psychic traumas haunt our world and the consciousness of the non-Western world and its people. What affects the individual affects the whole culture, demanding a

N'Cwala, an annual ritual conducted by the N'goni people of eastern Zambia. After being forbidden by British colonization, the ritual was revived in 1990 and now combines two annual rituals, a 'first fruits' harvest and a 'purgation' ritual that identifies and releases the social ills that have accumulated over the past year. Depicted is the waking up the Paramount Chief. Dancers perform in admiration and devotion outside the hut of the Chief's mother where he has spent the night. They do this so his dreams will be filled with the thoughts and feelings of his ancestors and his loyal subjects. The women in the background sing and counter clap as the men demonstrate their warrior prowess, February 1994. Photo: Thomas Riccio.

culture-wide response. What affects the individual affects, increasingly, the planet. This is elegantly expressed in the Vedas: "As is the atom, so is the universe; as is the microcosm, so is the macrocosm; as is the human body, so is the cosmic body; as is the human mind, so is the cosmic mind."

Indigenous African performance

Indigenous African performance is an under-appreciated and under-utilized expression that facilitates a response, change and adaptation to this dire situation. Amidst the maelstrom of contemporary events, an alternative perspective is sorely needed. Indigenous African performance, and all of its incumbent traditions, holds within it the germinating values of sub-Saharan Africa's identity and place-based worldview. And it has the potential to become a catalyst for the reimagining of an earth-centric way of being in the Anthropocene.

'Indigenous' and 'traditional' are often problematic, overlapping, and fluid terms. When using the term 'indigenous' in reference to performance, I mean a performance language (actions, regalia, rhythm, song, and structure) that implicates and expresses a specifically indigenous worldview. Within the indigenous worldview, humans are only one part of the community, the conveners of an event that brings together other members of the community of that place: namely, the animals, spirits, ancestors, and elemental forces of nature. Performance within this context has the implied objective of celebrating, remediating, and balancing a community of place. Performance in many ways is a limiting term, unable to capture the unique, complexly integrative, and multi-vocal expression of agency. Indigenous performance is at once a sensorial, mythic, spiritual, psychological, biophysical, participatory, communal, and most significantly a functional interaction to effect real and practical change. The full impact is most vividly exampled by the ritual and shamanistic practices of Africa's few remaining hunting-gathering groups. The elements of the indigenous performance are shaped by and expressive of this comprehensive, effective intent.

When using the word 'traditional' I mean those actions, regalia, sounds, music, and structures that have been codified by a culture, and have become mnemonics and containers of cultural memory. Traditional expressions may very well have indigenous origins, and indigenous performance manifestations serve a similar mnemonic function; however, the fundamental difference between the two is that traditional performance expressions (traditional social dancing, for instance) are not focused on the objective of expressing and/or remediating place. Traditional performances expressions can be atomized, travel, and be reconfigured. Indigenous expressions have currency only relationally to a larger community of place context, functionality and objective. Indigenous performance expressions out of context become something else. They may become traditional, but their function changes.[2]

Today there is an uneasy relationship between forced historical and cultural imposition and Africa's multiple and varied indigenous, place-based worldviews and traditions. This usurpation of African indigeneity, forcibly replaced by a human-centric, material-objectivist world order has been the cause of underlying individual, social, cultural and environmental trauma wrought by the Anthropocene. Today, lurking at the core, beneath and around every atrocity of Boko Haram fundamentalism, ethnic and political act of violence, corruption, multi-national resource exploitation, World Bank manipulations, pervasive and often insidious Chinese, European and American influences is the rending of cultures from their indigenous identity and way of being in the world.

2 Thomas Riccio, "Shadows in the Sun: Context, Process, and Performance in Ethiopia," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 28, No. 3 (2012), 294.

Africa in Context

In Africa, as with the world at large, today there are more and more people and fewer and fewer resources, with many of the resources that remain being corrupted. Systems are becoming increasingly stressed, creating anxiety, as they fitfully adapt and become more homogenous. In Africa, with every act of modernization, every new dam or drilling for oil, mining or pipeline, every forest clear-cut, every waterway fouled by a faceless international corporation, comes a Mephistophelean bargain and an implicit promise of a better life in the short term, in human-centric terms. Such a promise is an illusion, unattainable in reality, a carnival mirror distortion reflecting a distant backdrop of paradisiacal opulence. In the foreground are an increasing homelessness, disease, and hunger, compounded by economic, political, religious, and ethnic refugees searching desperately for higher ground. The Anthropocene is fueled by base greed and fear and is little more than self-perpetuating, short-term salesmanship served up by those hoarding power and wealth, in order to clutch as much as they can to withstand an inevitable systemic collapse they themselves have enabled.

Responses and adjustments to the human-centric way of being have so far been superficial, limited, and self-serving. Some are ignorant to the liability of continuing in a human-centric way, while others remain hopeful that technology will somehow solve all of our problems. The human ability to communicate and share instantaneously, splitting atoms, mapping the genome, ever expanding computational power, and the datafication of reality will not somehow better enable survival and the quality of life. It cannot, because it is only a projection of a human-centric reality with the implicit objective of extending a human-centric way of being in the world. Malidoma Patrice Somé, a Dagara elder from Burkina Faso, speaks to the implications and effect of technology on the human spirit:

> The role of technology must be to attend to the lower part of human existence, since a thing devoid of the spiritual cannot help reach out to the spirit. The spirit liberates the person to work with the things of the soul [...] Machine has overthrown the spirit and, as it sits in its place, is being worshipped as spiritual. This is simply an error of human judgment. Anyone who worships his own creation, something of his own making, is someone in a state of confusion.[3]

Humans are not the only living things on the planet but we are fundamentally convinced, through the self-affirming promulgations of language, politics, laws, religions, economics, popular culture and media, of our unquestioned rightfulness. We have been shaped by this unsustainable and false premise.

3 Malidoma Patrice Somé, *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community* (London: Arkana Books, Penguin, 1993), 59.

The western cultural imperative, which has been propagated and sustained by an ever-refining cycle of conquest, colonization, capitalization, industrialization and urbanization, has been predicated on a human-centric expansion. Now, in a reality exhausted and without terrestrial expansion, every place on the planet has been "discovered," mapped, and exploited. We have moved into the final phase one way of being and now live an enfeebled reality consisting of remix, simulacrum and simulation of what once was. The global village marks not an apotheosis but rather the ending of one cycle in human evolution and the forecasting of another, one that draws from all of the earth's knowledge. Indigenous African performance, as an expression of holistic agency, holds within it the deep structures of an earth-centric way of being in the Anthropocene.

A fundamental and profound re-formatting of how humans conceptualize their relationship with a place is necessary. The reappraisal of indigenous African performance is a viable response to a world that continues to adhere to exhausted and self-destructive ways of being in the world.

African Performance

Indigenous African performance—its ceremonies, rituals, dances, songs, and regalia—is an expression of another way of being in and with the world. It is, in its multiple and varied expressions and to a greater and lesser degree throughout sub-Sahara Africa, an expression of a place-based way of being in the world. Its cosmological worldview that evolved from, and is coherent and organic to, its system of place. The use of "performance" is deliberate, so as to distinguish it from drama or theatre. As Osit Okagbue asserts, "The indiscriminate interchanging of the word 'drama' with 'theatre' and 'performance' has been responsible for the confusion surrounding most discussions of performance in Africa."[4] The term performance serves here as an overarching term to include indigenous and traditional expressions specific to Sub-Saharan Africa, as distinguished from the dramaturgical, procedural, and production expectations, relationships, and objectives of "drama" and "theatre," which are western cultural artifacts.

From the microcosmic comes the macrocosmic: "A cosmos in not merely an empty everywhere, it is an everywhere as perceived room somewhere, a universe as construed from a locale."[5] This enacted essence of African performance is an offering to the world that lives on through varied and fragmentary indigenous forms and traditions to this day in African theatre. In essence, the function of place-based indigenous performance is to provide a venue by making the boundaries between the constituent parts of a given geographical place—the humans, animals, climate, flora, spirits and ancestors—porous and permeable. Performance evolved and is shaped as an expression as a functional interaction with a specific geographical

4 Osita Okagbue, *African Theatres and Performances* (London: Routledge, 2012), 174.

5 Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 146.

locale. Performance in this context is where the invisible is made visible, a venue that reveals the system of a place where the actions and varied voices of the constituent parts of place manifest, cohabitate, celebrate, and dialogue.

Indigenous African performance is a practical technology, a means by which to recognize and enable the participation of the constituent parts that made an indigenous holism. Witnessing, recognition, and participation made animated and intimate the mythological outlines that encode social and cultural identity, behavior, and community. By realizing, reiterating, and reaffirming other presences, human performance enables participation in a holism. In indigenous performance, the roles, rights, and responsibilities, along with the patterns of social and cultural identity of humans are reasserted, creating an organic and profound interconnected presence, a biological-psychological-physical bonding extending beyond the performance event. Victor Turner illustrates the reciprocal resonance of co-existence imbedded in the performance of the Ndembu of Zambia:

> As we became increasingly a part of the village scene, we discovered that very often decisions to perform ritual were connected with crises in the social life of villages. There is a close connection between social conflicts and ritual at the levels of the village and a multiplicity of conflict situations is correlated with a high frequency of ritual performance. In an Ndembu ritual context, almost every article used, every gesture employed, every song or prayer, every unit of space and time, by convention stands for something other than itself. It is more than it seems, and often a good deal more [...] Its ritual use is already metaphorical: it connects the known world of sensorily perceptible phenomenon with the unknown and invisible realm of the shades...[6]

African indigenous performance—and similarly the performance of other indigenous people—is a profound and vital legacy long discredited and marginalized. In a time of environmental stress that moves towards collapse, this function and means of performance merits an appreciation and reexamination as a viable alternative to the prevailing worldview of the human-centric western cultural tradition.

Africanist scholar Johannes Fabian advocates moving "from informative to performative ethnography." This reorientation, he suggests, gives access in a new way to the constitution of cultural knowledge, because certain kinds of cultural knowledge are produced in and by means of performance.[7] The encyclopedic knowledge held within African performance traditions offers timely alternatives to the pervasive influence of western dramaturgical models, indicating deep structure templates by which an emerging global culture can apply performance as a means by which to reimagine an inclusive and holistically mindful way of being in and with the world.

6 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Hawthorne, New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1995), 15.

7 Karin Barber, John Collins and Alain Ricard, *West African Popular Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xi.

N'Cwala, an annual ritual conducted by the N'goni people of eastern Zambia. After being forbidden by British colonization, the ritual was revived in 1990 and now combines two annual rituals, a 'first fruits' harvest and a 'purgation' ritual that identifies and releases the social ills that have accumulated over the past year. Depicted is the presentation of the first fruits by the N'goni poet and tradition bearer to the paramount chief which marks the opening of the ritual, February 1994. Photo: Thomas Riccio

Community of Place

African performance expressions, once exclusively the means of local communities to make visible the invisible holism of their place, have been colonized, reconstituted and encoded as "theatre": an imported form from the vocabulary of an alien worldview. Theatre, formed and shaped serving a human-centric worldview, is narrowly devoted to human and social remediation. Its prominent playing space is the elevated stage and/or frame of the proscenium, which symbolically portrays the perspective of an aestheticized mind-body split. Whereby the illuminated mind of the stage speaks to the passive body seated in the audience, a disembodied and fragmented reality emblematic of human removal from the body of the earth.

> As long as performance is confined to performance halls, performance is no answer to the problem of saving the planet from toxicity and species evacuation. The best that aesthetic art can do is mine the problem.[8]

8 Grimes, *Rite Out Of Place*, 149.

In contrast, indigenous African performance reveals a mind/body/spirit holism without rigid demarcations of space and time and a hierarchal consciousness and being.

The African indigenous worldview is a 'community of place'. Within this eco-cosmological worldview, each participant has a unique role and contribution. The world is alive, animated, and interconnected, with humans obliged to serve as responsible mediators. The noted Zambian theatre scholar Mapopa Mtonga illustrates the performance of this worldview in the opening of the Gulu Wamkulu, the "great dance" of the Chewa people of eastern Zambia.

> These groups of vinyau performers who do not come into the village but hide in the nearby bushes making all sorts of falsetto sounds and various animal calls, They may make the call of the jackal (nkhandwe), the laugh of the hyena (fisi), the cry of a wild cat (bvumbwe) or the roar of the lion (mkango) using all sorts of devices.[9]

9 Mapopa Mtonga, *The Drama of Gule Wamkulu* (Unpublished master's thesis, Legon: University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, 1980), 58.

Humans perform for the world out of respect for a wise elder and as a way to momentarily transcend, to glimpse and touch a totality of being. These actions are embodied, passed on and repeated anew for each generation as a legacy and obligation. The mountains tell of the beginning of the world to an Australian Aborigine on a walk about; the wind imparts a message to a !Xuu Bushman; a waterfall teaches a Korean mudang how to harmonize, and spirits assist a Chinese Miao shaman in healing. To perform within the context of the indigenous world is to have direct agency with a community that inhabits and maintains a place. It is an expansive place beyond social and material boundaries. This performance is an act of agency that applies performance as a communicative vocabulary.

> We owe to the cosmic order because we are individually and communally responsible for its maintenance. Every person is sent to his outpost called earth to work on a project that is intended to keep the cosmic order healthy. Any person that fails to do what he or she must do energetically stains the cosmic order.[10]

10 Somé, *Ritual*, 14.

Body interactions within the indigenous worldview are the primary way of "knowing" and dialoging with the community of place, and in turn, the human body is shaped by the sensuous world. To see the world means to be seen by the world. To see an eagle flap its wings and lifting itself into sky is to vicariously experience the eagle through one's own body.[11] To dance an animal's movement, chant its call, wear its feathers or skin, is to vicariously understand, celebrate, and cohabitate with that being. Is it any wonder indigenous masks of anthropomorphic beings, regalia festooned with animals, plant, and earth elements, and dances, chants and instruments, honor, emulate and express a community of place? The interactions of thought, feeling, dream, and

11 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Pantheon, 1996), 61.

A scene from the performance of Emandulo, devised and directed by Thomas Riccio, produced by the Kwasa Group and the Natal Performing Arts Council, Durban. Applying traditional Zulu performance vocabularies and mythologies in a contemporary context, the work served as a communal healing for post-apartheid South Africa, May 1992. Photo: Shelly Kjonstad.

action have equal credence. To think of someone or something means you are speaking or they are speaking to you. A word, thought, gesture, and expression, has a power and spirit, once enacted that will live forever. The porousness between dream, thought, myth and reality is at the core of the indigenous worldview and in turn, its performance. Performance is a reference for the everyday perceptions and events of the world. The performance of a ritual initiation becomes a marker witnessed by the entire human and non-human community. Performance becomes a community venue of agency, recognition, balance, and transcendence, where all constituents express their power on equal terms. Speaking of the performative agency of the Igbo masquerade in eastern Nigeria, Osita Okagbue observes,

> Conceptually, Igbo masquerade characters are ancestors of spirit forces that have taken on material form and returned to the human plane at the initiation of the living.... The ancestors and spirits constitute a community of souls and entities whose beneficial contact is constantly needed and sought by the living. The ancestors and spirits and gods are ideas born of the Igbo collective imagination but which need to be made flesh periodically in order for immediate physical contact and interaction to be effected. This physical manifestation of the spiritual on the material plane ensues that the continuities between the different worlds of the Igbo universe are kept alive through the masking theatre, with its explicit symbolism and performative dynamism. Igbo ancestors and sprits are able to participate physically in human affairs as masquerades.[12]

12 Okagbue, *African Theatres and Performances*, 19.

Indigenous African performance is a medium by which the sights, sounds, and rhythms of a specific place are brought into dialogue. Songs and drumbeats are not random, but rather specific to place. Science only now understands that each part of the world gives off a specific electromagnetic pulse. To drum a specific beat is to align with that part of the earth.[13]

13 Thomas Riccio, "Rhythm Reality." In Wiesna Mond-Kozlowska, ed., *Rhythms and Steps of Africa, Studies on Comparative Aesthetics: Studies on Anthropology and Aesthetics of The African Dance* 2 (2012): 123.

An awareness of the evolution of community, cultural, and environmental rhythms involves basic bodily rhythms, which in turn beget movement, dance, song and chant. Rhythm is the ephemeral catalyst, conduit, and conductor of place and culture. For Eliade rhythm is the revelation of the world, cosmology and mythology incarnate:

> Rhythms have their model outside of the profane life of man; whether they reproduce the movements of the totemic or emblematic animal, or the motions of the stars; whether they themselves constitute rituals (labyrinthine steps, leaps, gestures performed with ceremonial instruments) a dance always imitates an archetypal gesture or commemorates a mythical moment. In a word, it is a repetition, and consequently a reactualization, of illud tempus, "those days."[14]

14 Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of The Eternal Return* (New York: The Bollinger Library, Harper and Row, 1959), 28-29.

Every indigenous culture I have worked with has, at its core, simple rhythmic beat(s)—many cultures have several. I call these primary beats. These beats, their origins and inspirations being wide and varied, but always tactile, from a heartbeat to geology, the cycles of seasons, climate, and migrations, are the basis of dance and performance. According to American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, "In most musical styles, the performer or performers employ a single, over-all rhythmical scheme, or 'ground plan,' which serves as a point of reference for the infinite variety of rhythmic detail possible within the scheme."[15]

15 Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1978), 49.

Rhythm serves as a reference point, a grid, infrastructure, and "programmed code" emanating out through and permeating individuals participating and contributing to collectively agreed-upon

A performance of Community Health Awareness Puppets, an initiative that combined traditional performance vernaculars with western style puppetry to educate local populations. The author conducted workshops and research with the performers. The introduction of non-traditional puppets served to circumvent tribal and ethnic differences to bring awareness to critical issues such as AIDS awareness, female genital mutilation, deforestation, soil erosion, and corruption. Depicted is a performance in Nairobi's Uguru Park for street children, AIDS orphans, who live in the park, April 2002. Photo: Gary Friedman.

perceptions and ways of operating. Rhythm is a way of communicating to the varied community members—each speaking in its own terms. The rhythm of place is also where play occurs and by which discoveries and relationships are made, reaffirmed, and cohabitate. According to Johan Huizinga, "Play casts a spell over us; it is 'enchanting', 'captivating'. It is invested with the noblest qualities we are capable of perceiving in things rhythm and harmony."[16] Likewise, Okagbue writes:

> [...] religious/ritual undertones, the performances are underpinned by a sense of play. The Igbo, for instance, see themselves as "playing" with their ancestors and spirits through the masquerades; the Hausa are able to establish a playful relationship with their deities during Bori possession and trance performances.[17]

16 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: The Study of The Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 10.

17 Okagbue, African Theatres and Performances, 179.

Rather than a materialist, cause-effect theatre dramaturgy imported from the west, indigenous African performance is an expression of complex playful movements not through a rational, human-centric sequence but rather a sensorial dramaturgy of Rhythm, Harmony, Change, Alternation, Contrast, and Climax. Indigenous African performance presents a unique understanding and awareness of the world offering an alternative to the human-centric dramaturgy now driving the emerging global narrative of the Anthropocene.

Kristofer Schipper writes in *The Taoist Body:*

> Theatre is intended to cause the gods to manifest themselves in the festival. The community assembly and the liturgy thus aims at integration and order, and moreover to "pass" all beings to a higher life in one vast movement, so that the whole world may obtain the natural, spontaneous order of the heavens, and be at one with the cosmological system.[18]

18 Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 65-66.

The !Xuu Bushmen healers and diviners I worked with in the lower Kalahari similarly linked performance, spirituality and the regenerative healing of place, calling it *N!ngongiao (today we sing)*. By enacting an origin myth called *People Come Out of Here* they reaffirmed their agency with their place, returning to when all of creation emerged from two large stones and ordering the experience by way of sensorial dramaturgy.

> Several sets of rattles combined with the polyrhythmic drumming and three levels of women clapping. Machai led the song with others singing chorus. A few women added high-pitched birdcalls. Machai was shaking his shoulders and head and soon others joined the dancing, shaking with a shuffle step across the floor. The dance and song cycled, weaving the room into another space, one outside my normal sense of time and reality. Soon most of those in the trailer were shaking at the shoulders and hips to create "heat." Silenga, a small, older woman, also wore a beaded headpiece. Her eyes were closed and her face relaxed--she was entering an altered state of consciousness. The dance and song had many spontaneous swells of emotion and energy that pleased the group. The dance took them to some other place deep within their cultural identity.[19]

19 Thomas Riccio, "Making a New Story with the !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen," *Theatre Forum* 10 (1997), 55.

Each rhythm, be it traditional, pop, or hip-hop, is in its origins derived from and responsive to, a specific place. Complexity of rhythms illustrates a complexity of participant voices resembling in many ways a conjuring or divination. The aliveness and mutability of structured yet flexible indigenous African performance is a living embodiment of a holistic dramaturgy seeking to sensorially harmonize with its constituent participants. The radical difference from Euro-American individualism is the communal orientation inherent in African systems—from the attribution of skill and insight to the ancestors to the goal of harmony for the group, not just the individual.[20]

20 Philip M. Peek, ed. *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991), 135.

The role of humans within this holistic/sensorial dramaturgy is that of facilitator. Because humans are the most enabled and the greatest beneficiary of place, they are held the most responsible for maintaining the order and its well-being. To perform within this context is to be responsible for the gathering all of the place-based community together (re) create wholeness.

> Each one is the whole and the whole is each one [...] Each one is the whole and it is through it that the whole is formed. One is the whole and if each one did not contain the whole, the whole could not be formed. The whole, which is contained in everything, is the world. And we are sometimes told that the world is conceived as a unique animal, whose parts, however disparate they may seems, are inextricably associated.[21]

21 Mauss, A General Theory of Magic, 91.

Mapopa Mtonga describes how a Nyau ancestral spirit, performed by the Chewa people, enters a playing area (bwalo) portraying a mythic spirit creature and a man simultaneously. Other place-based animals are also portrayed, as are colonial police in a performance that vibrantly exemplifies indigenous African dramaturgy in action. The blending of spirit, ancestral, animal, and human interaction "plays" to evoke a moment of eternal presence into being. Participation is the necessary catalyst.

> The Sajeni emerges on to the bwalo furiously. A fearful creature measuring the size of a fully-grown giraffe. And yet he is a man! A caricature of the colonial police in Rhodesia that terrorized the inhabitants of Harare. People fear his hippo hide whip called the sjambok and are thus running from him. But this Nyau spirit does not really mean to hurt anybody except to imitate some of the harsh realities of life experiences by the Black Africans.
>
> The spectators at first arrange themselves in such a way that they give the impression of a street scene. But when drums have resounded, Sajeni becomes crazy and begins to chase them about. He tries as much as possible to try and to get somebody with his much-dreaded sjambok but because of his immense height, he is unable to do so. It is then that the dance becomes much more of a satirical comedy about social life than a serious ritual in honor of the dead. The spectators scatter themselves all over the bwalo; laughing, jeering, cheering, and making all sorts of funny remarks as they chant in praise of him.[22]

22 Mtonga, *The Drama of Gule Wamkulu*, 63-64.

The Lozi people of southern Zambia believe their ancestors live on an island in the sky called *Litooma*, which humans call to earth during performance. The songs, dances, and rhythms of performance are a call, serving to create a site that brings the many parts of the community together to perform as an expression of communality and continuity. All earthly and human issues are interrelated and only coherent in terms of the larger community. All sickness, human and non-human alike, is spirit sickness; weather, migrations, good and bad fortunes are related to the fragile balance of place.

When the Lozi performance is finished, the island of Litooma, the village of ancestors, returns to the sky to watch over the earthly community. Other community members return to their way of being in the world, boundaries separating them until they perform again.

Indigenous African performance is not a metaphor but rather a lived mnemonic and diagram of the world. The concept of metaphor is inadequate in this context because it implies an abstracting of the tangible and present. Indigenous performance is an evocation of the tangible presence of the eternal now, as my work with the !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen illustrates:

> Our discussion about pretending and acting evolved into a discussion about metaphor. The concept of how something can mean something else was alien if not absurd to them [...] The need for metaphor and to "act" something or someone else is urged by the need to make a connection to another person, event, or thing. By virtue of how they perceived their reality, the Bushmen were already connected. In the Western context, metaphor, like acting, serves to bridge or reveal an idea or feeling so as to identify, emphasize, compare and contrast. The Bushmen have little interest in such things because everything is self-evident. Things are simply what they are. Everything is inherently a reference to that which is simultaneously itself and something greater. Mythology lives within them, not removed or differentiated as something outside self. What in Western perception we term internal and external to self, is for the Bushmen, one and the same.
>
> Could it be that the need for metaphor and acting in Western and other cultures arose when they became removed from their hunter-gatherer interaction with their part of the earth? Did metaphor then become a device by which to bridge and hence reconnect with a lost wholeness? Did acting, like theatre, arise when once homogenous groups interacted with other groups? Did acting become a means by which to integrate (and thereby expand) a homogenous group's understanding of others? Acting allows one to become another and in this way understand another. Is the necessity of acting and theatre the attempt to connect with others and is it possibly an attempt to re-establish lost holism?[23]

23 Thomas Riccio, *Performing Africa: Re-Mixing Tradition, Theatre, and Culture* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 131.

Indigenous African performance has the unique, and immediate, ability to address long repressed, individual, environmental, social, and cultural traumas and inequities. But first performance must be understood and appreciated for what it is and what it can do. A practical and function technology that reveals a holism, holds a spirit of a community, and can heal.

The following passage describes an aspect of developing a performance project in Zambia, an example of how indigenous African performance can be utilized to remediate contemporary issues.

> To address the subtle inter-tribal antagonisms, some performers were deliberately assigned to perform the tribal dance of a traditional rival. Initially this caused some grumbling and some insensitive "correcting" by those from whose tribal dance was being attempted; eventually, however a sense of ensemble sharing and teaching evolved. In this instance, as in others, I took advantage of my being an outsider by asking them to do things no insider could nor would even think of asking. By dancing the dances of another tribe, boundaries were broken and performers expanded their performance vocabulary while gaining insight and appreciation for other tribal ways. Dance sharing established a paradigm and attitude that would guide the workshop and performance process: traditional performance was a language accessible to all and not something limited to tribal identity. This porous passing back-and-forth between tribal cultures and performers was seen as a source of strength.[24]

24 Thomas Riccio, "In Zambia, Performing the Spirits," *Theatre Forum* 8 (1996), 61.

Where and What Now?

The question confronting African performance and theatre today is whether, and if so, how, to access the rich, expressive ritual, performance, and dance tradition (and its implied worldview) for broader application. Indigenous African performance communicates well within its homogenous cultural context where the community understands, in a deeply ingrained way, the meaning and references encoded by it. But in order for these cultures to have a dialogue with other cultures in the age of the Anthropocene, some sort of expansion and adjustment of the performance language must occur. If not, the gulf between traditional African and Western realities will continue to expand and ultimately, I believe, relegate indigenous performance to obsolescent nostalgia. Respect, flexibility, and adapation of performance language is necessary to meet the challenges of expression in a larger Anthropocene context.

As the effects of the Anthropocene broaden, humanity is forced to look inwards, take stock, and re-evaluate who and what we are, what we have gained, and what we have lost. All of human knowledge is a resource.

Africa has been historically traumatized in many ways, and continues to be challenged by rapid urbanization and displacement, which has brought economic, social, and cultural hardships that have gone unanswered by ineffective, divisive, or corrupt nation states. The indigenous ordering systems of the past lay in waste and much of sub-Saharan Africa abandons its traditions, adapting to a new world out of the necessity of survival. The past may be in many and varied fragments, but they are vital and viable still, offering up an opportunity for the re-imagining of the indigenous African worldview. This will serve the specific needs of the continent itself, but also make a timely contribution to the emerging consciousness of planetary indigeneity in the age of the Anthropocene.

Place-oriented cultures have been overwhelmed and subsumed by non-indigenous cultures of the west: the Euro-American axis which transformed the world into meta-cultures, based on and propagated by modular, replicable, adaptive, and transportable ideas and values, which homogenize and flatten differences creating non-places serving the cultural-economic-technological-political nexus of capitalism-consumerism. The emerging global civilization has evolved into a place-less "community of ideas" removed from the contours, variance, and vibrancy of the local and terrestrial. This community of ideas, shaped by colonialism, industrialization, urbanization, missionization, capitalism, technology, media, travel, economics, and politics, has created a new "virtual-real" place and way of being in the world. A reassertion of "community of place" is necessary to serve as a countervailing force and response. It is time to reconsider the impulse, mechanisms, forms, and vocabularies embedded within indigenous African performance.

Breaking African performance free from its self-imposed perceptions and marginalization will serve to identify a powerful and much-maligned performance vocabulary and tradition. Like extracting words from a foreign language to identify a basic meaning, the movements, once freed, will take on a malleable, recombinant life of their own. Appreciating, defining, and engaging in indigenous African performance are the first steps towards its re-imagining and revival. The next steps include exploration and experimentation allowing for the active and playful interaction to create indigenous performance forms and expressions in a contemporary context.

We are all a part of something that is essential and vital, mythic, archetypal, and ritual. We are all projections that extend from the origins the human species. We are all from the earth and were once indigenous, protectors, articulators, and interlocutors of place. We have taken so much from the earth and now it is time let it speak and to give something back. Performance is that gift. A

References

Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous*. New York: Pantheon, 1996.

Barber, Karin, et al, ed. *West African Popular Theatre*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: the Myth of The Eternal Return.* New York: The Bollinger Library, Harper and Row, 1959.

Grimes, Ronald. *Rite Out Of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts*. London: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: The Study of The Play-Element in Culture.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

Lomax, Alan. *Folk Song Style and Culture*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1978.

Mauss, Marcel. *A General Theory of Magic.* London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

Mtonga, Mapopa. *The Drama of Gule Wamkulu.* Unpublished master's thesis. Legon: University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, 1980.

Okagbue, Osita. *African Theatres and Performances*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Peek, Philip M., ed. *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991.

Riccio, Thomas. *Performing Africa: Re-Mixing Tradition, Theatre, and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007.

———. "Shadows in the Sun: Context, Process, and Performance in Ethiopia." *New Theatre Quarterly,* 28, No. 3 (2012): 1-18.

———. "Rhythm Reality." In Wiesna Mond-Kozlowska, ed., *Rhythms and Steps of Africa, Studies on Comparative Aesthetics: Studies on Anthropology and Aesthetics of The African Dance* 2 (2012): 120-135. Krakow: Akademia Ignatianum.

———. "In Zambia, Performing the Spirits." *Theatre Forum* 8 (1996): 58-66.

———. "Making a New Story with the !Xuu and Khwe Bushmen." *Theatre Forum* 10 (1997): 45-59.

Schipper, Kristofer. *The Taoist Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Somé, Malidoma Patrice. *Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community.* London: Arkana Books, Penguin, 1993.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Hawthorne, New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1995.R

The Best Books on Finding Home in American Storytelling

A fuller version of this essay, with additional references, is available on our website at athenaeumreview.org.

Sarah Ruffing Robbins

Lorraine Sherley Professor of English
Texas Christian University

Robert J. Conley, *Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. University of Oklahoma Press, 240pp.

Mountain Windsong brings together Conley's deep knowledge of Cherokee history with his appreciation for the lived experiences of Cherokee people today. As one of my mentors at the National Museum of the American Indian, Dennis Zotigh, has emphasized, when we study Native culture and peoples today, it's important not to limit ourselves to stories depicting them as victims, erased from the American landscape and history. Instead, we need to honor the many ways that indigenous communities remain alive and well, overcoming whites' too-frequent attempts to denigrate or even to eliminate them. (I suspect that's one reason why Diane Glancy eventually followed up her *Pushing the Bear* volume one with a sequel, *Pushing the Bear: After the Trail of Tears*. Both of Glancy's Removal-related novels are well worth reading, especially in sequence, since the latter extends into the time when survivors of the long march west begin to build new homes in Oklahoma.)

Conley's novel on the Trail of Tears adeptly weaves together three strands of narrative which, read together, take readers both into the past moment of the Removal and into a present time when the Cherokee are successfully maintaining and passing along their heritage to new generations. One of these plot strands is a love story set in the time of the Removal. Waguli (Whippoorwill), a brave Cherokee from a traditional tribal community in what is now the homeland of the Eastern Band, is swept up into enforced relocation out West after the perilous journey mandated by President Andrew Jackson in defiance of treaties that had been affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Separated from his betrothed Oconeechee, who is part of the group remaining hidden in the Appalachian hills, Waguli initially grows despondent and becomes trapped in alcohol abuse, even as Oconeechee determinedly seeks to find him. Alongside this personal story, Conley presents historical records that document the longstanding political battle between the Cherokee and those seeking to take away their tribal lands. The author frames both these historical strands—the romance and the archive—with a third narrative thread depicting a Cherokee grandfather teaching his grandson community-oriented traditions while also telling the story of Waguli and Oconeechee.

Paulette Jiles, *News of the World*. William Morrow, 209pp.

Paulette Jiles is a productive writer whose mastery of multiple genres (poetry, memoir, dystopian narrative), like Conley's, had already generated a similarly impressive list of publications before *News of the World*

appeared in 2016. A National Book Award finalist, *News* shines for its visually stunning language and its thoughtful consideration of cross-cultural encounters in a past time that resonates with our own. In addition, the unusual yet believable relationship between its two central characters presents intriguing possibilities for following up on the romance of Waguli and Oconeechee's with a very different kind of intergenerational romance more akin to the grandfather/grandson bond in *Mountain Windsong*.

Set in 1870 in a Texas era facing interlocking social conflicts, *News of the World* focuses on the evolving connections between Captain Jefferson Kidd and Johanna, a young girl whose time as a captive in a Kiowa community has left her in a cultural limbo. The "finding home" theme operates on multiple levels in this fast-moving yet poetic story. Kidd reluctantly accepts a commission to escort Johanna from northern to southern Texas, where her aunt and uncle (her only relatives, since the rest of her family was killed in the Indian raid leading to her capture) are said to be eagerly awaiting her return. The shared journey of a grandfatherly Kidd and young Johanna leads this unlikely twosome through diverse encounters that convey how unsettled political, economic, and cultural forces in post-Civil-War Texas made any travel challenging—even perilous. Forging a bond in part based on navigating this danger together, Kidd and Johanna also find connections based on their both being situated on the margins of the region's white society. Kidd's past experiences, including his separation from his own family, and his fascination with cultures far removed from his own background, help him recognize Johanna's Kiowa self-identification as understandable, even admirable.

Francisco Jiménez, *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child*. University of New Mexico Press, 134pp.

First in a series that continues with *Breaking Through*, *Reaching Out*, and *Taking Hold*, *The Circuit* signals its autobiographical elements in some editions by including photographs of Jiménez himself on the cover. Along related lines, the dedication page for *The Circuit* salutes both Jiménez's parents and his "seven sisters and brothers," with a list of their names that pairs each with a parallel character from the narrative. Winner of multiple literary awards, this memoir-like novel forecasts its plot and setting in a descriptive subtitle, *Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*.

The text's opening chapter, "Under the Wire," and its first full sentence situate the narrative as a Mexican family's border-crossing search for a new home in the US: "'*La frontera*' is a word I often heard when I was a child living in El Rancho Blanco, a small village nestled on barren, dry hills several miles north of Guadalajara, Mexico." Jiménez carries readers along as his narrator struggles to acclimate to various new schools. His family's situation is clearly shaped by the tenuousness of most members' status within the U.S. (the father having legal work papers, but the mother and several children, born in Mexico, constantly at risk of being deported). But Jiménez also depicts Panchito's family life in ways that invite strong empathy based on shared values and experiences, such as wanting to become more like an older sibling, chafing at the responsibility of caring for younger ones, and sometimes resisting parental priorities. Overall, with consummate skill, Jiménez cultivates a balance between celebrating specific features of his own ethnic identity (such as its vivid language patterns, sometimes

rendered directly in Spanish, and its special foodways) and building intercultural connections.

The strategic choice of writing in a child's voice brings important benefits to the narrative's engagement with complex politics. Minor characters who've been brought to the California farm fields as *braceros* cue adult readers to think critically about how U.S. agriculture capitalized on the vulnerabilities of workers desperate for any kind of labor opportunity, however constrained. But Jiménez's youthful narrator presents no critique of his own. Similarly, Jiménez shows us how Panchito struggles to master a second language via immersion in English-only classrooms. The novel vividly describes his concerted efforts to rise above such constraints on his schooling as the family's constant moves on the harvest "circuit." But his youthful viewpoint shields readers from having to confront overt analysis of how structural inequities impact educational policy as encountered by individual migrant children.

Like Paulette Jiles, Jiménez can call up poetic imagery to engage his readers. Everyday objects like Panchito's treasured note pad become unpretentiously imbued with symbolic resonance. Panchito's unfulfilled longing for a pet—even something as modest as a neighbor's little goldfish—or his wishing for a warmer jacket—convey the precarious status of family finances concisely. Simple, repeated descriptions carry affective weight. Coming back to one of their temporary homes after a day helping their father in field labor, Panchito and his older brother Roberto confront the familiar signs that another dislocation is at hand, just as they were beginning to find a few friends and settle in on the strawberry farm where the harvest is almost completed. "When I opened the front door to the shack," Jiménez says in Panchito's voice, "I stopped. Everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes…The thought of having to move… brought tears to my eyes. That night I could not sleep. I lay in bed thinking about how much I hated this move."

Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*. Riverhead, 231pp.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has generated noteworthy scholarly analyses positioned within ongoing conversations about cosmopolitanism, comparative cultural studies, and post-colonial literatures. Whether Hamid's more recent *Exit West* will garner similar multi-faceted (and sustained) success remains to be seen, but it's already grabbed the attention of literary prize-givers.

Certainly, *Exit West* is a book of and for our current moment. If Hamid's portrait of refugee trauma is mitigated somewhat by his love story (reminiscent in some ways of *Mountain Windsong*), the diasporic terrain being far more vaguely depicted mostly separates it from specific migratory histories like Conley's. When Hamid's young protagonists, Saeed and Nadia, first meet, they are caught in a beleaguered but not-yet-uninhabitable space evoking today's Syria. And in various points in the characters' odyssey, they find temporary refuge on Greece's Mykonos, in London, and in the San Francisco Bay Area. Perhaps because each of these episodes seems more focused on their psychological responses and the broader sociological unravelings exemplified at each stop, and despite Hamid's naming of these various locales in their migrations, this progression of settings seems more a series of geographic pin drops than a vividly rendered sequence of realistic places-in-time, as in *News of the World*. Yet, for me, in spite of the sophisticated

psychologies at play, their successive dislocations are not as emotionally debilitating to read, as young Panchito's in *The Circuit*. Maybe that's because Nadia and Saeed, as adults, however young, are choosing their moments of departure in each case, rather than having others direct their migratory paths.

I suspect Hamid sought to encourage just such a distancing between his characters' moves in search of home and his readers' responses. More allegory than history, more parable than adventure, more philosophical dystopia than personal story, *Exit West* seems to me, especially as I re-read in the intertextual nexus of my current syllabus's other narratives, to be mandating a more distanced reflection—a careful consideration of where the world is headed, if we fail to see how all of us could soon be refugees. If nationalist xenophobia reigns supreme, *Exit West* shows, there may be no nations to safeguard, in the end, no exit for anyone, anywhere.

Hamid refuses to issue a direct call to political action or even to clarify if individual love can prevail. Maybe his is a wiser rhetorical stance than clarion pleas for intervention like the repeatedly circulated photograph of a toddler washed up on a Turkish beach after a failed Mediterranean crossing. Perhaps a realism only somewhat tinged with fantasy will have a more telling impact. ▲

The Other Ursula Le Guin

History and Time in the Orsinian Tales

Anastasia Pease

Senior Lecturer in English
Union College

URSULA KROEBER LE GUIN, WHO DIED IN JANUARY at the age of 88, was a prolific American writer, winner of Hugo and Nebula awards, and was named the first female Science Fiction Grand Master by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America in 2003. She was at the forefront of the gradual recognition of science fiction and fantasy as serious literature, worthy of careful study and scrupulous critical attention.

Le Guin was the first writer to send a boy wizard to school in her deeply imaginative *Earthsea* series, published decades before *Harry Potter*. And her many other works, such as *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*, are now classics of speculative fiction. Populated by unforgettable characters and set on alien planets, they help readers explore our own world—its gender dynamics, social psychology, and even economics. As a result, these books have increasingly been studied, written about, taught at the college level, and examined critically. Yet one part of her body of work, the so-called mainstream stories, set in an imaginary country called Orsinia, have received relatively little critical attention. Part of the reason is that these early creations are eclipsed by her later, more famous, works. Another factor is that the Orsinian texts do not fit neatly into the genres and literary categories where Le Guin has achieved prominence. She herself recognized this bias and was at times poignantly funny about the genres she wrote in.[1] Nevertheless, the fact remains that her mainstream stories, of what she called Orsinian Realism, have received comparatively little attention.[2] This article is an attempt to explore the richness of the other Le Guin—the imaginative literary depths of her Orsinian world and its connections to the rest of her oeuvre. Some of the most remarkable (and remarkably underappreciated) elements of

1 Le Guin has addressed this issue in an essay called "Despising Genres," which may be found as a free e-book extra in HarperCollins PerfectBound version of *The Birthday of the World*.

2 This is a term from Le Guin's list "Some Genres I Write in," which appears in the collection *Unlocking the Air* as well as on her website: http://www.ursulakleguin.com/AlternateTitles.html

Le Guin's Orsinian cycle are her treatment of time and chronology, her experiments with the idea of interconnectedness, and her imaginative placement of herself (as a character and as the omniscient narrator), with her deeply-held Taoist view of the universe, in Orsinia.

First, allow me to provide some context. Orsinia, or the Ten Provinces, is a fictional Central European country, invented by Ursula Kroeber around 1951, when, as a graduate student at Columbia University, she began writing poems and stories set in this imaginary place. Orsinia's name is derived from the author's first name, Ursula, Latin *ursa* and Italian *orsino* for "bear," according to James W. Bittner. Orsinia's name also resembles such names as Bohemia, Galicia, Moravia—the small Eastern European nations that have never had lasting political independence or geographical stability. Ursula Kroeber's first finished novel, *Malafrena*, was set in Orsinia. Likewise set in Orsinia was her first published short story, "An Die Musik," which later became one of the collected Orsinian Tales, a book compiled and arranged by the author in 1976, after she had made a name for herself in the genres of fantasy and science fiction. Later still, in 2001, Le Guin wrote her last Orsinian Tale, "Unlocking the Air," which takes place in 1991.

Although it is a fictional state, Orsinia shares many of the real-life characteristics of Central or Eastern-European nations. Barbara Bucknall, in her book-length study, states that while "in fact, it cannot be identified as any particular country," some readers insist that Orsinia is recognizably Romania or Hungary, in disguise. There are several reasons for its uncanny verisimilitude. In the first place, Orsinia's history is replete with events of the real-world history of Central Europe, with its wars and revolutions repeatedly sweeping over a small country, dividing it both geographically and sociopolitically.

Orsinia's history is closely connected to European history in general. It retains the evidence of a Viking invasion, which brought in the Norse religious practices portrayed in the story "The Barrow." According to Bittner, later on, the country was a part of the Hapsburg Empire in the 16th century and Austria-Hungary in the 18th, while in the intervening two centuries between those dominations, Orsinia was threatened by the Ottoman Empire, Prussia, and Austria. As one of the successor states after World War I, Orsinia would have had a short respite of true nationhood before being overwhelmed again by Hitler, and then by Stalin. Real historical events, such the upheavals of 1848, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the two World Wars, the anti-Soviet Budapest uprising of 1956, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and something very much like the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004 affect Orsinia as they have affected all the nations of Eastern Europe.

Another reason for Orsinia's verisimilitude is that Le Guin's tales reflect the author's deep understanding and imaginative reach in recreating the psychological conditions of a small Eastern European

country, conditions which serve as the backdrop for the lives of her Orsinian characters. This informed speculation creates for the reader a level of believability George Steiner has called "hermeneutic trust" in his translation treatise *After Babel*.[3] Orsinia is "a product of cumulative impressions," skillfully rearranged and combined with intelligent anticipations and educated guesses about the real-life conditions of Eastern Europe throughout history. History is for Le Guin not a science but an art, which can rarely claim absolute objective truths. In her interview with Jonathan White, she said that "every age has its own history, and if there is any objective truth, we cannot reach it with words." The facts of history, remote or recent, are always enveloped in interpretation and affect each person differently, becoming a part of personal history. The self of each person is the sum of his/her memories, both personal and collective. Therefore, historical truth becomes, in the words of one of Le Guin's characters, "a matter of the imagination."

3 George Steiner's discussion involves Ezra Pound's imaginative (re)constructions of China in *Cathay*, which, according to Steiner, is fundamentally a "Western invention of China."

By virtue (and tragedy) of its location, Orsinia is connected to Europe and the rest of humanity not only through geography and culture, but also through a multitude of intimate human relationships. In "An Die Musik," the main character's sister lives in Prague; the impresario Otto Egorin was born and raised in Vienna and speaks fluent German. Dr. Kereth, the protagonist in "The Fountains," feels a close affinity with the French and claims the history of France as his own heritage. The radio in "An Die Musik" plays a song by Schubert, sung by the German-born Lotte Lehmann. Le Guin describes the subtler cultural connections that exist at a very personal level of her characters' individual lives. The connections are deeply rooted in each person's individual and collective history and experience.

This experience and cultural matrix are not all positive, however. To quote James Bittner again, Orsinia finds itself at the "sick heart of Europe." So the darker side of these connections is also always near. One of the characters in "A Week in the Country," for example, has a Nazi death camp number tattoo on his arm. The young blind man at the center of "Conversations at Night" is a World War I veteran. The Soviet-style political repressions in "The House" are a result of nationalizing private property. Likewise, in "The Road East," set in 1956, political purges are exported to Orsinia from the Soviet Union via Hungary, and the Hungarian Revolution is explicitly mentioned. And in "Unlocking the Air," set in 1991, the young Orsinians debate the potential consequences of the onset of market capitalism and consumerism for the future of their country.

Furthermore, and importantly, the European world of Orsinia expands to other continents, as well. In "A Week in the Country," Le Guin writes: "On a sunny morning in 1962 in Cleveland, Ohio, it was raining in Krasnoy," thus connecting the two continents in a single reach of thought. This intercontinental link is especially important because of Le Guin's persistent motif of the essential interweaving of all humanity.

Perhaps the best illustration of that is the fact that Le Guin places her younger self and her own family as characters at the chronological center of the Orsinian Tales in the story "Imaginary Countries," set in 1935. This is the luminous, dream-like tale Bittner calls "A portrait of the author as a very young girl." Zida, Le Guin's child avatar in the story, lives in an enchanted world of a loving and comfortably well-off family. She makes a unicorn trap with colored bits of paper and falls asleep in the woods. Her father is a gentle, caring, and wise professor of Medieval History. Her mother is a beautiful goddess-like woman whom her husband calls Freya. The family's summer house, the so-called Asgard at the center of the story, is a literary recreation of the Kroebers' summer residence in California's Napa Valley, where young Ursula and her siblings grew up. In the story, Zida and her brothers play the game they call "Ragnarok," the Norse mythology's apocalyptic war. The game is both an archetypal reenactment and a foreshadowing of real-world cataclysmic events coming up in Orsinia and in Europe. None of the children are aware that the world as they know it is as fragile as it is enchanted. In real life, all three of Le Guin's brothers fought in World War Two. While distancing them in time, space, and characterization, the author writes of the people, places, and events closest to her own heart, suggesting an unbreakable spiritual bond, indeed a unity, between herself and her Orsinian characters. In one of her conversations with Helene Escudie, Le Guin also has called Orsinia her own "half-imaginary homeland."

The kinship of East and West is also underscored, as Le Guin explores the "moral meaning of history to the individuals living through it," writes Charlotte Spivak. And, in the words of Le Guin herself, the realization that all humans share the "singular catastrophe of being alive," is essential to the experience of being fully human.

As the examples above demonstrate, it is not geography or history as such that are important in the Orsinian tales and elsewhere in Le Guin's works, but geography and history as they connect the characters' lives, because, as James Bittner puts it, "relationships, not discrete things, are the subject of all of Le Guin's fiction." And Warren Rochelle writes that Le Guin's vision is of human "communities of the heart." That is why, according to Bittner, the actual geographical boundaries of Orsinia are meant to be fluid and undefinable. This fluidity of geographical boundaries, another distancing technique, is a perennial theme in Le Guin's fiction, and it is discovery, not recognition, which is the goal of her imaginative art. Be it the drifting ice on the distant planet of Gethen in *The Left Hand of Darkness* or the Orsinian karst plain, perpetually reshaped by underground streams, the tectonics of Le Guin's imaginary lands reflects the psychological and social uncertainties, the inherent instability and fluidity of human existence. Likewise, in the story called "Ether, OR," in her 1996 collection *Unlocking the Air*, an American town has no fixed

geographical location; it moves and shifts perspectives, geographically, and—while the story switches from one narrative voice to another—psychologically. Similarly, Orsinia's location, history, and geology are ever changing.

The theme of the essential inter-connectedness that is central to her early Orsinian Tales, continues in most of Le Guin's other, more famous worlds. Her expanding Hainish universe, for example, is called the Ekumen (from the Greek "oikumene" for "home" and "hearth"), and all its planets are connected to a common source. Likewise, the humans, the animals, and the dragons of Earthsea are interconnected by verbal magic, which permeates their existence, so that if one creature or person tampers with the world by abusing his, her, or its power, the world's balance is violated and has to be restored.

This idea of the essential balance all creatures depend on is a belief Le Guin derives from the Taoism that influences all of her writing.[4] One of the messages of Taoism is that a non-combative, non-competitive, non-violent, contemplative existence and individual self-knowledge are the way to intra- and inter-personal harmony. Taoists believe that every human tendency, good or bad, should be in balance with its opposite. According to this philosophy, opposites are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Allowing one to dominate the other creates imbalance, suffering, and violence, which is, she writes, "the loss of options." Another important Taoist belief influencing Le Guin's fiction is the view of time as both linear *and* cyclical. The next section explores the implications of this belief in the Orsinian Tales.

4 Not to be confused with the Taoist religion. Le Guin's philosophy is secular.

The Non-chronological Arrangement of the Tales

Each of the Orsinian Tales is dated at the end, but the overall arrangement in the 1976 collection does not follow the actual internal chronology. Chronologically, the earliest Tale is "The Barrow," which takes place around 1150, at the time when Christianity is taking hold of Orsinia's outermost regions; this Tale is actually the book's second text in order of appearance. The Tale that opens the collection, "The Fountains," dated 1960, is actually the ninth chronologically. The last Tale in the 1976 collection, "Imaginary Countries," set in 1935, is its chronological center.

This seemingly strange arrangement is a narrative device that serves a few important functions. First, as I have already mentioned, it shifts the chronological center so as to suggest that it is incidental, that the center can be and is any or all of the stories, or even the gaps between them. History is full of gaps, and the historical events alluded to in the Tales cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Secondly, Warren Rochelle points out, this arrangement enables "meaning [to] emerge from a network of relationships" among the Tales, without

imposing a linear cause-and-effect sequence. This is a strategy Le Guin employs in many of her other stories and novels, namely, *The Dispossessed*, which alternates chapters depicting the "present" and the "past" and suggests similarities in themes between them. *The Left Hand of Darkness* also alternates both narrative voices and time perspectives. Similarly, the novel *Always Coming Home* is a "multi-media" compilation of first-person narratives, folklore, songs, poems, and even music. The meaning of these works is fluid, equivocal—very much in the spirit of what Mikhail Bakhtin called "polyglossia," a literary device of allowing multiple perspectives and interpretations to coexist in a literary work. Orsinian Tales can be stand-alone, readable separately, in any order. Therefore, the whole series, or rather the cycle, has multiple access points. Le Guin has experimented with this format a lot. The reader is invited and encouraged to co-create the text, to make his or her own conclusions. In her introduction to another collection, Le Guin brought up the need to find a new name for a compilation of related stories, "which form not a novel, but a whole." She called it "a story suite," similar to the musical form, as in "Bach cello suite." In such a compilation, all the parts are integrally interwoven and related, though they are also "performable" on their own, readable separately. The Orsinian Tales form a similar interconnected cycle, which also includes, as I mentioned earlier, the novel *Malafrena*.

Such an open-ended text arrangement is typical of Le Guin. The most obvious examples are the Earthsea series and her Hainish universe—what she called the Ekumen. The Hainish, in Le Guin's works, are the original human race with a long and involved history of settling many widely separated planets, some of which form a loose association (the Ekumen) for the purposes of gaining and exchanging knowledge. Le Guin often revisited both Earthsea and the planets she had already discovered in the Hainish universe. Often she discovered new worlds, new cultures, new societies, new people. The same can be said for the Earthsea cycle, which started out as a novel about the boy-wizard Ged, expanded into a trilogy, but was later expanded further by two more novels and a few short stories set in that particular world.

As for the Orsinian Tales, the last one she wrote is "Unlocking the Air." In a September 2002 letter, Le Guin told me she would include it in a collection with the rest of the Tales, if she had the chance to do so. This Tale is set about the time of the fall of the Soviet empire and the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Because in its original published form, the Tale was not dated at the end, I asked Le Guin to date it, if she saw the necessity of doing so. She dated it 1991, one year ahead of the Tale's actual original copyright date (1990), though with the benefit of hindsight. This small leap into the future is not incongruous with what Bittner calls "a complex organic vision of history" embodied in Le Guin's arrangement of all the Orsinian Tales.

Her vision of history and of time is cyclical, as well as linear. Here is how Le Guin explained this twofold nature of history, in speaking of her Hainish universe:

> …[Y]ou can ask the Hainish, who have been around for a long time, and whose historians not only know a lot of what happened, but also know that it keeps happening and will happen again.… They are somewhat like Ecclesiastes, seeing no new things under the, or any, sun; but they are much more cheerful about it than [the author of Ecclesiastes] was.… The people on all the other worlds, who all descended from the Hainish, naturally don't want to believe what the old folks say, so they start making history; and so it all happens again.

Similarly, in the Orsinian Tales, time and history are presented as cyclical in many subtle ways; history is a web of memories, a delicate weaving full of gaps. The Tales are connected both by the gaps and by other factors, such as setting, theme, and the characters' names. Within the stories themselves, there are numerous shifts of time and perspective, as if time's course constantly loops back to the past or branches out into the future. In "The House," when Mariya has a vision of her former residence, she is described as "squeezed … flat between past and present." She also sees another time and place in a blind mirror, as though the mirror were a window into her past. In "A Week in the Country," such shifts occur in the characters' memories and their projections into the future, as, for instance, when Bruna tries to gauge her prospects with her future husband, Stephan. In "The Road East," time and space converge in Maler's dreams of the road that leads into the past, into history: "… in his mind he walked to them on foot and it was long ago, early in the last century, perhaps." In a key scene, he sits down to rest on the side of this imaginary road, eases his back-strap off his shoulders; yet, when his mother calls him to supper, he gets up and joins her at the table in their apartment. In one sense he has not left the living room, and in another, he joins her out of the past and through a great distance.

In "Unlocking the Air," the idea of time as both linear and cyclical is the most prominent. History is presented as a cycle of retelling the same fairy tale. Within one paragraph, the past, the present, and the future converge:

> This is history. Once upon a time in 1830, in 1848, in 1866, in 1918, in 1947, in 1956, stones flew.… The soldiers raised their muskets to the ready, the soldiers aimed their rifles, the soldiers poised their machine guns.

The passage connects the events of European history with Orsinia as it exists in 1991 and with the events in the novel *Malafrena*, where the protagonists take part in a 19th century Orsinian nationalist uprising against Austro-Hungarian rule.

The less obvious examples of time as both cyclical and linear appear as symbols in Orsinian landscapes and cityscapes. The limestone karst of "Brothers and Sisters," though seemingly unchanging, has underground rivers that carve it and reshape it ceaselessly. Humans also change the karst by mining it, transporting, depositing, and transforming the materials. They also farm some of the land, irrigate it, as well as bury their dead in it. All this perpetual change is both linear—entropy—and cyclical—the lime deposits are simply shifting, not diminishing. Time and history are both cyclical and linear as humans perceive them: in the eponymous Tale, "Ile Forest," which, in the present, consists of just a hundred or so trees, expands into the past in one character's imagination and covers the entire Orsinian province of Valone Alte.

The dual quality of time is also subtly reflected in the structures built by humans. In Foranoy, the Old City and the New City are connected by a bridge, where the hero of "An Die Musik" spends a few tranquil moments, connecting the past and the present, while the river beneath it, a current in time, reflects the arches of the bridge, "each with its reflection forming a perfect circle." Another Taoist feature of this vision of time and history is the emphasis on the contemplation of the present as the moment of true human power. The past and the future are both affected by the decisions of the present; moreover, they are present in the present. It is not about control, because control is deemed illusory by the Taoists, and the need for control, according to this philosophy, results from fear. Instead, it is about making the right decision. But what would be the criteria for "rightness" and correctness? Le Guin does not give the answers; her fiction is open-ended. The implication is that there are no sure prescriptions, no dogma to guide every human decision; the answers are always context-bound. Therefore, to make the right decisions is to recognize the context; usually, it is a context larger than the immediate circumstances. The constructs of music and art (as well as history and nature) serve to provide this larger view by allowing the present to expand and coalesce with the eternal. Ladislas Gaye, the composer in "An Die Musik," gets a glimpse of eternity through music, which helps him transcend his immediate circumstances. The young characters in "A Week in the Country" listen to old love songs in various foreign languages and are moved by them to see their own love from a universal perspective. Art, history, music, poetry, because of the fluidity of their meanings and individual appeal, seem to be particularly well suited for providing an enlarged perspective necessary for contemplating the current circumstances and for making decisions in the expanded present. In one of her poems from the collection *Sixty Odd*, Le Guin describes this essential relationship between the contemplation of history and the decisions of the present:

We make too much History.
[...]To be we need to know the river
holds the salmon and the ocean
holds the whales as lightly
as the body holds the soul
in the present tense, in the present tense.

History is a human construct, a linguistic construct, essential to our collective and individual identity. However, history is often used as a weapon, an excuse, or a justification for perpetuating interpersonal and international violence. Humans have often been unable to balance the past, the present, and the future; often one dominates or overwhelms the others. Yet the future might depend upon achieving this difficult balance, the larger vista of time and humanity's place in it. Envisioning—without fear—a time when one did not or will not exist, one might take comfort in this thought, as, apparently, did Ursula Le Guin and sometimes her characters. For instance, "An Die Musik," one of the first stories she published in her long career, explores the role of music in particular and art in general in the human search for a broader view of time and identity. Music and art at times remove all hindrances to contemplating the "complete, enduring darkness" of eternity. Again, in this Tale, the past and the future are balanced in the present, if only for a moment. These moments of atonement with nature, with humanity, with history, and with time, are fleeting but important to the balance of human experience. The Orsinians are often aware, if vaguely, of their own longing for this balance; yet, as Le Guin seems to suggest, this awareness is not at home in cultures privileging linearity over cyclicality, results over process, action over contemplation, youth over maturity, control over freedom, masculinity over femininity, etc. Thus, humans often doom themselves to perpetuating the imbalance of their own lives and, by extension, of history; as a result, human history privileges war over peace, power over understanding, and competition over cooperation.

By contrast, in "Unlocking the Air," history is being made in the present by the active/passive participation of many "soft faces with shining eyes, soft little breasts and stomachs and thighs protected only by bits of cloth." The "softness" of the crowd is contrasted with the compact, rock-hard tension of the "palace of power," "a bomb [...] if it exploded it would burst with horrible violence, hurling pointed shards of stone." In Le Guin's own rendition of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, she writes:

This is called the small dark light:
the soft, the weak prevail
over the hard, the strong.

In "Unlocking the Air," the young people are described as "absolutely certain and completely ignorant. Like spring—like the

lambs in spring. They have never done anything and they know exactly what to do." And once again, in her translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, Le Guin writes:

> To know without knowing is best.
> Not knowing without knowing it is sick.
> To be sick of sickness
> Is the only cure.

In Orsinia, this sickness is the fear that the past will repeat itself, but the young Stephana Fabbre, a student of early Romantic poetry, knows without knowing that history does repeat itself, that the tide always draws back again, but also that qualitative change is inevitable. And she knows that the way to effect this change is through cooperation. The young join forces with previous generations, and, as Stephana says to her mother, "there is enough time to go around." The girl's father, who has been hiding from the world in his research laboratory, and her mother, who is initially frightened by the prospect of sweeping social change, both join their daughter, trusting her to make the right decision. As Le Guin writes in another poem, "outside trust, what air is there to breathe?" In one sense, history is the sum of each individual's memories and life experiences, all of them subjective, some of them imaginary, most of them reportless. So what is there for us all—Americans, Orsinians—to share? As Le Guin puts it, we "share ... the singular catastrophe of being alive" and the hope that the next generation will join us in making the right decisions. We also share humor, music, and art, as well as the inevitable realization that all of our lives are woven into the tapestry of Time, that we are creating its intricate patterns by using language, and composing a tale, parts of which we are doomed to repeat, "till we get it right."

Orsinia is where Le Guin's published oeuvre began. And these Tales reflect her philosophical framework, as well as her understanding of time and history. Her imaginative placement of herself as a girl growing up in Orsinia reflects her convictions of universal interconnectedness. Perhaps more important for Le Guin's fans is that Le Guin's other (more famous) worlds are, in many respects, rooted in and connected to Orsinia, the first imaginary country she created in detail. The Orsinian Tales provide a larger vista of her literary achievements and offer many glimpses into the remarkably detailed and soulful visions that have been Le Guin's trademarks. A

Works by Ursula K. Le Guin

Always Coming Home. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

The Birthday of the World and Other Stories. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

Changing Planes: Stories. New York: Harcourt, 2003.

The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia. New York: Avon, 1974.

The Eye of the Heron. New York: Bantam, 1978.

Malafrena. Berkeley: Berkeley Publishing Group, 1979.

The Left Hand Of Darkness. New York: Ace, 1971.

Orsinian Tales. New York: Bantam, 1976.

Sixty Odd: New Poems. Boston: Shambhala, 1999.

Unlocking the Air and Other Stories. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

Other References

Bittner, James W. "Persuading Us to Rejoice and Teaching Us How to Praise: Le Guin's Orsinian Tales." *Science Fiction Studies*, 5. (November, 1978). 215-42.

Bucknall, Barbara J. *Ursula K. Le Guin*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981.

Escudie, Helene. "Entretien avec Ursula K. Le Guin." *Conversations with Ursula K. Le Guin*. Carl Freedman, ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. Pp. 124-62.

Rochelle, Warren. *Communities of the Heart: The Rhetoric of Myth in the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*. Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2000.

Spivak, Charlotte. *Ursula K. Le Guin*. Boston: Twayne, 1984.

Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1992.

White, Jonathan. "Coming Back from the Silence" (Interview with Ursula Le Guin). *Whole Earth Review* 85 (Spring 1995), p. 76.

Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching: A Book about the Way and the Power of the Way.* A New English Translation by Ursula K. Le Guin. Boston: Shambhala, 1998.

6 SCIENCES AND ARTS

The Aesthetics of the Axe

Paul Galvez

Research Fellow, Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History
University of Texas at Dallas

It is not uncommon that the oldest works in a museum collection command the most attention. Who hasn't marveled at an Egyptian or Mesopotamian artifact at an encyclopedic museum like the Louvre or the Met? Who isn't impressed by the earliest abstract paintings in a modern art museum? But what happens when the objects in question are not only incredibly old, but the oldest manmade things that we know of?

It says much about our fascination for everything prehistoric that the stone tools and shaped rocks recently exhibited in *First Sculpture: From Handaxe to Figure Stone* at the Nasher Sculpture Center did not seem out of place there. Normally falling under the purview of the science or anthropological museum, these ancient implements easily stood toe-to-toe with the Nasher's usual fare. This should not surprise us. Modern sculpture, particularly that produced within the orbit of surrealism, took direct inspiration from prehistory. So we have long been conditioned to accept the presence of the objects of early humanity within the sphere of the most advanced art, even though said objects were never intended to be art. Or were they?

What makes *First Sculpture* more than just a mere transfer of specimens from the science museum to the art museum is its underlying premise: that things like handaxes, face-like rocks, and spherical stones are not just records of human activity but records of *artistic* activity. During the Paleolithic, hominids (a category including *Australopithecus*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, and eventually Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*) learned how to create stone tools. By striking pieces of flint together to make variously-sized flakes, they made what we today would call axes and knives. For a long time, and even in pop culture today, the image of this early society was not that much different from an illustration from Louis Figuier's popular *Primitive Man* (1870). There, brutish cavepeople went about their daily tasks: men hunted and gathered while women stayed at home and took care of the children; they covered their private parts with impeccably tailored animal skins; the firepit was home; and the at the center of it all was the family. If this sounds familiar, it should. For as many have noted since, the artist simply projected turn-of-the-century middle-class values and customs back a couple million years.

Makapan pebble, Makapansgat, South Africa
ca. 2.5 million, Jasperite, 3 x 2 1/2 in. (7.6 x 6.3 cm)
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

This is not to say that our ancestors did not have social structure. On the contrary, in addition to stone tools, we have evidence of body decoration and the making of pigments as well as tools made of bone. They probably used animal skins and pieces of wood in interesting ways as well. But the handaxes are still our best guides, both for their durability over the millennia and the sheer quantity to be found all over the world. To put this into context, we are talking about the three-million-year period between the commencement of the most recent ice age and the beginning around 10,000 years ago of the warmer interglacial period that we still live in today. That is, a period starting 60 million years after the last dinosaurs and ending around the time of the first agricultural societies (but still 7,000 years before the invention of writing).

What is remarkable about this period is the stability of the handaxe form across millennia. At a time when the human brain was quickly evolving into its present state, the toolmaking process was passed on hardly altered. In comparison, the last three thousand years of human history (an infinitesimal amount of time, geologically speaking), has witnessed huge technological advances, from the invention of the wheel to spaceships, while our craniums in the same period have remained more or less the same size.

Did hominids during this period appreciate the aesthetics of the handaxe? Did they collect or produce rocks that looked like faces and figures? The curators of the exhibition believe so, and they construct certain arguments on its behalf, to various degrees of credibility, as we shall see. In the case of the handaxe, the organizers point to certain features that make no sense from the standpoint of utility. A giant-sized stone, for instance, would be too heavy to easily wield. The shape of certain choppers seems to follow the patterns of the rock from which they were carved. It was impossible to judge from the information given in the catalogue and the exhibition alone the hypothesis that the existence of unusual size and patterning is proof of aesthetic intent. Maybe large handaxes *could* be useful for doing certain things. And statistically speaking, amongst thousands of examples, isn't it conceivable that at least some of them might have had an interesting pattern purely by coincidence?

More convincing for the argument than the most spectacular examples were the ones that were humbler but came with more information. At Boxgrove, in England, handaxes were found in the thousands. Apparently, some of them are so similar to each other that archeologists have speculated that they are evidence of a particularly distinct hand, group of hands, or some kind of systematic production. Whatever the case, this is too many examples from a single place, in a relatively short period of time, to be attributed to chance. If some of the more generic pieces had been shown next to the most extraordinary ones from the same place, this would have lent greater credence to the idea that they were made with something other than use-value in mind. It still would not have proved it without a doubt. But at least one could have made a better case for the argument that they were intentionally exceptional.

The highly concentrated set of objects was the exception, not the rule. According to the catalogue, the curators scoured public collections around the world in search of the best objects for the show. It didn't matter where they came from, as long as they fit the criteria for being "exceptional," that is, gigantic, of unusual shape and pattern, highly symmetrical, etc. They looked spectacular in the vitrines, but it did make one wonder if the aesthetic perception belonged to early humankind or to the curators themselves.

An art historian by training, I am in no position to really judge the scientific arguments of *First Sculpture*. But what is interesting to me is that, whether talking about prehistoric humans or us moderns, the criteria for something to be called *artistic* had an eerily modern ring to it. This is because the idea that the aesthetic is constituted by what in the object exceeds absolute need dates to the eighteenth century. In the Enlightenment, when an urgent task for philosophy was to categorize and define all human thought, the concept of the beautiful received rigorous examination. It was then that the dichotomy between need and aesthetic pleasure, between utility and the beautiful, was given its first philosophical definition. In many ways, we still work under this general principle. If we today think of the artwork as part of larger web of socio-historical forces, we at the same time also believe that art somehow stands apart, however minutely, from those forces, even if only to comment upon the act of its own failed attempt at separation. In other words, while we no longer think of art as purely disinterested, art can only be critical on the condition that it is also not purely instrumental.

Would the curators say that they were projecting a modern view of what art is

back into prehistory? Probably not. But that is precisely what *First Sculpture* does, with a neuroscientific twist that will be addressed later below. This is most apparent in its presentation of the other class of objects, so-called figure stones. Unlike the knapped choppers, these stones have no ostensible use. If created by man, then they would truly be needless and therefore able to be classified as art. This would put the birth of art a couple of million years earlier than the cave paintings with which Art History 101 usually begins. But are they man-made, or did chance accidents of erosion leave rocks that to our eyes look like faces? Let's suppose that their excavation at a certain stratigraphic layer or that chemical dating proved that these artifacts were from the Paleolithic. The anthropological approach would be to determine what other kinds of objects remain from which to reconstruct this hypothetical prehistoric society. Were there other kinds of figurative items? Were they found in particular places like caves? And if so, can connections be drawn or inferred among them? When the evidence is abundant, as it is in more recent times, one can infer a great deal, e.g. whether that community had funerary rites, or something resembling a cosmology or mythic thought. But when there is a paucity of comparanda, let alone doubts about dating, this task remains speculative at best.

We are asked to believe that these things are the earliest sculptures, and not just tools or anthropomorphic objects, ultimately because first, they seem to have no use and second, they are too particular in design to have been determined by chance. But barring sufficient evidence (which admittedly may exist outside this exhibition in the scholarly literature), how can we possibly know that a particular shape or form or material was the product of human manufacture? In order to procure consensus, the presenters draw upon neuroscience. Take the example of symmetry. We know that certain areas of the brain are stimulated by the perception of symmetry. This innate appreciation of bilateral symmetry helped early human beings to recognize each other and thus to survive. This was especially true of faces. It was quite amazing to see in the accompanying symposium that deformed photos of celebrities, when turned upside down, didn't register to the audience as aberrations.[1] Acknowledging the general overall image was enough for our brains to recognize them as faces, even though the eyes and mouths had been grossly altered. So far so good. But it is one thing to say that we are hard-wired to like symmetry; it is another to say that because of that we want to produce symmetrical things. I'm not saying it's not possible, just that one cannot logically use the existence of one as conclusive proof of the other.

It is one thing to say that we are hard-wired to like symmetry; it is another to say that because of that we want to produce symmetrical things.

At this point it might be helpful to put this neuroscientific turn in historical

1 With presentations from co-curators Tony Berlant and Thomas Wynn, John Gowlett, Richard Deacon, Leanne Young, and Naama Goren-Inbar, the symposium was held at the Nasher on January 27th, 2018; video of the presentations and panel discussion is published on YouTube.

Cleaver, Gesher Benoit Ya'aqov,
North Bridge Acheulian (NBA), ca. 780,000, Basalt
6 1/2 x 3 15/16 x 2 23/64 in. (16.5 x 10 x 6 cm)
Tel Hai University, Israel

perspective. A century and half ago, well before *Jurassic Park*, prehistory was an obsession of nineteenth-century scholars and antiquarians. One of the pieces in the show in fact comes from the collection of one of these proto-prehistorians, a customs-house officer from the French town of Abbeville, Jacques Boucher de Perthes.[2] What has earned him the name of the father of the study of prehistory in France was his unwavering commitment to the then-extremely controversial idea that ancient man lived alongside extinct animals. Why would this have caused so much debate? Even though natural historians and geologists were beginning to accept the idea that the earth was much older than biblically-derived dates had hitherto suggested, scientists were still very much reluctant to put the appearance of mankind so far back in the timeline. If human beings were special and made in God's image, and if the fossil record showed a slow progression of fauna from the most primitive species to the most advanced ones as one moved closer to the earth's surface, then surely men and women would have arrived at the very end of the chronology and not be mixed in with the earlier, less advanced species. For if the latter were actually true, it would only take a few steps to argue that—gasp!—humans evolved from lower life forms.

Boucher de Perthes presented his discoveries from nearby quarries in his 1845 book *Antiques celtiques et antédiluviennes*. The title alone is indicative about the state of the field at the time. Most French antiquarians were concerned with the people who lived in France before the Romans, the Celts. As a learned amateur, not an academician or professor, Boucher de Perthes had to wait a considerable time for the acceptance of his theories (the quasi-philosophical prose of his first texts did not help him in this regard). Yet what really held him back were claims of forgeries and fakes. Scholars assumed that local stonebreakers had forged ancient implements, in the knowledge that people like Boucher de Perthes would be willing to pay a lot for them. Then there was also the cursory nature of the excavations. Rocks were often hard to date because the excavators did not carefully note where they were found. This was essential, for how could one know whether or not animals existed at the same time, if one didn't know what time one was talking about. By the 1860s, the search for traces of "fossil man" became a *cause célèbre*. In 1863, no less than

2 A flint flake circa 500,000 to 30,000 years old, in the collection of the Musée d'Archéologie nationale et Domaine national de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France.

Charles Lyell, the eloquent and influential British geologist, wrote in support of Boucher de Perthes after visiting Abbeville himself. Many who subsequently took the trip also began to change their minds. Eventually Boucher de Perthes's collection became the basis for the National Museum of Archeology at Saint Germain-en-Laye, the first of its kind in France.

What did its owner have to say about such early figurative representations? Quite a bit actually. Practically a quarter of the text of *Antiques celtiques et antédiluviennes* and half of its illustrations concerned things that were not handaxes but rather symbols: steles, talismans, animal silhouettes, hieroglyphs, biomorphic pebbles, and of course rocks in the shape of human heads. Boucher de Perthes recognized the speculative nature of what he was doing: "Was it my imagination? You be the judge. I do not present my idea as a certitude but as a question to explore."

First Sculpture takes up Boucher de Perthes's question and tries to answer it with certainty. Its ally is the neuroscientific analysis of human brain function. If the early human brain was not too dissimilar to our own, then its core functions were probably similar to ours. That is to say, if we

Biddenham "Big Boy", England
Late handaxe
ca. 300,000
Flint
11 x 4 in. (27.9 x 10 cm)
The British Museum

are drawn to bilateral symmetry and tend to see faces where they are not, then so, too, did our ancestors, just as they shared involuntary processes like breathing and digestion, or coordinated locomotion. The problem is that liking and making are two entirely different operations. Just because I like the color blue, does not mean that I will make only blue sculptures or avoid black-and-white drawing altogether.

It is up to properly trained scientists to judge the conclusions about neural function presented in the catalogue and exhibition. From the view of the field of art history however, there are certain reasons to be wary about such grandiose claims. Not just a few times in the history of art has a set of norms been held as a universal aesthetic ideal. Laws of perspective, mathematical ratios, classical proportions, and—well before electronic brain scanning—symmetry itself were often held up as standards of perfection underwritten by divine and then later scientific authority. It is not that the creation of standards against which to test one's judgement was inherently wrong. After all, art criticism could not happen without evaluative criteria. It is rather that such norms, in claiming universal validity, became highly rigid and exclusionary. To define beauty became a way to repress aesthetics that did not match one's own. Thus, attempts to explain what causes a feeling of harmony, pleasure, and excitement in front of a work of art often went hand-in-hand with denouncements of what causes discomfort and displeasure, inevitably the production of barbarians, foreigners, and the unskilled.

To be fair, I don't think that *First Sculpture* was locating certain aspects of aesthetic experience in the brain in order to devalue others. Indeed, the discussion of gigantism and exaggerations ("peak shifts") in the making of handaxes suggest that the non-normal could be as interesting from an artistic point of view as the normative. The reason I raise a red flag is that with every new scientific discovery it is all too tempting to attribute to nature what is in fact a product of culture. And culture by definition is manmade, decided by social convention, and historically contingent (i.e., not universal). This temptation is particularly strong when there is not much information. We know next to little about the daily lives, group organization, communication, and (if any) religious or cult practices of these early societies. Without these basic facts, there is no opportunity to make the counter-argument that the symmetry of the spheroids or the anthropomorphism of rocks has less to do with early humankind's neural processing capabilities and more to do with, let's say, a way of maintaining a social hierarchy or celebrating the hunt.

Prehistory is thus a minefield of methodological problems. On the one hand, we don't want to consign all human activity, in all its complexity, to biological mechanisms; on the other, we don't want to uncritically project our ways back to a period that probably had cultural dynamics different from our own. Only more research (including new fields like paleogenetics) will further elucidate the enigmas of prehistory. But as long as it remains enigmatic it will always be an arena in which to explore the most basic question of all: what does it mean to be human? ▲

First Sculpture: Handaxe to Figure Stone. Exhibition curated by Tony Berlant and Thomas Wynn. Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, January 27th to April 28th, 2018. Catalog with essay by Berlant and Wynn, and contributions by Jared Diamond, V. S. Ramachandran, Richard Deacon, Naama Goren-Inbar, John Gowlett, and Evan Maurer, 188pp., 84 color and 19 black-and-white illustrations, $70 cloth.

Kim Fischer as The Creature in Dallas Theater Center's Frankenstein, by Nick Dear, from the novel by Mary Shelley. Directed by Joel Ferrell. Kalita Humphreys Theater, Dallas, Feb. 2 to Mar. 4, 2018. Photo by Karen Almond.

Womb and Doom

Frankenstein as Mother and Maker

Adam Briggle

Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of North Texas

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which celebrates its two hundredth birthday this year, has itself become a monster, stitched together this way and that way from the raw materials of an ever-renewing (or ever-decaying) popular culture. Shelley would approve. In her introduction to the 1831 edition she wrote, "I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper." Here I look at two of *Frankenstein's* offspring, a stage adaptation by Nick Dear and a new version of the novel published by MIT Press and annotated for scientists and engineers.

Since its 2011 debut at London's Royal National Theatre, Dear's *Frankenstein* has traveled the world. This winter, it came to haunt the Kalita Humphreys Theater in Dallas, where the intimate setting thrust the audience uncomfortably, delightfully close to the grim drama. Dear's telling of the story deviates from the original in several ways, including who gets to know Victor's secret. In the novel, he never tells his fiancé Elizabeth about his creature. He promises to confide his "tale of misery and terror" the day after their marriage, but she is killed by the creature on their wedding night. On the stage, though, we get watch Elizabeth absorb the news of Victor's abomination.

She waits alone in her wedding gown on her bridal bed while a paranoid and armed Victor leads a posse of men on a security sweep of the mansion. They are finally wed, but he still hardly speaks to her, let alone touches her. Maybe tonight Victor, the 'genius,' will at long last seek a kind of carnal knowledge that cannot be had alone with a cadaver in a lab. But when he does arrive, he sits haggard at the end of the bed as if it were his desk. "I built a man!...I brought him to life!...I have lured him here," he says, looking over his shoulder.

Elizabeth is an amorous woman. Earlier, she had mounted Victor, insisting, "Show me how you'll give me children. Touch me. Feel my heat!" Unaroused, he refused, tossing her aside to finish packing his trunk to travel to Scotland to raise the dead. Elizabeth was left (in heat) for many months. Now he was back and rather than consummate, he confesses! Her temperature rises to a mocking disdain: "You lured him to our wedding?! But, Victor, he wasn't on the guest list!" Jolly Abraham, playing Elizabeth, delivers just the right sneer. She laughs at the thought of his creature, "This is ridiculous…What is it, like a puppet?"

Victor mansplains to her (again) that he was conducting serious scientific work. She wouldn't understand. He was trying to create life! Elizabeth retorts: "But if you wanted to create life, why not just give me a child?... That is how we create life, Victor—that is the usual way!" The conversation shows Victor in a new light. Not a master inventor. Not even a monster. Rather, a fool. The entire endeavor, all that suffering, was utter stupidity. He could have had life all along—life born of pleasure and ecstasy, of rose-tinged (not reeking) flesh. That idiot. Victor leaves to do one more security check. The creature then has his way with her on a stage that rotates just slowly enough to give you a glimpse of the vile act. "What is wrong with you men?" Those were some of Elizabeth's last words before the mortal scream.

* *

Frankenstein is often read as a tale about playing God, where God is understood in the Judeo-Christian sense as a creator and not, like Zeus, a procreator. The creator works alone to make something that was first an image in the mind: In the beginning was the *logos*. Procreation, by contrast, requires the coming together of male and female to give existence to another being not through conscious design but by simply being what we are. Like other animals, we are gendered and engendering beings. We make many things, but we don't 'make' humans. We have sex and, God willing, a being self-assembles in the dark through mute, exquisite mysteries and arrives as a gift. So, was Victor taking the place of God or of woman? Maybe it amounts to the same thing.

That bit about "gendered and engendering" comes from the philosopher-physician Leon Kass in his essay about human cloning titled "The Wisdom of Repugnance." Kass argues that we are justified to feel disgust at the prospect of cloning human beings, because it is an

affront to the natural order and a threat to the social institutions built atop that order. Clones, like the monster, are the product of asexual reproduction—which means they are without the usual kin. Born of isolation, rather than union, their origin compels an identity crisis: Who am I? You are a wretch, a manufactured product, not the fruit of the womb.

Elizabeth said that sex is the 'usual' way children are created, but she could just as well have said 'natural.' Indeed, the Greek word *physis*, often translated as 'nature,' refers precisely to the way living things have *in themselves* the source of their reproduction, growth, and development. Plant an acorn, Aristotle says, and an oak tree will sprout. Plant a bed, though, and a bed does not sprout. To know the biology of a thing—how it 'usually' unfolds—is to know its essence. When the essence is perverted, we should feel repugnance just as we do at any kind of pollution. Nature sets the proper boundaries.

This moral power of nature was waning in Shelley's time. It diminished in proportion to the increase of the studies of physical power—lightning, Leyden jars, Voltaic piles, and most poignantly, electric eggs. Maybe the spark of life is something material, not divine. Darwin would soon deal a decisive blow to the connection between nature and morality. Evolution is the unfolding of blind forces…forces that we could harness for our own ends. There is no human nature. We are a process, a becoming. We are not a being with a particular form that we must obey. Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the first to sniff out the consequences: This means anything goes. But "is not the greatness of this deed too great for us?" It is for Victor, who is left howling on the ice chasing his unnatural spawn, rather than lounging in the arms of his lover watching his natural children play.

* *

Repugnance. That is the world of the creature. At the opening of Dear's play, we feel it too. But only for a moment. Then, we smile, because the creature is just a man-baby, taking delight in the simplest sounds—its own voice echoing in a metal bucket, the chirrup of the birds. Our heart aches when time and again it is greeted with shrieks of terror and revulsion, with violence and hatred. If only they got to know him like we do! They would see that he is good. But is he good "by nature" even though he is an artifice? Are we forced still to speak of some essence that predates the influences (nearly all corrupt and despicable) of society? His was not a blank slate that passively absorbed the evils of prejudice; it was already carved in the shape of beneficence and his conversion into a vengeful monster took a great deal of force to overcome the original pattern.

For all its strengths, Dear's adaptation, which tells the story from the creature's point of view, is also flawed. As Jill Lepore notes, the genius of Shelley's book lies in the way she patiently "nudges readers' sympathy…from Frankenstein to the creature." There is a pilgrimage of moral imagination where we first inhabit the 'usual' mindset of the 'normal' person only to be wrenched into a realization that we were the bullies all along, that our 'wisdom' of repugnance was no more than chauvinism. In Dear's version, though, we are thrust too quickly into our sympathies; they come too easily and as a result they do not transform us.

When Victor first meets his creature in the play, he replies in astonishment: "It speaks!" Kim Fischer plays the creature and has, by then, willed his character to life through the sheer force of facial expressions, grunts, and gesticulations. By degrees, we watch him transform as an

education in the humanities turns him into the animal who speaks. The creature, like Elizabeth, mocks, not the arrogance, but the stupidity of Victor: "Yes, Frankenstein. *It* speaks." Duh. The emphasis is on the 'it,' because if 'it' speaks then 'it' can't really be an 'it' now, can it? Dear's De Lacey, the creature's only true father figure, says that "no man is a monster." An 'it' is a monster, but not a 'he.' To be without gender is, arguably, to be more radically 'other' than to be without name.

fictitious. And it is here that the creature founders. So, 'it' is a 'he' and he can speak, but is he really human if he has no mate?

His most ardent desire is to "excite the sympathy of some existing thing." The creature's request is for a companion "of the same species" where this is understood to be something other than 'man.' It must be "one as deformed and horrible as myself." In sexual selection, animals often make vivid displays like the peacock's feathers. The outward appearance signals the inward

An 'it' is a monster, but not a 'he.' To be without gender is, arguably, to be more radically 'other' than to be without name.

Even in our day, growing lists of gender inclusive pronouns do not include 'it.' "Zie speaks." That would work too. Gender queering is just one sign of our times where authenticity has become the new natural law to fill the vacuum left by Darwin. Maybe there is no species essence, but each individual has an essence, their "true colors." The more different you are, the better—it just means, in Natalie Merchant's words, that you are "one of the wonders of God's own creation" and the fates smiled at your cradle. But what if God didn't create you and there was no cradle? No matter how different you appear, you are the same and, thus, deserving of equal dignity…as long as you came via cradle. Maybe nature still trumps nurture and still guides ethics.

This brings us to the question of engendering, as in begetting. Here is that ultimate source of belonging for which the creature pines. A species is often defined as a group of interbreeding individuals. It is a fuzzy boundary, as we know even from the history of our own species' dalliances with Neanderthals. But fuzzy is not the same as

nature and the kind of complementarity it seeks. In the novel, the monster wears its hideousness like a peacock's exhibition, looking in vain for a peahen. But Dear's monster doesn't look monstrous enough. Once again our sympathies come too easily, this time by virtue of the creature's normal (natural?) proportions. Indeed, Fischer (the actor playing the creature) is shorter than Alex Organ, who plays Victor. Yet Shelley is at pains to stress the superhuman stature and physical abilities of the creature. Maybe that's because he really is a different species and, even if people were nicer, he never would belong because he never could begat.

One of the winning traits of Dear's creature is his aversion to contradictions. Twice he screams in exasperation: "I do not like inconsistent!" Sorry, but things just are so: you are both human and non-human, product and child.

Transhumanists talk about the next civil rights wave as one centered on "morphological freedom," the ability to modify our bodies as we choose. Lizard scales, bird feathers, digital selves, you name

it. For this to be a right, the assumption is that looks and biological origins don't matter when it comes to carving out communities of belonging—that bird-man and lizard-man could both operate under the same constitution as, well, man-man. If this seems unlikely, then maybe we shouldn't embrace this 'right.' Do we have a right to undo the community of man? Maybe we should reject certain experiments in the way things are 'usually' done.

These, anyway are Victor's thoughts as he, this man-mother, agonizes through an unholy late-term abortion. The sun has set and it is too dark to continue work. Time to ponder (finally) about the meaning of it all. Eventually he is resolved and he dismembers the female mate for his creature even though she was nearly completely formed in his lab, that artificial womb. He did it, lest "a race of devils would be propagated on the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror." It is a decision that seals his miserable fate, but perhaps saves humankind.

Then again. Maybe that was a moment of cowardice and he should have pushed on. Shelley had three children die and she nearly bled out from a miscarriage. The precariousness of life—especially the life of little things ferried into being on the frail raft of sex—was abundantly clear to her. Earlier, we concluded that Victor was stupid. But no, he wasn't. He was after the ultimate prize: immortality. What if he could "renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption?" Shelley had a vision of reviving one of her dead babies by caressing her near the fire. What could be nobler than to make that kind of earthly resurrection possible? Wouldn't that be worth any price?

William Godwin, Shelley's father, was a critic of the way lords treated peasants like so much fodder. He denounced feudalism as a "ferocious monster." But death is the ultimate tyrant. If rebellion against kings is legitimate, why not rebellion against mortality? The best part of Dear's play is hearing this question posed as it should be: as a mad, and maddening, scream in the dark.

* *

Victor gets a bad rap for being selfish. We are told with a moralist's wagging finger that he was driven by arrogance and hubris. But what's wrong with scientists acting selfishly? Knowledge is good. Curiosity is a virtue. Our reigning myth about science, that "endless frontier," is the same as Vannevar Bush put it in the document that launched the National Science Foundation: "Scientific progress on a broad front results from the free play of free intellects, working on subjects of their own choice, in the manner dictated by their curiosity for exploration of the unknown." Note well: *Their own choice*. And if science progresses, society progresses. It is the same logic of capitalism: the sum of individually selfish acts equals the greater good.

This, at any rate, is the default mentality of most aspiring young scientists and engineers. That would mean that they are accountable only to their peers—if fellow scientists say their work is good science, then *ipso facto* it is good for society. But is that equation sound? Might the scope of scientists' responsibility be wider than that, and could *Frankenstein* be a lever for elevating their ethical consciousness? That's the question animating another adaptation of the novel, this one in the form of a new edition published by MIT Press and annotated for scientists and engineers. The volume, edited by David Guston, Ed Finn, and Jason Scott Robert, is just one offspring from the Arizona State University Frankenstein Bicentennial Project. It features hundreds of annotations, seven

short original essays, as well as dozens of references and discussion questions.

The introduction, written by the late Shelley scholar Charles Robinson, cuts to the quick: this is a novel about the dangers inherent in seeking knowledge. But not just the dangers. Early in the novel, the creature finds a fire and learns the hard way that it can produce both the pleasure of warmth and the pain of a burn: "How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects!" Nowadays this is called creative destruction. The good and the bad are all tangled up in moral monstrosities.

That means that the moralist's simple conclusion (don't make monsters!) can't be the whole story. Look, Victor was trying to conquer death. That's a tough thing to do. Failure in the short term is unavoidable. There is no way to know, *in advance*, how different approaches to that challenge will pan out. If we knew in advance, then we wouldn't have to do the research! Unintended consequences are inevitable, because we cannot possibly foresee the myriad impacts and behaviors of our creations.

The creature was a pilot study, a phase one clinical trial. Yes, things went horribly wrong. Oh, but think of all that we learned as a result! That means next time we are more likely to succeed. Here is just one of many spots where the annotations in the MIT volume invite us into a deeper understanding. In one of his own notes, Guston flags a quote from Victor: "The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." The key word is *ultimately*. Scientific progress is a contact sport: no pain, no gain. But if you take the long view, the gain always outweighs the pain. Or as Guston puts it, there is a "presumed certainty" that the outcome will be a net positive.

Taking the long view, though, means extended responsibility. As several contributors to the MIT volume suggest, Victor's fault wasn't in creating the monster, but abandoning it. Reckless abandonment: that's the real problem with science and technology. Bruno Latour, a leading intellectual in the field of science studies like those behind the MIT volume, put it this way: "Which God and which Creation should we be for, knowing that, contrary to Dr. Frankenstein, we cannot suddenly stop being involved and 'go home?'" Scientists and engineers are not mistaken in the quest to play God. They just have a flawed notion of what this means. It doesn't mean distance, independence, and aloof detachment. Rather, it means being involved, entangled, fixing, fretting, and caring. Especially caring. "Love your monsters!" Latour commands.

* *

How do you love your monsters? Let's say your monster is a machine learning program that some troll used to make it look like President Trump just declared a war that he, in fact, did not declare. Welcome to our future of "deep fakes" brought to you by…Science! If it is not entirely the troll's fault (i.e., the user's fault) but morally implicates the creator, then how far back does culpability go? After all, you only made that one program and to do so, you relied on work done by others, who in turn relied on previous work, and so on back through Faraday and Newton.

This leads to what the philosopher Stanley Rosen called "the ultimate absurdity of the attack against the Enlightenment." All aspects of science, he writes, "may lead to the destruction of the human race." No one will quibble with the wisdom of trying to prevent, say, nuclear holocaust, but "not many are prepared to admit that the only secure way in which to protect ourselves

against science is to abolish it entirely." I think of Victor on that fevered, futile quest to safeguard his home on his wedding night. Burn the house down! That's the only way to be sure. Rosen draws the same conclusion: to really be safe from knowledge and its consequences, we must kill all the children, because we cannot predict who might produce an idea that spells our ultimate doom. Now there's your sequel to *Frankenstein*!

This, as noted, is absurd. But arguably our culture's wholesale embrace of research and development (to the tune of $500 billion annually in the U.S.) is equally absurd. As if someone isn't going to, say, unleash a novel virus, tip the climate into chaos, or juice up a malevolent AI. Ah, but we have faith in progress. I guess we won't really know if this is an absurdity until things go boom. At which point, of course, it will be too late.

In one of the essays at the end of the MIT volume, science fiction author Cory Doctorow notes that we don't have complete freedom of choice in using technologies. We don't *choose* e-mail in any robust sense of that term. Yet when it comes to making new technologies, he says to the aspiring scientist or engineer, "That's up to you." I disagree. The creator, like the user, is constrained by the imperatives of the system. Funding comes from agencies or corporations with their own agendas. Promotions come from publications. The age of Victor—of the natural philosopher toiling alone—is over. Creations arise from the complex interworking of vast assemblages of "knowledge workers." Even the makers of the machine are cogs in the machine.

The term for this is Big Science and it muddies the ethical waters. In *Frankenstein*, the chain of responsibility is linear and points back from the dead Elizabeth to Victor's lab. But now knowledge is hivelike. It's specialized and distributed across networks. No one is really in control and there is no pinch point (like Victor's lab) where we could just turn off a potentially dangerous development. No one really knows how to make any modern artifact. It takes thousands of specialists each doing a tiny part. When causal chains of responsibility get complex so do the moral chains. When the technological apocalypse comes and some future historian asks "Who did this?" the answer won't be "Victor" or anyone else. It will be no one. The Great No One.

* *

So, is this nineteenth-century tale too antiquated to teach us about the twenty-first century? Victor's creature was an outsider living on the edges of the social world. It was never enrolled, recruited, or folded into things. Our technological monsters, by contrast, are woven into the fabric of life. Victor's creature was never commercialized or used. Rather, it was shunned and detested. Our technologies, by contrast, are embraced even to the point where they become (gasp!) *needs*. We depend on them. Oh, foul e-mail…demon! Then again, the end result is the same in the novel and in our lives: the creature conceived as slave turns out to be master. Doesn't the internet also drag us across an endless frozen expanse in some futile hunt?

All right, maybe Shelley's monster still resonates, but what about her morality? Victor was no hero, to be sure. But he's not necessarily a villain either. He didn't intend harm, and once he realized what he had done he felt remorse and, in true romantic form, he devoted his life to the dogged pursuit of his monster. Of course, once the genie was out of the bottle it proved to be too late. But at least Victor tried—indeed, he literally went to the ends of the earth to carry out his obligatory chase. In this way, the novel is soaked in the ethos of

romanticism with all its passion, earnestness, and, yes, care.

Is that our ethos, though? Don't we slouch about in sweat pants, supping listlessly from the teat of mass culture, giving a 'meh' to the universe? *Frankenstein* is a cautionary tale about thoughtlessness. That's obviously still a relevant message. But our bigger problem might just be carelessness. Remember that our act of theomimesis—becoming God—hinges on our capacity for care. I worry that when Stephen K. Bannon chose the honey badger as the symbol of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, he didn't just label his candidate, he pegged our zeitgeist. The honey badger is that cobra-chomping, chaos-generating animal that, as a 2011 YouTube video put it, "just doesn't give a shit." Honey badger don't care.

firewood chopped and bundled just in time for the coming winter. It is a gift from the creature, but they don't know that. "Who did this?" Agatha asks. Felix guesses it was the handiwork of "Faerie folk…elves and sprites!" He tries praying to them. Agatha, though, will have none of it: "There's no on there, you fool. It's just us." Presto! They forget the miracle, chalking it up to their own agency. Yeah, we did that. It's the pathology of the libertarian mindset in a technological culture. Though we are obviously dependent on invisible, inscrutable forces to provide our way of life, we keep telling ourselves we are free, autonomous, and independent. It's just me. It's all about me!

Try this out for the next adaptation of the novel. Imagine if Victor never gave another thought to his monster once it was

Victor's creature was an outsider living on the edges of the social world. It was never enrolled, recruited, or folded into things. Our technological monsters, by contrast, are woven into the fabric of life.

Being Frankenstein is about making something without thinking about the consequences. Being a honey badger (like being a spoiled brat) is about taking whatever you want, consequences be damned. It's grabbing crotches and bragging about it. Our techno-bubbles shield us from the consequences of our actions. We are anonymized and in turn disinhibited. We fill up the car but don't see the refinery, we buy the cellophane-wrapped meat but don't see the slaughterhouse. The violent spawn of our activities are far off and hidden behind layers of mediation. As a result, we act like they don't exist at all.

There is a scene in the play where the cottagers Felix and Agatha discover a pile of

created. After the murder of his brother, he just shrugs rather than hikes into the mountains to find and bargain with his creature. Or imagine if Victor visited the murder scenes left behind by his monster only to point out the circumstantial nature of the case. Is there actual video footage of the killings? Even if there was, who can trust video nowadays in the age of, you guessed it, deep fakes? Seeing is disbelieving. Then imagine him smugly dismissing the whole thing as a hoax or as fake news.

That's not how the novel went, but that's our reality. The biologist Stephen Jay Gould said that the moral of *Frankenstein* is that the makers of monsters must educate

others to accept them. Sure, that's precisely what the tobacco and fossil fuel industries do. And now that industry advocates are in charge of the EPA we are learning how to accept all sorts of misunderstood chemicals, especially the unfairly maligned CO_2, which is just trying to green the planet! For all the dark magic of her novel, Shelley still assumed a reality principle that we can no longer take for granted. Victor's monster was out of control, to be sure, yet at least that was plain to see. Now, though? Who knows and, really, who cares?

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich recently said that government needs "to move at the pace of technology, not the pace of bureaucracy." As if technology, that hyperactive child, was setting a sane pace. And as if bureaucracy was not the wicked progeny of technology—there to manage the complexities introduced by our modern 'conveniences.' If bureaucracies, like Victor, also treat us as nameless, it is only because the machine told them to do it. I'll take a government that moves at the speed of care and contemplation. And may our scientists and engineers also find this rhythm in their work. The annotations in the MIT Press edition of *Frankenstein* have the effect of slowing things down. I applaud this pouring of sand in the tank. May it succeed, whether that is the intended consequence or not. A

Frankenstein, by Nick Dear, from the novel by Mary Shelley. Directed by Joel Ferrell. Kalita Humphreys Theater, Dallas, Feb. 2 to Mar. 4, 2018.

Frankenstein Annotated for Scientists, Engineers and Creators of All Kinds. By Mary Shelley, edited by David H. Guston, Ed Finn and Jason Scott Robert. Introduction by Charles E. Robinson. MIT Press, 320pp., $20 paper.

The Best Books on British Romanticism

A fuller version of this essay, with additional references, is available on our website at athenaeumreview.org.

Kenneth L. Brewer

Clinical Associate Professor
of Arts and Humanities
University of Texas at Dallas

Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, 1772-1804 (Pantheon, 448pp.) and *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, 1804-1834 (Pantheon, 656pp.)

It is fitting to start with a biography of one of the major Romantics because the Romantics placed so much emphasis on art as a means of personal expression. So many of our conceptions of the artist—a "genius," a dreamer, more sensitive and perceptive than others, often an abuser of illicit substances in his or her desire to shake off the shackles of normal perception—come from British Romanticism, and especially from how Coleridge is represented in the popular imagination. While Holmes' 1974 biography of Percy Shelley might be a greater work than his biography of Coleridge, this one is particularly fascinating for the way that Holmes' research undermines so many of the myths about Coleridge. While Holmes does not stint on describing the ghastly effects of Coleridge's addiction to opium, he locates the sources of Coleridge's work in his everyday life, not in hallucinations that came to him when he was high. Holmes brilliantly and persuasively roots "Kubla Khan," often seen as the ultimate "stoner" poem, in books Coleridge had read about Khan's empire and in scenery he took in on his daily walks: the "romantic chasm" in the poem, Holmes argues, was a chasm Coleridge walked by frequently. "Christabel" seems very influenced by his friendship with Dorothy Wordsworth, and the ghastly image of the skeletal ship from "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" stem from Coleridge observing the construction of actual ships. The effect of Holmes' research is not that Coleridge seems less imaginative and creative, but even more so: it took a poet of special talent to transform his daily life into art in the way that Coleridge did. Holmes also notes that Coleridge provided an extremely important way to think about the kind of poetry that would later be called "Romantic": Coleridge saw his work as focused on slowing things down, on patience. Unlike the rapid wit of Augustans such as Alexander Pope, Romantic poetry requires slow reading and contemplation. Fittingly, then, Holmes' beautifully written biography is a book that must be enjoyed slowly, contemplatively.

M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 416pp.

At least in scholarly terms, this is the book that rescued Romanticism. When it was published in 1953, anti-Romantic poets such as T. S. Eliot were still in the ascendant, as Modernists rejected what they viewed as the excessive emotionality of Romantic poetry in favor a clinical, detached approach to artistic creation. Abrams reasserted the importance of Romanticism merely by taking their aesthetic theories seriously, and then

subjecting them to a rigorous examination in relation to the Augustan aesthetic views that they were reacting against. The effect, to some extent, is to bridge the gap between them: the Augustans anticipated some of the key ideas of the Romantics, and the Romantics were not always as anti-Augustan as they believed themselves to be. Abrams emphasizes *the* central metaphor for understanding the Romantic view of how the poet relates to nature: the poet's consciousness is not a passive "mirror" that merely reflects nature (as the Augustans had maintained) but instead a "lamp" shining its light out into the natural world. Our memories and our personalities color the way we interact with nature: as Wordsworth puts it in "Tintern Abbey," we "half-create" what we see. This, Abrams indicates in the title of one of his chapters, is an "Expressive Theory of Poetry and Art." For the Romantics, art is now primarily about self-expression, and while various literary movements since Romanticism place more or less emphasis of the importance of self-expression as necessary to great art, none of them have rejected it entirely, and we owe this to the Romantics. Abrams concludes his masterpiece of literary scholarship with a fascinating chapter on the relationship between poetry and science in the Romantic era: the Romantics were the first artists to truly have to grapple with the role of art in the face of the growth of systematic scientific knowledge as we know recognize it. What is the place of poetry in an age of rapid technological development? How can a poet write about a beautiful cloud when science can now explain precisely why the cloud looks the way that it does? If we look at everyday objects scientifically, does this mean that we can no longer regard them poetically? These questions continue to be relevant today, as do, Abrams suggests, the ways that various Romantic poets responded to them.

Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron, and Other Tangled Lives*. Bloomsbury, 384pp.

Hay is not the first biographer to focus on a group of Romantic writers instead of on an individual: the "Godwin" circle of William Godwin, his wife Mary Wollstonecraft, their daughter Mary and son-in-law Percy Shelley have been a particular focus of such studies. However, the publisher of Hay's biography, Bloomsbury, is only slightly exaggerating when it claims that "Hay shatters the myth of the Romantic poet as a solitary, introspective genius, telling the story of the communal existence of an astonishingly youthful circle." It is impossible to write the life of one Romantic writer without taking in several others, given their "tangled lives," as the title puts it. Hay's focus on how her subjects' lives were deeply enmeshed with the lives of others also restores to prominence relatively neglected—and fascinating, she proves—figures from the period such as Thomas Peacock, primarily known for his 1818 fictional satire of the Romantics, *Nightmare Abbey*, and Leigh Hunt, who emerges not only as a promoter of the Romantic movement in his 1816 essay "Young Poets," but as an interesting poet in his own right. Hunt also co-wrote a book on gardening with his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Kent, entitled *Flora Domestica, or, The Portable Flower-Garden* that was published in 1823. This neglected work reveals, Hay argues, not only the how the aesthetics of Romanticism affected realms outside of the fine arts, but also the high status of Romantic poets by this time: Kent and Hunt use quotations from John Keats and other Romantics instead of the standard passages about gardening matters from Shakespeare and Milton. These tangled lives are not always happy ones: Hay's book is filled with tragedy, from

unhappy marriages to children dying in infancy to Percy Shelley tragically dying in a boating accident at 29. Ultimately, however, Hay brilliantly demonstrates how the Romantics lived out a principal theme of their works: the conflict between solitude and sociability. The artist seems to require solitude to create his or her work, but too much solitude also seems dangerous and not conducive to artistic creativity. In their tangled lives, the artists of the Romantic period attempted to keep these two in balance, and novels such as Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*, in which Victor Frankenstein hides himself away in order to create his monster demonstrate the dangers of a lack of sociability.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, 1805 version.

There should be of course one primary work from British Romanticism that is essential to understanding the movement and the period, and while there are many candidates, from long poems such as Byron's *Childe Harold* to shorter ones such as Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" or Percy Shelley's "Mont Blanc," Wordsworth's epic poem about his own life is the best place to begin. While the Romantics deeply admired epic poems such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, they eschewed epic in favor of the short, highly emotional lyric poem, turning over the aesthetic hierarchy of the Augustans that placed epic at the top of the poetic heap and lyric somewhere near the bottom. The Romantic avoidance of epic was no doubt aided by the Augustans having been spectacularly bad themselves at writing epic poems: their best attempt at the form by far is Alexander Pope's mock-epic, *The Rape of the Lock*. Wordsworth, then, faced squarely the problem of how to merge the emotional intensity and introspection of the lyric with the more public concerns of the epic poem (such as war) by writing an epic poem about his own life. "Oh there is a blessing in this gentle breeze / That blows from the green fields and from the clouds / And from the sky: it beats against my cheek / And seems half conscious of the joy it gives," Wordsworth's poem opens. It is hard to find the essence of Romanticism more clearly and concisely expressed in these four lines: the beauty of nature, but nature also as alive and moving, and most importantly, nature's effect on the speaker as the wind blows against his face. Wordsworth's poem dives deeply into his childhood and the events that shaped him as a poet and as a person, but the poem is also surprisingly dramatic, particularly the sections that focus on Wordsworth's experiences in France during the Reign of Terror. *The Prelude* was not published until 1850, after Wordsworth's death, and exists in various versions, but the most quintessentially Romantic is the 1805 thirteen-book version dedicated to Coleridge and not yet with an actual title. Wordsworth was (arguably) the greatest Romantic poet, and *The Prelude* is (not so arguably) his greatest work.

E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800*. Cambridge University Press, 240pp.

College courses on British Romanticism once focused exclusively on the Big Six male poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Percy Shelley, Byron, and Keats. Gothic fiction, which focused on the supernatural and was enormously popular in the period, was not taken seriously by most scholars as part of Romanticism until the 1980s. Clery's book clearly and convincingly presents a history of how supernatural fiction came to be so popular among the Romantics—Percy Shelley not only avidly read Gothic novels, but wrote two of them himself. She begins

with a brisk account of the rise of a consumer society in the eighteenth century in Britain, and the corresponding interest in the emotional underpinnings of everyday life: commodities, like art, tend to provoke intense emotional reactions. The rise of the Gothic novel (and the novel in general) is inseparable, Clery argues, from the increasing role of women as consumers, particularly about women as consumers of fiction. In particular, the mounting interest in the intense emotional states of fear and even terror evoked by sublime objects such as mountains were indicative of a rising interest in fiction that would produce these extreme states. Gothic novels, beginning with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* in 1764, became extremely popular and extremely controversial. Throughout the period, Gothic was criticized for its violations of realism (Walpole's novel features a giant helmet falling on a character in the first few pages and killing him) and its supposedly detrimental effects on readers, particularly female ones. Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is especially critical of the detrimental effects of novels on female readers, and by "novels," Clery argues, Wollstonecraft specifically means Gothic fiction. Even though novels such as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1795) end with poetic justice—the evil monk Ambrosio is punished for his crimes—along the way there are numerous salacious passages that seemed to attract readers more than the novel's moral message. While Lewis embraced the irrational elements of Gothic, fellow writers such as Ann Radcliffe tried to balance Gothic and realism, as Radcliffe's novels invariably end with a rational explanation of the supernatural events that have occurred in the plot. While Gothic never has gone away (it is a strong component of the novels of the Brontë sisters in the Victorian era), it ran out of steam by the 1820s, Clery argues, as readers' obsession shifted to the tormented heroes of Lord Byron's poetry, the Byronic hero. It is impossible now to consider the Romantic period without the Gothic novel as a significant aspect of it, and Clery's book convincingly demonstrates why this is the case. Supernatural fiction was not 'bad Romanticism' or 'trashy Romanticism': to a significant extent, it *was* Romanticism. ▲

The Best Books by Joseph Conrad

John G. Peters

University Distinguished Research Professor
University of North Texas

Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness is a densely-packed tale that is both profoundly political and profoundly apolitical. It is to be sure a powerful critique of colonial waste and abuse (while also revealing Conrad's, or at least his narrator Marlow's, cultural blind spots regarding his African characters), but it is also a journey within, with Marlow in search of the self and the meaning of human existence. As Marlow journeys up-river and approaches closer and closer to the literal heart of darkness in the Congo, he also approaches closer and closer to the figurative heart of darkness as he comes to see life as a "droll thing": "that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late—a crop of unextinguishable regrets." For Marlow, meaning for human existence can only come from confronting an empty universe and in the face of that knowledge maintaining an "inner strength," acting as if there were an inherent order and purpose to life and society while remaining aware that such is only contingent.

Lord Jim

Lord Jim is a book about honor, the loss of honor, and the attempt to regain honor, but it is also a book about the world view that creates the conditions under which that honor is achieved. In a moment of weakness, Jim fails in his duties as officer aboard a maritime vessel and spends the remainder of the novel trying to atone for that failing. Jim is, as the narrator Marlow calls him, "one of us," that is an adherent to a code of conduct that expects unfailing fidelity to that code. But the code allows for no redemption. And yet Marlow and others know that there is nothing at the back of the code, that is it is a mere social contract, but its adherents treat the code as if it were founded upon transcendental truths. Although Marlow recognizes that the code is not absolute but only contingent, he finds he cannot relinquish it. Further complicating matters, the code is a product of the idealism of the Victorian world, which expected unwavering adherence to an ideal standard of behavior from imperfect beings. Consequently, by extension, the same contingency of the maritime code is revealed to be at the heart of the Western world view that is the origin of the code, as the novel in the end comes to question the very nature of the Western universe.

Nostromo

Nostromo is the first of Conrad's oddly apolitical political novels, that is unlike the typical political novel that posits a particular political position in opposition to another political position, Conrad rejects all political positions. In *Nostromo*, this view appears in the endless cycle of revolutions that occur in the fictitious South American country of Costaguana, each revolution fueled not by the desire for better government but by the persistent desire for personal gain. The novel

further ties its politics to reinvigorating a long-defunct silver mine, as Conrad also critiques economic imperialism and material interests in the novel. All of the characters are negatively influenced by the material wealth the mine creates, and the mine becomes the ruling element in the lives of the novel's characters. The mine incites the revolutionaries, who desire its wealth; it brings about the American and European economic and political intervention in Costaguana; and it brings about the personal tragedies of so many of the characters, as one of its characters remarks of the possibility of finding a lost shipment of silver: "Isn't there enough treasure without it to make everybody in the world miserable?"

The Secret Agent

The Secret Agent is Conrad's most carefully controlled novel. While novels such as *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim* may have gotten away from him a bit, Conrad is in complete control of *The Secret Agent*. The novel is a carefully-wrought narrative and like *Nostromo* is a novel of politics, and also like *Nostromo* it is highly critical both of the revolutionaries and the established authorities. Conrad also follows through even more clearly than in *Nostromo* his rejection of those who place politics over the individuals those politics are supposed to serve. Conrad deliberately establishes a close interaction between a political plot and a domestic plot, as Verloc's terrorist actions, forced upon him by an established government to place blame on the revolutionaries, utterly destroy himself and, more important from Conrad's perspective, his family members, as we experience the graphic consequences of political action in the body of Verloc's brother-in-law being inadvertently blown into such small pieces that he had to be gathered up with a shovel. A major feature of the novel is also the all-permeating irony of the novel's omniscient narrator.

Under Western Eyes

Under Western Eyes is the last of Conrad's overtly political novels, and, like *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent*, it rejects both sides of the political struggle. The novel most dramatically chronicles the consequences of political views that do not place individuals over ideas. Razumov, a university student, simply wants to remain neutral in the struggle between the Russian revolutionaries and the Tsarist government, but neither side of the political divide will allow him to do so. Each pushes upon him unwelcome political action, and the result is the complete destruction of his existence, a promising student with hopes of academic success at the opening of the novel he ends the novel with no future possibilities; he can never finish his university training and is now deaf, having had his eardrums burst (ironically by a double agent), and permanently disabled when he is run over by a streetcar because he cannot hear it coming.

Under Western Eyes most strikingly shows how individuals are crushed between competing political forces. The novel reveals in the end that despite their beliefs otherwise, both political forces, revolution and autocracy, are equally dismissive of legality and ultimately appear to be merely different aspects of the same entity. As Conrad remarks in his "Author's Note" to the novel: "The ferocity and imbecility of an autocratic rule rejecting all legality and, in fact, basing itself upon complete moral anarchism provokes the no less imbecile and atrocious answer of a purely Utopian revolutionism encompassing destruction by the first means to hand." A

Poetic Misprision in Art and Science

Charissa N. Terranova

Associate Professor of Aesthetic Studies
University of Texas at Dallas

The relationship between art and biology is in flux, as is that of the humanities and natural sciences, and of art history and neuroscience. The evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr warned of facile couplings, advising any such attempts should be rooted in solid knowledge of evolutionary theory. Mayr said, "no-one should make sweeping claims concerning evolution in fields outside the biological world without first becoming acquainted with the well-seasoned concepts of organic evolution."[1] More recently, anthropologist Tim Ingold argues, by contrast, for a unified concept of the biosocial. He says "all life…is social. Yet all life, too is biological," claiming that the bifurcation between the two areas is the result of decades of blunt-force reductionism in the form of evolutionary theory understood solely in terms of natural selection and inheritance.[2]

Underscoring the flux, both quotes originate in texts by Ingold, that is, the Mayr quote comes from the anthropologist's earlier writing. Yet both positions are true at once: Ingold is not contradicting himself but consistent and correct. Tread lightly when writing about evolutionary theory within the humanities: know your stuff! And, take heed: the separation of nature from nurture is but an ideological split. By no means a capricious thinker, Ingold has carefully hewn a path between the fields wherein no damage is done to either. That is, in their union, the "soft" (arts and humanities) is not simply made quantifiable and, vice versa, the "hard" (the sciences) is not bastardized. This is the fundamental challenge at stake in forging a union of art and biology.

Two books by art historians, Matthew Rampley's *The Seductions of Darwin: Art, Evolution, Neuroscience* and Edward Juler's *Grown But Not Made: British Modernist Sculpture and the New Biology*, play out the vibrant if not fractious state of interaction between fields. If for Rampley the

1 Mayr, Ernst, *The Growth of Biological Thought* (1982), quoted in Tim Ingold, *Evolution and Social Life* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

2 Ingold, Tim, "Prospect," in *Biosocial Becomings: Integrating Social and Biological Anthrolpology*, eds. Tim Ingold and Gisli Palsson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9.

crossovers between art history and the ideas of Charles Darwin over the last century have yielded far too many instances of insensitive reification, then for Juler the union of art, art history, and biology in 1930s British sculpture proved a bold model of public intellectualism. One is wildly skeptical while the other blithe and halcyon. Yet, in both books, the authors creatively misinterpret science, or perform what literary critic Harold Bloom described in terms of the "anxiety of influence."[3] Such angst, Bloom explained, "comes out of a complex act of strong misreading, a creative interpretation that I call 'poetic misprision'."[4] Creative misinterpretation is willful, ideological, and automatic, or "simultaneously intentional and involuntary."[5] It is "part of the larger phenomenon of intellectual revisionism."[6]

While not quite synonymous, the terms "Neo-Darwinism" and "Modern Synthesis" together describe the revival at the end of the nineteenth century of Darwin's theory of natural selection and the incorporation of Mendelian inheritance or genetics into the theory of evolution, both of which became central engines of population genetics. In short, these concepts quickly allayed biology's "physics envy" by providing modes of quantification to the all-too-difficult-to-quantify complexity of induction, gene action, and phenotypic expression. Scientists such as Julian Huxley and Theodosius Dobzhansky codified Neo-Darwinism and the Modern Synthesis in the late 1930s, which through the work of many others, including James Watson and Francis Crick in the development of the Central Dogma of molecular biology (the

Imaginative misinterpretation, or poetic misprision, is one of the few ways new ideas come about.

Simply put, imaginative misinterpretation, or poetic misprision, is one of the few ways new ideas come about. The two authors should be commended for their stellar acts of creative misprision. Bravo! Rampley and Juler perform the Lucretian clinamen swerve, a "marvelously gratuitous" act of atomic freedom in which a writer carves out new territory by diverging from standing ideas. And, remarkably, they do so around the same set of evolutionary concepts within science: Neo-Darwinism and the Modern Synthesis of evolutionary biology.[7]

oversimplification of genetic determination according to which "DNA makes RNA and RNA makes protein") in the early 1950s, and later E.O. Wilson's sociobiology and Richard Dawkins' "selfish gene" of the late 1970s, drove the zeal for a reductionist gene-centric science based on natural selection during the twentieth century.

In *The Seductions of Darwin*, Neo-Darwinism is a catchall for Darwinist reductionism in art history: the quantification of art by means of rooting it indelibly in the genetic drives inherited from of our prehistoric ancestors. It allows Rampley to very willfully dismiss any attempt to think about art and science together. The author never really historicizes Neo-Darwinism. He neither explains its connections to the Modern Synthesis that was codified in the 1930s, nor its position as a force of reductionism

3 Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1973]), xxiii.

4 Bloom, xxiii.

5 Bloom, 45.

6 Bloom 28.

7 Bloom, 45.

across the twentieth century to the detriment of other strains of more complexity-friendly and less reductionist thought within biology and evolution, namely organicism, epigenetics, embryology and evolutionary development.

The kind of dead-end objectification at work in Neo-Darwinist art history happens for Rampley by many means: through evolutionary theories of art that reduce art to an outcome, that is, the results of a universalized male subject whose contemporary cultural mores can be traced back in linear fashion to Pleistocene man; cladograms or phylogenetic trees, such as the famous genealogical tree of modern art designed by Alfred Barr for the 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* at MoMA; the will to reduce "beauty" to neurological fields within neuroaesthetics and neuroarthistory; and the "refusal to adopt normative positions", i.e. make value judgements within systems, cybernetics, and second-order cybernetics within art and art history. Rampley invokes Neo-Darwinism as part of an overarching critique of "consilience" between fields (a reference to myrmecologist E.O. Wilson's idea of syncretism between art and science).[8] "The theory of evolution," Rampley explains, "has been of central importance in this context, and one might even argue that the call for consilience amounts to little more than an attempt to create a neo-Darwinian framework for the analysis of art." The term appears sporadically in the book in relationship to art, art history, and Darwin's own thinking of the mid nineteenth century, coming across as more of a literary theory than actual science, which it was until recently. The author makes a resoundingly negative assessment of the idea in the conclusion where he summarizes his demonstration of the "internal flaws in the logic of the neo-Darwinian position," according to the fact "that evolutionary aesthetics relies on a self-contradictory view of aesthetic experience, positing a putative ancestral Pleistocene environment as the ground zero of human nature, as if all human history in the intervening 2.5 million years were a superficial cultural overlay, and as if evolution had then come to a halt."

Rampley is both right and wrong. Reductionist Neo-Darwinian art and art history should be hailed with much skepticism and criticality; but all evolutionary science within art and art history is neither Neo-Darwinist in nature nor about such reductionism. In fact, in works of bioart, evolutionary science is present for exactly the opposite reason, to obstruct reductionism by teasing out complexity. Much thus goes ignored in *The Seductions of Darwin*, the most important of which is that Neo-Darwinism is obsolete science. Never mind that the many tomes by Charles Darwin are part of what evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould called "evolutionary pluralism."[9] Never mind that Charles Darwin is not the same thing as Darwinism, a term coterminous with social Darwinism, which is further based on the idea of the "survival of the fittest," a turn of phrase owed *not* to Darwin but his compatriot and fellow Victorian Herbert Spencer.[10] Never mind that, similarly, the ideas of Neo-Darwinism are closer to those of Darwinism than to the actual ideas of the man himself.[11] Never

8 Wilson, E. O., *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

9 Gould, Stephen Jay, "Evolution: The Pleasures of Pluralism," *The New York Review of Books* (June 26, 1997); http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/06/26/evolution-the-pleasures-of-pluralism. Accessed 01/14/18.

10 For a comparison of Spencer and Darwin see Ingold, Chapter 1, *Evolution and Social Life*.

11 Reid, Robert G. B., *Biological Emergences: Evolution by Natural Experiment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 3-4.

mind that, following Ingold, "Neo-Darwinism is dead," made obsolete by the emergent complexity revealed in the mapping of the human genome early in the new millennium and the postgenomic sciences that ensued.[12] Never mind that new expanded and extended theories of evolution have become the norm in contemporary biology over and above evolution understood solely in terms of natural selection.[13] Never mind that whole fields of contemporary art and art history—bioart, bioarchitecture, and new media art history—have opened up based on such complexity-based practices within biology and the expanded evolutionary synthesis.

In *Grown But Not Made: British Modernist Sculpture and the New Biology*, Juler takes a different tack, exploring with great gusto and positive reinforcement the roots of biomorphic sculpture—the sensuous curves and undulating forms of work by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Richard Bedford, F. E. McWilliam, Hans Arp, and Constantin Brancusi among others—in the voices of 1930s British popular science. The opening pages revisit the 1935 origin of the term "biomorphism" in the writing of British critic Geoffrey Grigson, a term often misattributed to MoMA director Alfred H. Barr, and the Two Cultures argument of C. P. Snow. As the subtitle of the book suggests, the New Biology is the leitmotif of the book, connecting chapters about "metamorphosis," "organismal composition," "the morphology of art," and "worlds beneath the microscope." The book truly captures the exciting cultural crosspollination at work in 1930s Great Britain, connecting, for example, the extraordinarily talented creator and editor of the avant-garde journal *Axis* Myfanwy Piper, Neo-Constructivism, and the biologistic mindset cultivated in H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley's collaboratively written book of 1938, *The Science of Life*—a nexus of forces which materialized in the beautiful garden suburb of London that is Hampstead. In addition to artists and critics, seminal scientists make appearances in the book, including J. B. S. Haldane, Lancelot L. Whyte, Lancelot Hogben, J. D. Bernal, and Raoul Francé. The author often quotes these figures in their forays as writers into the popular sphere and not their more difficult scientific texts.

An account of the harder science at work in the "New Biology" destabilizes the term, because at its core are contradictory modes of scientific thinking. It embodies simultaneously the opposed orders of the day a century ago: the mechanist and vitalist approaches to biology. Some of the New Biology was rooted in mechanistic methodologies of biology: what were, circa 1930, the freshly innovative modes of reductionism and gene-centrism, namely Neo-Darwinism and the Modern Synthesis. But most of what inheres in the New Biology—its neo-vitalism, neo-romanticism, and neo-Lamarckism—was not exactly new in the 1930s. These were all ideas of late nineteenth-century biology based in part on a thesis that the workings of biological life constitute an irreducible metaphysics (an example of which is Henri Bergson's élan vital). They were made supernumerary precisely by the reductionism of the new sciences of the 1930s, namely rising

12 Ingold, "Prospect," 1.

13 See Armin P. Moczek, et. al., "The Significance and Scope of Evolutionary Developmental Biology: A Vision for the 21st Century," *Evolution & Development*, 17:3 (2015) 198-219; Sarah S. Richardson and Hallam Stevens, eds., *Postgenomics: Perspectives on Biology after the Genome* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Massimo Pigliucci and Gerd B. Müller, *Evolution: The Extended Synthesis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); and Evelyn Fox Keller, "Mathematics in Biology – Has D'Arcy Thompson been vindicated?" unpublished public keynote address at the Centenary Conference on D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form*, Universities of Dundee and St. Andrews, 13-15 October, 2017.

genetics, molecular biology, Neo-Darwinism, and the Modern Synthesis. Juler creatively elides old and new science, the outdated with the cutting edge, all under the omnibus term "New Biology." His exploration of the connections between biology and the curving shapes of the 1930s modernism is a rich and necessary contribution, but it does not address the likely fact that a metaphysical neo-vitalism would be completely debunked by the reductionism of figures such as Bernal, Huxley, and Hogben, as well as the Neo-Darwinism and Modern Synthesis that are mentioned in passing.

If the misprision of science at work in Rampley's book unfolds around a revision of evolution and biology as *tout court* a matter of Neo-Darwinism, Juler's misprision is carried through the term New Biology, which subsumes Neo-Darwinism almost as if in the blind spot of older ideas once connected to physiology and embryology, such as vitalism and neo-vitalism. Rampley's misprision seeks to shut down the lively and growing contemporary dialogue at work between art and science by reification of another order, namely by turning the manifold complexities of evolutionary theory and biology into Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. Juler's misprision is quite a bit more generous. It brings to bear the humanist pleasure of the text, or what Roland Barthes called *jouissance*. Juler's book is all about loving science, at least in the popular realm, and its coexistence and mixing with art during the 1930s. His is what Bloom called "a profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with a literary work."[14] Understanding how science could constitute a literary text—or, that a scientific axiom might even be a poem—must be left for another, perhaps longer discourse to come. A

Matthew Rampley. *The Seductions of Darwin: Art, Evolution, Neuroscience*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 200pp., $35 cloth.

Edward Juler. *Grown But Not Made: British Modernist Sculpture and the New Biology*. Manchester University Press, 256pp., 97 color plates, $110 cloth.

---

14 Bloom, xiii.

The Wilcox Space

Art History, Regional Art, and Documentation

Rick Brettell

Founding Director, Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History
Margaret McDermott Distinguished Chair of Aesthetic Studies
University of Texas at Dallas

When the discipline of art history got started in the late Renaissance with Giorgio Vasari, it dealt seriously with what was then "contemporary art" and its position in larger art historical narratives of late Medieval and Renaissance Italy. Yet, when the discipline professionalized in the 18th and 19th centuries, its narratives were firmly located in the human past—in the art of museums, which in their great founding century, the 19th, eschewed art of the historical moment of their founding, preferring narratives of stylistic development in the past—arranged by nation and region.

Today, the discipline of art history is engaged more than ever with the art of our own time, and faculty often complain that it is all but impossible to convince our current students to take the human past seriously. Indeed, at the internationally known Master's program at the Clark Art Institute (where our own Sarah Kozlowski trained before doing her Ph.D. at Yale, and where I work in the summer), I surveyed the second-year students' carrels this past summer to find ten of the twelve students writing about art after 1945. So much for "Art History."

And, if the discipline-wide preference for the present is true, there is a corollary—the preference for the cosmopolitan and international over the regional. To study locally produced art is almost tantamount to excommunication from the larger worlds of contemporary discourse, which are determined by capitals and markets and, of course, art critics in New York, Tokyo, Los Angeles, London, etc.

So, in the face of all of this, how does the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History deal with locally produced "contemporary art?" The answer lies in our fascination with the nature of documentation and of the physical and intellectual properties of the work of art itself. Five years ago, we entered into a partnership with the Ioannes Project, created by the artist's younger brother, David, to document and preserve the work

Fifth Installation at The Wilcox Space, *Relinquishing Time: Selected Works of John Wilcox*, curated by David Wilcox, on view November 2016 to October 2017.

of an important Dallas artist, John Wilcox, who died in 2012 after two decades of struggle with HIV at the age of 57.

Although admired by collectors, curators, and the small community of Dallas-based artists in his lifetime, John Wilcox was a supremely private person, whose actual production was scarcely known outside his immediate family. Yet, his importance as an artist was clear to everyone with a serious knowledge of post-World War II art, and a small group consisting of his dealer, Barry Whistler, his brother David, his friend the El Paso artist James Magee, the collector/architect Gary Cunningham, and myself met in his Exposition Park-area studio to discuss ways of dealing with his oeuvre after his death.

Our first inclination was to find a museum to mount an important retrospective of his work. Yet, in considering the real possibilities of that, it became clear that the work was too little known to justify the institutional expense required for a large exhibition and publication. As we sat in the space, James Magee and Gary Cunningham said that, if the space was simply and cheaply transformed into a gallery-like space with drywall and new track lighting, we might create what would be called The Wilcox Space and embark on an open-ended series of small, strictly non-commercial exhibitions from the large core of his work, each with its own publication.

We didn't, at first, know what they would be, but decided as a first step to do a simple exhibition curated by Wilcox's old friend and dealer, Barry Whistler, which could be quickly mounted without a good deal of research, and which would allow us to open the space quickly and to buy time for the complete digital photography and assessment of condition for all of John's work on canvas, panel, and paper. David was also able to catalogue and assess Wilcox's personal art collection and library, and to begin the slow process of reading his journals and letters, which were so personal and private that only David, as executor of the artistic estate, had initial access to them.

Our continued conversations with David also coincided with the founding of the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History at the University of Texas at Dallas. Within a matter of months in early 2014, a partnership was established between David and The Wilcox Space, and the Edith O'Donnell Institute. As we continued our conversations with David, we developed a plan for a curatorial process that would result in comprehensive and well-documented exhibitions, accompanied by scholarly catalogues.

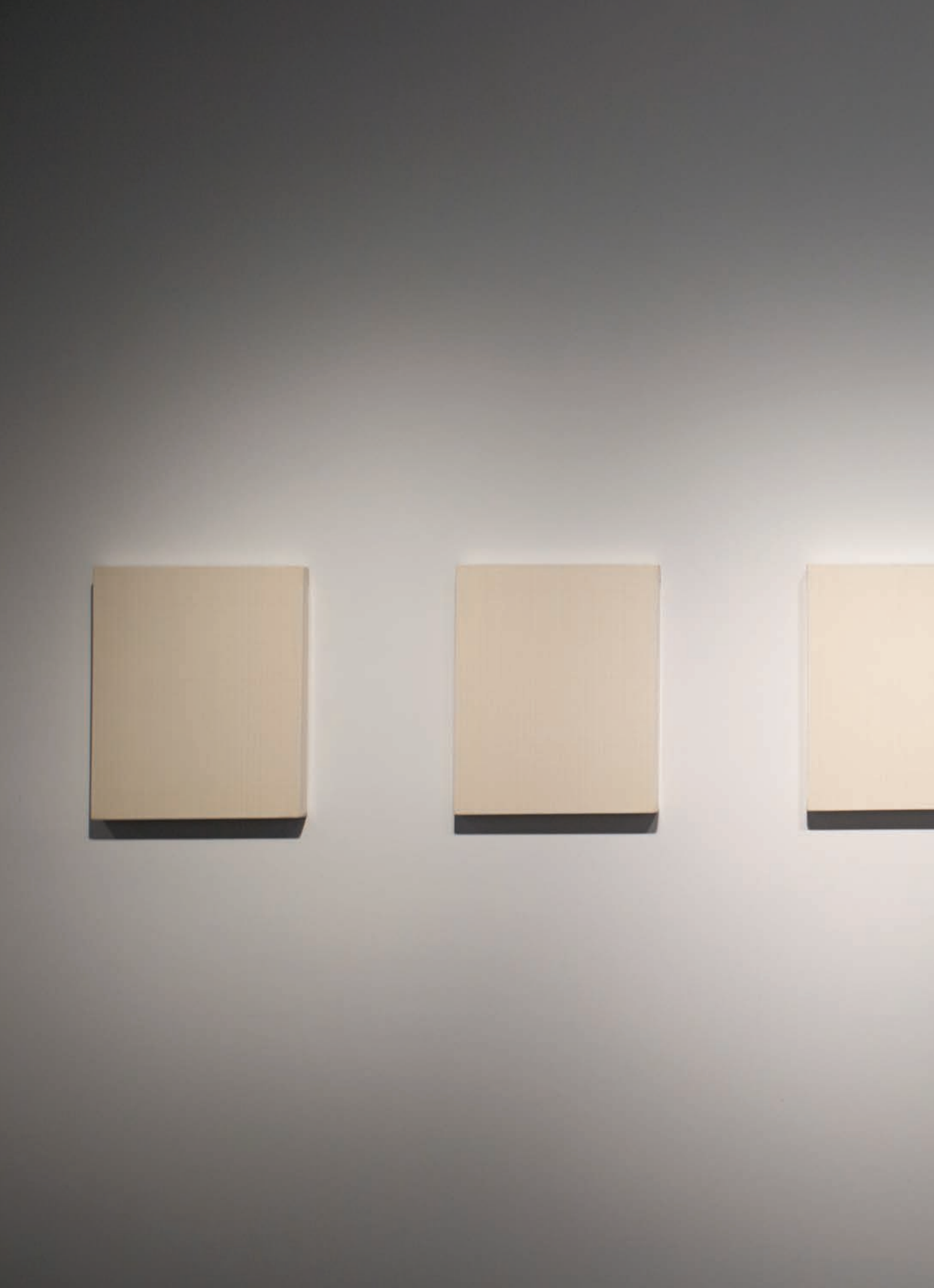
The idea for the initial exhibition in this new partnership came from me and from my own fascination with the earliest works of Wilcox, which were made in California, New York, and Texas as he struggled to define himself. These works were virtually unknown to his dealer, Barry Whistler, and to the larger community in Texas because, when Wilcox made them, he was not yet part of the local art scene.

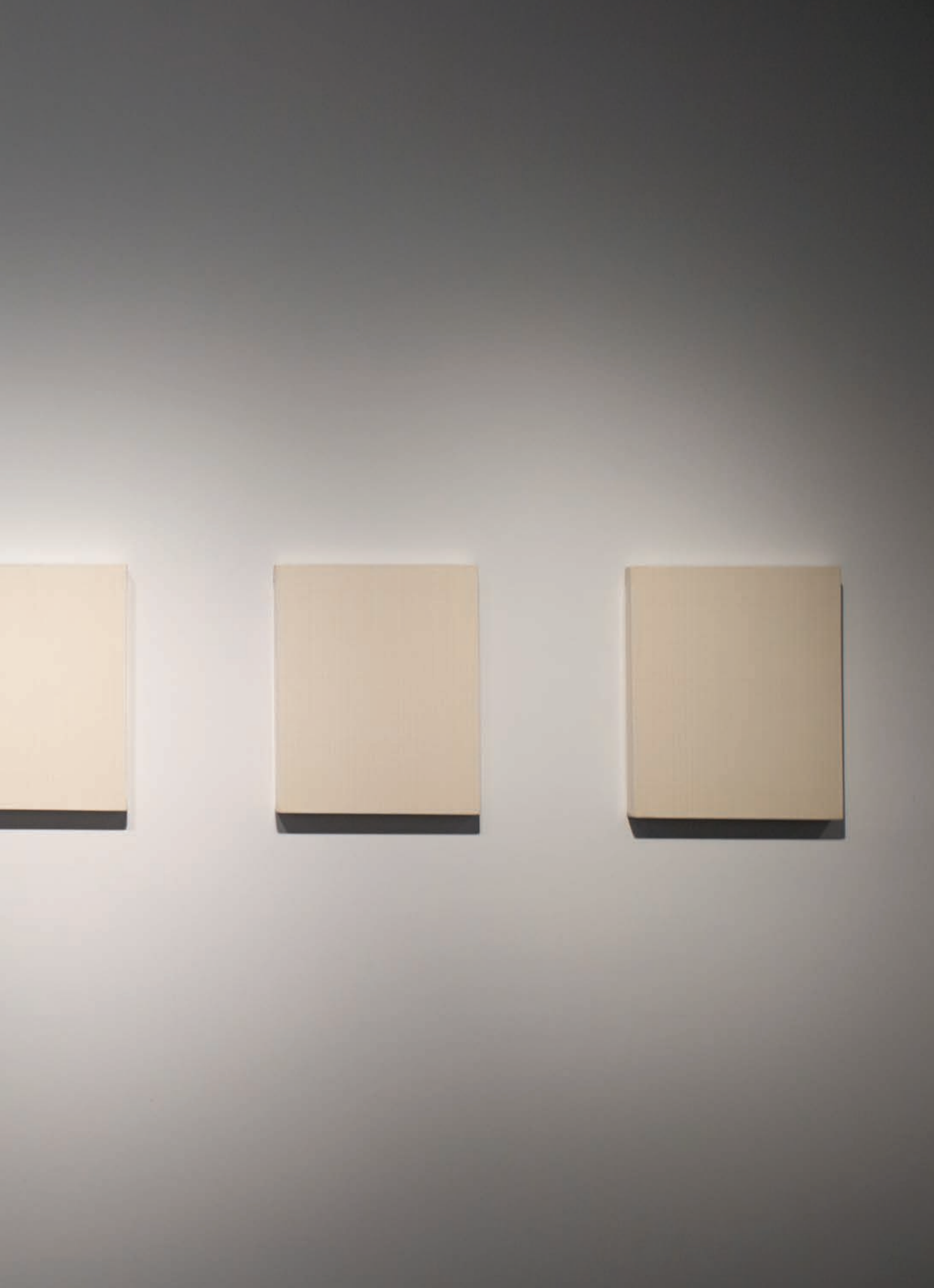
I was fascinated with this group of works, but felt strongly that, although I *am* a professional art historian, my own field of expertise lies with earlier modernist European art, and that for this and all future exhibitions, we ought to recruit an outside scholar-curator who could bring fresh eyes and more focused contemporary experience to the project. We also decided—with a combination of boldness and of the desire to buy time—to publish the book *after* the opening of the exhibition, so that it would also document the exhibition itself with a floor plan and installation photographs, in addition to professional photographs of the work included in it.

We approached the Seattle-based firm of Lucia/Marquand to be our publisher and, after careful deliberation, decided to make the books as a standardized series that would have an eventual collective impact. What was most important in our early decisions is that we didn't foresee the entire series at once, but rather allowed it to develop gradually as his work became known to a widening circle of collectors, critics, curators, and artists.

The book, *John Wilcox: The works from 1980-83, California to Texas*, was the result of the exhibition I curated, and helped bring our thinking for future volumes into form. I selected the fifteen works of art and curated their installation in The Wilcox Space. We recruited Gabriel Ritter, then the Nancy and Tim Hanley Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the Dallas Museum of Art, to write a second essay after spending considerable time with the works selected. We also worked closely with Wilcox's brother David to collect material for an illustrated chronology of the period, and asked the important Dallas-based photographer Allison V. Smith to document the installation. The natural linen-bound hardback with a jaunty red linen binder strip made its debut after the exhibition closed, as a permanent scholarly record of Wilcox's early work.

The spare, utterly non-commercial installation had tremendous success for the large groups who came to the opening and to subsequent events at the space. It





brought the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History into the heart of the creative community in Exposition Park, and was clear evidence of our commitment to both contemporary and locally produced art. It launched another important aspect of the Wilcox Space, which had served as Wilcox's loft and studio for ten years. Because it has a bathroom and a kitchen as well as a sleeping loft, it could not only house visiting curators *in* the space, but also be a place for meals, conversations, casual gatherings, and lectures, each of which brought a different small audience into direct contact with the works.

All of us know that we look differently at works of art at differing times of the day, in different groups, and when seated during a meal or a discussion. The multiplicity of *ways* of viewing make The Wilcox Space all but unique because it has both a domestic and an institutional character. It also brought a widely diverse audience to confront and then to study the work, as well as to read the critical prose and documentation about it. One important Dallas-based collector was so taken by a particular work at one event that they inquired about its availability from Wilcox's dealer and were able to acquire it privately for their collection, thus providing the estate with an income stream that could support the costs of the space.

In curating my exhibition of Wilcox's work, I wanted to focus on Wilcox's origins as an artist. Although a native of Denison, Texas, and Dallas, he attended St. Stephen's School in Austin, where he already showed interest in the visual arts and won an arts prize as a high school student. Wilcox decided that he was interested in the liberal arts and elected to go the experimental—one course at a time—private college in Colorado Springs, Colorado College. Here, he made several close friends of both genders and began to experiment even more ambitiously with his ideas and his art practice.

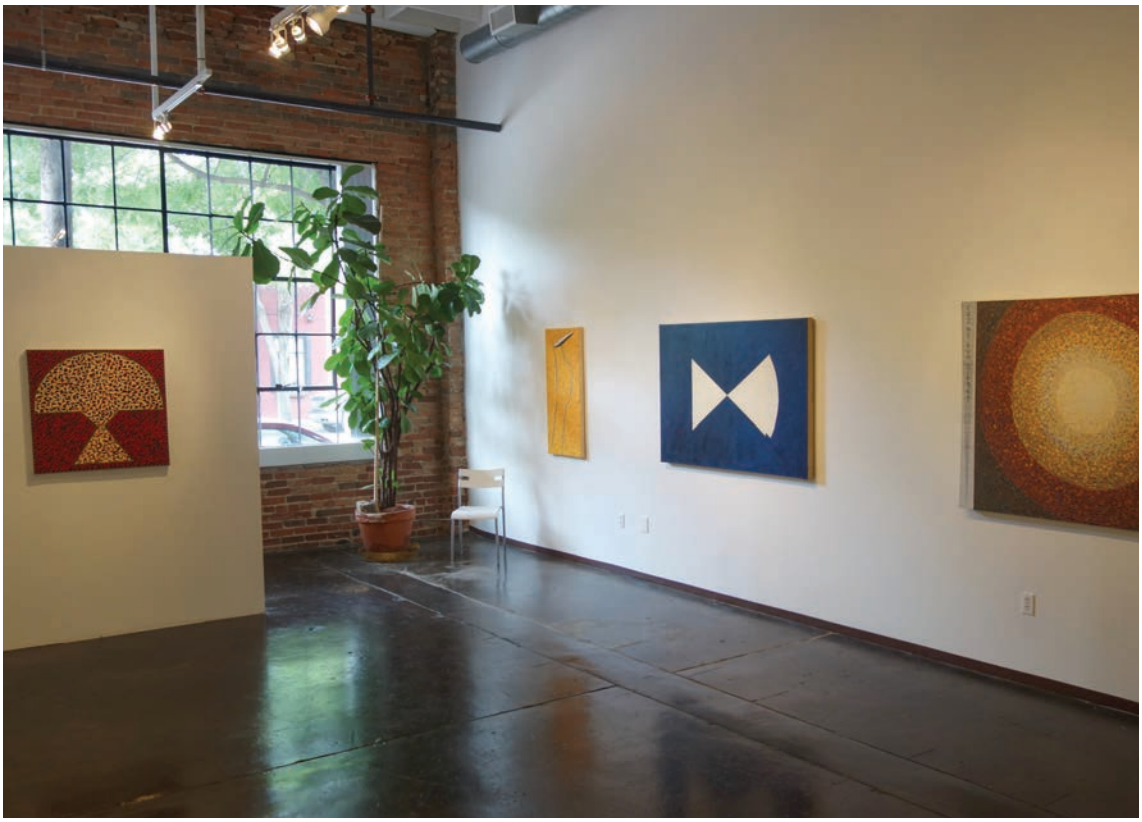
To start professionally as an artist, he needed an MFA degree, and, rather than go to New York, he applied to and was accepted by the graduate program at Pomona College, outside of Los Angeles. Yet, after matriculating, he quickly realized that his decision was incorrect and returned to Texas, where he worked, like many other artists, as an art handler and preparator at the Fort Worth Museum of Art. Here, he met lifelong friends and began to understand the complex aesthetic politics of institutional museum culture.

Yet, California—*not* New York—beckoned, and, not only did he have a close friend in the theater world in L.A., but he also knew that he needed a quiet place distant from urban pressure to develop as an artist. Through other friends, he found a studio and living place in Carpinteria, just southwest of Santa Barbara. Here he worked and lived in an abandoned bunk house with two others: a Japanese Buddhist, who chanted much of the day, and an organist. It was, seemingly, a kind of hippy paradise—cheap, open-minded, and spiritual—and here Wilcox developed as an artist.

The work from this period is confounding to a conventional art historian, who wants to root the work of the artist being studied in the cultural context of southern California of the late 1970's and early 1980's. Gabriel Ritter, a native Californian who brought his intellectual energy and knowledge of the arts traditions of Southern California to the project, was unable to find any compelling origins for the highly original and accomplished paintings made there by Wilcox.

So, how did they happen? A Texas-raised, Colorado-educated, artist in rural

Previous page John Wilcox, *Prayer No. 1, 1990*. In the fourth Installation at The Wilcox Space. *John Wilcox: Diptychs and Polyptychs*, an exhibition curated by Sarah Kozlowski and Ben Lima, on view November 2015 to November 2016.



Second Installation at The Wilcox Space, *John Wilcox Selected Works: 1980 to 1983*, curated by Rick Brettell, on view November 2013 to October 2014.

California was not destined to follow regional norms and, thus, developed a profound originality largely because he was *not* part of a regional aesthetic tradition. He could never have made the works he made there in Texas or Colorado (and certainly not in New York), and this very situation produced work of a stubborn originality. The aim of the exhibition and its publication was not to find the origins of Wilcox's aesthetic, but, instead, to understand his need for originality.

In my essay for the catalogue, I wrote of certain resonances between particular works by Wilcox and those from the late 1970's by California based artists like Ron Davis and Robert Therrien. And to those, I would now add the wonderful experimental work from the 70's by Mary Corse, whose work is now coming to prominence. The whole issue of the elusive relationship between figure and ground in illusionistic painting, of the discovery of geometric shapes that have a multi-dimensional character, and of the complex chromatic and light-based issues involved with the positioning of a shape on a ground—all of these fascinated Wilcox in ways that have a good deal to do with what he saw in southern California.

What one learns from this is that artists can teach art historians to look beyond their established canons—both at the work of neglected artists and at visual

relationships among artists from different art historically defined groups. This is what happened for those of us who thought we knew the art produced in southern California in its greatest decades—the 1960s through the 1980s—as codified by the Getty-financed regional art historical project called Pacific Standard Time. Wilcox realized before *any* art historians or museum professionals in Texas the incredible fecundity of formal invention and material experimentation in the art produced in and around L.A.

The work I did on the exhibition and the subsequent volume in the series devoted to the oeuvre of John Wilcox taught me to look at regional art in completely new ways, and to have courage to get beyond established art historical forms that are, fundamentally, established by the art market. We learned that documentation is only the beginning of critical and historical understanding and that we all learn *from* the work ordered and discussed in new ways. This is not possible in museums, which need external verification and established knowledge before they can be experimental. The Wilcox Space brought art produced just decades ago into the realm of "art history."

From this beginning, it would have made sense to divide the oeuvre of Wilcox into chronological groups defined by place—the New York years, the return to Texas, etc. But, as soon as we began to confront this kind of historically minded structure, we realized how formulaic and boring it was. So, we gathered the larger group of curators, scholars, and artists and began to discuss what to do next. Leigh Arnold, the UT Dallas Ph.D. who is a curator at the Nasher Sculpture Center, realized that Wilcox had done a large series of works that dealt with words, and that this body of work was in need of real study. So, we jettisoned chronology for a serious examination of Wilcox's works involving words from 1988 to 2002.

This exhibition was curated by Arnold and had the same number of works, fifteen, that had been in the California exhibition. These included works on paper that can easily be classified as "drawings" and works on linen or canvas that are "paintings." All involved words—sometimes one or two in fascinating word plays and other times long passages of biblical texts patiently rewritten on linen or canvas.

All the works were made after Wilcox's devastating diagnosis of HIV which, in the late 1980s, was in effect a death sentence. In this way, they fulfilled personal and aesthetic needs very different than the California work in the first exhibition. Death weighed heavily over this body of work, as light and seemingly easy as many of the works seem at first glance. And Wilcox's intense involvement with Christianity also entered into the world of his art.

At the opening, people wept openly at the realization of his struggles, which had never before been laid bare in exhibition form. Something known only to closest friends and family was shared posthumously with others in a way that made the exhibition a cathartic experience. Memorial works for his L.A.-based friend Frank Wilson (*Untitled: in Memory of FOW, 1992*) and his lifelong friend and helper Willa Mae Runelds (*Untitled: In Memory of WMR, 1992*) were shown along with works entitled *Prayers* or *Sin* or *Revelation*.

The spiritual quest of abstract artists, which has been studied extensively for earlier and mid-20th century art, was then evident in ways that no one who had seen Wilcox's work at Barry Whistler's gallery could ever have expected. Leigh Arnold's frankly memorial essay was joined by another by Darren Jones, a New York and Florida based artist and critic, who had become familiar with Wilcox's work when he

was in Dallas at the CentralTRAK artists' residency. Both essays fearlessly confront the issues of art and mortality with which Wilcox struggled, and placed his wordplay and religious words into the larger context of word art of the postwar period in America.

The *Private Words* exhibition led us to realize that the devotional and, in some cases, overtly religious nature of Wilcox's art had only begun to be recognized. Dr. Sarah Kozlowski, the associate director of the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History, and a scholar of multi-part works of devotional and narrative art created for the Catholic Church in late medieval Europe, suggested that Wilcox too had a career-long interest in diptychs and polyptychs—paintings in two panels or in multiple panels—placing his work in a long European tradition. Because she approached the work with such a deeply rooted art historical perspective, we all thought that a project on these multi-part works would benefit from the critical perspective of a scholar of 20th century art, and we approached Dr. Ben Lima, then at the University of Texas at Arlington, about a curatorial collaboration.

When Sarah and Ben began to delve into Wilcox's work of this type, they found so much that they proposed mounting two completely different installations of the works that would both result in a single publication. Called *John Wilcox: Diptychs and Polyptychs*, each of the two installations included nine works of art, the first pair of which, *Drawing for Transmission Tower (Father)* and *Drawing for Radio/Cell Tower (Mother)*, instigated each.

What they learned is that Wilcox was uninterested in the traditional diptych and triptych forms, in which the work has both a "closed" and an "open" position. Indeed, in each case, he wanted the various parts to be seen at once, and, in certain cases, such as the work on paper entitled *Paradise*, the "two-part" aspect of the work is not at all obvious from a superficial glance or from a reproduction. The sole "triptych," entitled *Grief (Child's Grave)* of 2000, is actually the opposite of a traditional triptych, in which the central panel is covered by the two wings when closed. Instead, the three panels are stacked to form a pyramid of three differently sized panels touching, the largest and lowest appearing almost to support the smaller two on top of it.

At the opening, people wept openly at the realization of his struggles, which had never before been laid bare in exhibition form.

Among the initial three books in our series, the *Diptychs and Polyptychs* volume had the deepest art historical resonance, bringing the imagination of the art historian to the task of interpreting contemporary art, and, it led directly to the fifth installation, which was curated by the artist's brother, David Wilcox. David is a clinical psychologist and associate at the Harvard Medical School in Boston who has a deep personal understanding of his brother's work and has spent the past five years since John's death cataloguing the works of art, letters, and ephemera from his estate. At the onset of our collaboration, he felt ill-equipped to curate the work of his brother and, thus, allowed others to do so. Yet, as he witnessed the process of selection, participated in the installations, and oversaw the production of the books, his confidence increased, and all of us who had

worked with him encouraged him to curate the next installation in the space.

Entitled *Relinquishing Time: Selected Works of John Wilcox*, the installation included nine works by Wilcox, each of which resulted from mantra-like repetitive process of mark making. Indeed, the sheer discipline and control of process in these works is extraordinary, and David Wilcox laid bare one important aspect of his brother's artistic process. He also commissioned an essay from artist and curator Terri Thornton, of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, as well as an introduction from the important scholar of monochrome and other varieties of pure abstraction, Dr. Frances Colpitt, Rose Professor of Art History at Texas Christian University. The book on this installation, the fifth in the series, will appear within the year.

The final installation resulted from a fascinating dialogue that had taken place during the past five years, first with the Dallas Museum of Art's esteemed chief conservator, Mark Leonard, and, in the end, with his successor, Laura Hartman. She elected to collaborate with Arthur Peña, an artist who had long admired John's works and was fascinated by his varied processes of painting and drawing. The two made a selection of nine works, each of which was technically different than the others, revealing the fascination with process that is, in the end, part of all art making.

Their work resulted directly from an intensive examination of particularly important works by Wilcox that had been damaged in a storage flood and were in need of conservation. This practical problem resulted in a detailed analysis of the ways the artist made each work. The most important of these, a four-panel work entitled *Crucifix*, necessitated a complex plan for its eventual restoration, which reveals a good deal about the artist's methods of work.

The co-curators of the final installation are preparing their texts for what will be the sixth of the books on aspects of Wilcox's work envisioned by the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History in collaboration with the Ioannes Project and David Wilcox. When the delayed first volume of this series appears with a full chronology of John Wilcox's life and art and its interview with his friend and dealer, Barry Whistler, the six volumes will be packaged and given to important art libraries throughout the U.S. and Europe.

I know of no artist with such a richly varied project of documentation produced in the decades after his or her death. It is proof of the commitment of the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History to the very nature of art historical documentation. It also has been so successful within the tightly knit arts community of greater Dallas that the Institute has decided to take over the space for a three-year period and to devote it to the same kind of close art historical and conservation documentation of artists whose work is centered in North Texas and who, at least in the initial year, have made contributions to abstraction (variously defined).

Hence, the Wilcox space will have a life beyond John Wilcox, enabling us at the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History to make serious contributions to the careful study of serious regional art. We plan to do two major installations per year, coinciding with the two academic terms of UT Dallas, and one summer group exhibition, each of which will be documented on our website and, if possible, in an annual print publication. It will be our small, but serious regional variant of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time, which has done so much to document locally produced 20th and 21st century art in Southern California. A

Digital Games, Science Fiction, and the Death of Literature

Ming Dong Gu

Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature
and Director of the Confucius Institute,
University of Texas at Dallas

Due to the ongoing digital revolution and increasing pressures from STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, departments of literature across the world are facing a stark reality: a shrinking reading public of literature in society, and dwindling enrollment of literary majors in colleges and universities. The diminishing interest in literature is observed in both Western and Eastern literatures and reveals one universal phenomenon: Literary studies across the world are struggling to survive in the age of digital revolution and telecommunication by eking out their existence through compulsory literary requirements of general education. The situation in society is even more disheartening. In public places anywhere, one may see people intently watching their iPhone or iPad, but few of them are likely reading literary works, be it poetry, fiction, or drama. As a consequence, not a few people predict that in the foreseeable future, literary studies are likely to become an endangered species among the institutionalized academic disciplines. Jacques Derrida, for one, prophesied in the 1980s: "An entire epoch of so-called literature, if not all of it, cannot survive a certain technological regime of telecommunications (in this respect the political regime is secondary). Neither can philosophy, or psychoanalysis. Or love letters."[1]

Echoing Derrida's prophecy for the possible demise of literary studies in particular and of the humanities in general, many thinkers and scholars, including Alvin Kernan, Michael Bérubé, Robert Scholes, John Ellis, Carl Woodring, Edward Said, J. Hillis Miller, and others seriously contemplate and speculate on the fate and future of literature.[2] They have raised some thought-provoking questions, the tenor of which may be boiled down to two practical

1 Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 204.

2 See Alvin Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Michael Bérubé, *The Employment of English: Theory, Jobs, and the Future of Literary Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); John M. Ellis, *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Robert Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as A Discipline* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Carl Woodring, *Literature: An Embattled Profession* (New York: Columbian University Press, 1999); Edward Said, "Restoring Intellectual Coherence," in *MLA Newsletter*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Spring 1999); J. Hillis Miller, "Literature Matters Today," in *Substance*, Volume 42, No. 2 (2013), pp. 12-32; and *Literature Matters* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016).

questions: How can we re-energize the teaching of literature and attract more students into taking literature courses at colleges and schools dominated by STEM subjects? And how can we resuscitate the popular interest in reading literary works in the age of globalization dominated by new media and telecommunications? In this article, I will make an attempt to locate possible practical answers to those two questions by exploring the connections between digital games and literary works and by examining the internal reasons for the recent upsurge of popular interest in science fiction and the role science fiction may play in re-energizing public interest in literature.

Science Fiction as a Bridge between "Two Cultures"

In his renowned lecture delivered in 1959, subsequently published in a book form as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, C. P. Snow made a keen observation of a trend in the industrialized society of his time and raised his famous argument that the intellectual life of the whole Western society has split into two contrasting and almost exclusive cultures—one of the sciences and the other of the humanities; and that the split had become an obstacle to resolving world problems in the modern age.[3] More than half a century later, the divide between the Two Cultures in Snow's conception has been increasingly widened by the predominance of STEM subjects in the educational system and new media and communications in society. In our efforts to confront the challenges of STEM, our aim is not only to bridge the gap between the Two Cultures, but also to tackle a practical question: How can we re-energize the teaching of literature and attract more students into taking literature courses? In a recent book, *Thinking Literature across Continents*, J. Hillis Miller and his co-author Ranjan Ghosh have addressed this question and engaged in elaborate discussions of how to re-invent the teaching machine in the global age of science and technology.[4] Their advocacy and critical practice are an admirable and noble effort to rescue literary studies which is hard pressurized by STEM subjects. But in the face of the globalization of technology, will it be able to lure students of STEM majors into taking courses of literature? My common sense compels me to have doubts.

The endangered status of literary studies consists of two basic factors that I have identified in the opening of this article: the declining number of literature majors in colleges and the dwindling interest in reading literature in society. Both factors are duly reflected in one academic phenomenon on college campuses: that is, the dwindling of attendance at public lectures on literature. Nowadays, it is a no small effort to organize a successful public lecture on a literary topic. Except for lectures by big names such as a Nobel Literature Prize winner or world-renowned scholars of literature, most lectures on college campuses are inadequately attended despite strenuous efforts made by lecture organizers for publicity and advertisement. It is not a rare occurrence that a public lecture on literature is attended by a small audience, to the embarrassment of both the organizer and the speaker. But one recent lecture should give us food for thought for re-inventing the teaching machine and for devising practical ways to save literary

3 C. P. Snow, [1959] *The Two Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 3.

4 Ranjan Ghosh and J. Hillis Miller, *Thinking Literature across Continents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

studies. This speaker was neither a world-renowned author nor a world-renowned scholar. In fact, he is not even a professional scholar of literature. It was a lecture on the translation of Chinese science fiction delivered by Ken Liu, an attorney by profession, an amateur author, and an amateur translator.[5] His lecture topic was on the origins of Chinese science fiction through translation of Western works and his own translation of Chinese science fiction writer Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem*.[6] The lecture was a huge success with the lecture hall packed with standing room only for latecomers. The huge turnout of the lecture had a number of reasons, but the biggest appeal was the topic itself: science fiction. A large number of the audience was composed of undergraduate and graduate students. They came to the lecture simply because it was one on science fiction with a focus on a popular Chinese sci-fi novel *The Three-Body Problem*, which won the Hugo Award for Best Novel in 2015, the first translated fiction ever to receive that prestigious honor. I used to have a low opinion of science fiction and could not understand why people, old and young, East and West, are so captivated by *Star Trek*, *Jurassic Park*, *Harry Potter*, and the *Space Odyssey* series. This lecture totally changed my mind and forced me to rethink the significance of science fiction genre both for the sake of the genre itself and for literature as a whole.

In the academic and popular conception, science fiction always has something lowly about it, at least never on a par with refined high literature. It is frequently dismissed as an escapist writing appealing to less intellectual-minded and lowly-educated social strata. In the age of globalization and technology, science fiction has been gaining increasing popularity in society and power to impact our lives and the world. Its popularity and power come from both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. Extrinsically, as science and technology have become indispensable parts of our lives, we have become cyborgs in one way or another, willy-nilly. While science and technology have improved and enhanced the quality of our lives, they also bring with them side-effects which plunge us into uncertainty and even fear. Science fiction addresses the positive and negative effects of science and technology. It can help us think about the role, value, and ethics of science and technology, forewarning us of its positive and negative effects on humanity and society, and imaginatively projecting its developmental trends and long-term effects and outcome. Intrinsically, science fiction is more effective than any other literary genre in expanding our imagination and exploring the consequences of our social endeavors, moral beliefs, value systems, and educational policies. In a way, it may even surpass philosophical reflections. It is true that science fiction till now is not a highly regarded literary genre, but it has some advantages over other literary genres. It is not only a genre of literature, but also a genre of TV, film, online writing, and other media including computer games and board games. Although one may dismiss it as an escapist genre, yet ironically, it is a genre most directly related to our life, society, and future.

From the perspective of human psychology, the popularity of science fiction in all media may touch a deep dimension of literary psychology and offer hints to a hidden pattern of development in human perception, cognition, aesthetics, and consciousness across cultural traditions. In

5 Ken Liu, "Betrayal with Integrity: Conformance and Estrangement in Translating Chinese Science Fiction." Anlin Ku Lecture, University of Texas at Dallas, October 20, 2016.

6 Liu Cixin, *The Three-Body Problem*, translated by Ken Liu (New York: Tor Books, 2016).

his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye proposes a theory of literature, which, based on a modification of Aristotle's elevation of the characters in the Poetics and an observation of Western fiction, views European literary development in five modes characterized by "the hero's relative power of action": (1) myth; (2) romance; (3) the high mimetic mode; (4) the low mimetic mode; and (5) the ironic mode. In an article, "The Universal Significance of Frye's Theory of Fictional Modes," I have conducted a comparative study of Frye's theory in relation to the Chinese literary tradition and argues for the transcultural value of Frye's theory in spite of distinctive differences in the Eastern tradition. On the strengths of the comparative study, I suggest that the compatibility of Frye's theory of literature with Chinese literary tradition "seems to affirm that the developmental model in Frye's theory of fictional modes may perhaps be viewed as a hidden structural pattern in long-term human endeavors such as the movements of history, literature, art, civilization, and culture."[7] I also suggest that Frye's fictional modes form a pattern, which may be repeated in variegated cyclical forms. And science fiction in modern times may be viewed as a modern form of ancient myths and legends. I mention in particular: "Star Trek, the American TV series, has captivated viewers all over the world, partly because it provides a means to satisfy modern people's (un)conscious longing for the long lost infantile hallucinatory sense of omnipotence."[8] That article was written in 1992 and first published in 2001.[9] Now, 25 years later, as though to affirm the understanding of Frye's insights, science fiction has become the most popular genre in literature, TV series, film, video games, and multi-media.

The popularity of science fiction among the reading public is the consequence of both technological advancement and the innate drives of the human desire to control one's world and destiny in the age of postmodernism. Lyotard defines postmodernism succinctly as "incredulity toward metanarrative," which, he also notes, "is undoubtedly a product of the progress in the sciences."[10] In the postmodern age, Eagleton points out, the solid foundation of modernity built on such Enlightenment norms as truth, reason, identity, and objectivity has slipped away from under one's feet,[11] and in place of the culture of reason is a "style of culture" that offers a "depthless, decentered, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' culture and 'popular' cultures, as well as between art and everyday experience."[12] Doubtless, science fiction in the postmodern age fully reflects these characteristic features of postmodernism and radically deviates from early works of science fiction created by Mary Shelley, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and others in that it downplays the role of rationality and does not shun themes of the supernatural, thereby coming closer to the traditional genre of fantasy. In a way, it may be viewed as a postmodern form of myths

7 M. D. Gu, "The Universal Significance of Frye's Theory of Fictional Modes," in Jean Grady and Wang Ning, eds., *Northrop Frye: Eastern and Western Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 175.

8 Ibid., 174.

9 Gu Mingdong, "Frye and Psychoanalysis in Literary Studies: The West and China, in Jean Grady and Wang Ning, eds., *New Direction in N. Frye Studies* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001), pp. 239-264.

10 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xiv.

11 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), pp. 57-58.

12 Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell,1996), p. vii.

and legends or postmodern Gothic romance. Although it generally orients toward the future, science fiction shares with postmodern works of literature and art what Fredric Jameson calls the "attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically."[13] Moreover, science fiction attempts to think the future imaginatively beyond postmodern fiction. Aesthetically, I believe that science fiction in the postmodern era is becoming increasingly refined and literary, perhaps because much of the imaginative energy for traditional literature is migrating into it.

For both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons, we may employ science fiction as an effective means to save and resuscitate literary studies. Since science fiction has the benefits of both worlds—those of sciences and humanities, I believe, it may effectively serve as a bridge across the gap between the Two Cultures and play a crucial role in turning STEM into STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics) in education. We should rethink the importance of science fiction, elevate its status among literary genres, and call on sci-fi authors to blend the popular demand for imaginative consumption and the aesthetic requirements of refined literature in their literary creation. In our efforts to re-invent the teaching machine, we should develop new curricula that take into account the popular demand for fun as well as the educational requirements of knowledge acquisition and human cultivation. Through an imaginative use of science fiction, we may be able to reinvent the teaching machine in a way to meet the challenges of science and technology and to lure the reading public back to the domains of literature. We may even be able to avert the disappearance of literary studies as an academic discipline.

Digital Games as a Portal to Literature

Since science fiction is still a literary genre that has been in existence for over a century, one may say that it is only tangentially related to new media and communications generated by electronic technology. How can we make a connection between literature and digital culture like video games and interface culture, which have taken a heavy toll on popular interest in literature? It is certainly true that digital games, which are played by billions of people around the world, may be the single most fatal cause for the decline of interest in literature. As such, they may be viewed as the first and foremost enemy to literature. If we look deeper into the issue, however, we may be able to find something interesting that might be employed to turn digital games into allies for literary studies. Among digital games, video games are the most popular genre. A video game shares with the novel and epic the qualities of fictionality and extended narrative; with lyric poetry the subtlety of emotions, themes and symbols; and with film and TV series the features of storytelling, movable images, dazzling music cues and visual sights. Moreover, digital games possess the strengths of most artistic media without many of their limitations. A formal and technical study may even locate an inner connection between digital games and most refined literary works like Joyce's *Ulysses*. As we are lamenting the fact that video games have drastically reduced popular interest in refined literature like Eliot's *Wasteland* or Joyce's *Ulysses*, we seem to have failed to notice the possibility that video games and literature may become strange bedfellows in our time. A look into the inner

13 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), p. ix.

connection between digital games and experimental fiction will be enlightening.

Just as Eliot's poems changed our ideas about poetry, Joyce's novels also changed our notion of what a novel is and what it can accomplish. Joyce lived in the first quarter of the twentieth century when the dominant technology included photography, electricity, internal combustion engine, and newly emerging film. The high-speed communication made possible by electronic technology was yet to come, but there were already enough media types that enabled him to become aware of the interrelationship between art and technology, and to find inspiration for revolutionizing literary creation through novel treatment of the relationship between content and form, media and message. As a pioneer who realized that form is inseparably bound with content, Joyce put into brilliant practice his idea of using form to express content in his writing of *Ulysses*. With the appearance of *Ulysses*, Joyce, perhaps without himself knowing it, engaged in the efforts to create an early form of interface literature, which fuses textual elements from different quarters. In fact, he could be viewed as a technician not unlike Da Vinci or Gutenberg. Some even regard him as a computer programmer. In his *Interface Culture*, Steven Johnson asks a startling question: "When James Joyce published *Ulysses* in 1922 and revolutionized all of our expectations about how books should work, was he so different from Gutenberg himself?" He provides an affirmative answer: "You couldn't see it at that time, but Joyce was a highly skilled technician, tinkering around with a book-machine, making it do things it had never done before."[14] Joyce's contemporaries and readers of our era have all regarded him as a literary man, a verbal artist, but Johnson convincingly argues that "from our vantage point, he could just as easily be a programmer; writing codes for the printing press platform. Joyce wrote software for the hardware originally conjured up by Gutenberg."[15] Johnson also reverses the angle in viewing the issue and suggests that "Gutenberg's reworking of the existing manuscript technology of quills and scribes was a creative act as profound as Molly Bloom's final monologue from *Ulysses*." What is the logic of Johnson's analogy? He argues that both Joyce and Gutenberg are innovators with startling imagination, playing the dual role of artist and technician: "Gutenberg built a machine that Joyce souped up with some innovative programming, and Joyce hollered up a variation on a theme originally penned by Gutenberg himself." Indeed, if we view Joyce's experimental novel from the perspective of computer-generated multi-platformed texts, we have good reasons to say that Joyce was a pioneer in the creation of hypertext, and his experimental writing that fuses a variety of languages, historical particulars, and formal patterns is not unlike the present-day interface design, which is the fusion of art and technology.

In realizing that how one writes about something changes or determines what one can write about, Joyce came to the same realization as McLuhan's famous saying: "The medium is the message." By employing a wide variety of languages and styles, he endowed his language with the power to create a literary work which comes close to the multi-platformed texts made possible by computer technology. In creating *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce worked more like an interface designer, for the novel is believed by Joycean specialists to be

14 Steven A. Johnson, *Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create & Communicate* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 2.

15 Ibid., p. 3.

a huge cryptogram, which conceals a cyclic pattern for the entire history of human civilization in terms of Ten Thunders. In his novel, each of Joyce's thunders consists of a 100-character portmanteau of words. In concocting the portmanteau of words, Joyce was literally engaged in a linguistic game which is not unlike that of computer programming. Interestingly, McLuhan employs Joyce' novel as an inspiration for his study of war in human history and shows how each thunder in the novel is connected to technology which determines the development of humanity in history.[16] Although there is much controversy over what each portmanteau word may mean, a reader must break the portmanteau into separate words, many of which are themselves portmanteau words gleaned from different languages. In the true sense of the word, Joyce is creating a word game, not unlike the video games created by interface designers. As a work "where every sentence opens a variety of possible interpretations,"[17] Joyce's novel is both literally and figuratively a literary game.

For this reason, however, what he created has often been dismissed as language games. In terms of interface culture, he may be viewed as a precursor of the kind of educated people in the postmodern, post-human, post-literary, and post-technology age. But in terms of our concern with the likely death of literature in the traditional sense, there is something tricky about *Ulysses*. Numerous people have praised the book as a brilliant work of verbal art, and maybe the most refined book ever written in human history, but there is another side to the same coin: there has existed a big gap between the encomia that critics have heaped on Joyce's novel and the real experience of reading and understanding it. Most readers admit that they are unable to make it to the end. Even many scholars of English literature admit that they have not read the book from cover to cover. Why does this happen? Simply put, readers are put off by the language game in which Joyce excels and indulges. For this reason, the book has received criticism from people who dismiss it as a boring linguistic game which takes fun out of reading a literary work.

Joyce is creating a word game, not unlike the digital games created by interface designers.

Both Joyce's novels and digital games share a commonality in being games, but there is a big difference in terms of their outcomes. While the former is a brilliant failure, the latter is a ruinous success. Joyce's novels are brilliant as the most refined masterpieces of fiction, but fail to attract readers into reading them. Computer games are ruining the lives of millions of people, old and young, but they have achieved spectacular successes in attracting game players across the world. If Joyce was doing something not much different from that of an interface designer, why do readers feel put off by his novels? By contrast, people, both old and young, especially the young, are never bored by video games. I suggest that the literary game created by Joyce does not benefit from interface technology which was yet to appear. Joyce lived and wrote in a historical

16 Marshall McLuhan, *War and Peace in the Global Village* (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. 46.

17 Bernard Benstock, *Joyce-Again's Wake: An Analysis of Finnegans Wake* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, (1965), p. 6.

period when digital technology was still a remote thing in the future. If he lived in our present age of telecommunication, it is an educated speculation that he might have put computer graphics, video games, and interface culture to work in his revolution of fiction composition. Joyce's novels may be too esoteric to sustain the reader's interest, but they are writerly texts in Roland Barthes' conception. In the post-structuralist advocacy of reading, an ideal literary text is one that encourages the reader to come out of a passive, consumptive position and engage in a negotiative mode of reading which produces meaning out of the interactive relations between the text and the reader. In this mode of reading, the reader's initiative and imagination are utterly indispensable. Video games are quite effective in bringing into play the reader's initiative and imagination. Roland Barthes distinguishes literary works into two kinds of texts: readerly texts and writerly texts.[18] While the former encourages the reader to digest passively what is coded in a text, enjoying the fun encoded by the author, the latter stimulates the reader into an active participation in the process of reading so that he or she becomes a co-writer of the text and a co-producer of meanings. I venture to argue that a video game with extended narrative is a writerly text, for a player will have fun only when he or she both reads and plays while using his imagination and ingenuity. If a player passively plays the game, the game will not only become boring but also cannot even continue. Similar to reading a writerly text, the fun of a video game grows out of active participation by the player. Like literary works, video games can perform the didactic function of moral education as well if a video game incorporates a classic literary work into its designing. Its educational function will be heightened if the video game designer self-consciously inputs a moral sense into the game designing. If this happens, computer games will play a vital role in enriching people's life rather than a destructive menace.

In our everyday life, video games have already made their cursory entry into the domains of literature. In the past ten years or so, video game designers in Japan, Korea and China have designed video games based on characters and episodes in the popular classical Chinese novel, *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*.[19] These games have attracted millions of people, both young and old, in the Far East. Video games at present are still limited in the extent to which narratives of literary works are incorporated, and they are in most aspects literal computer-generated games. As such, they are blamed for ruining the life of numerous young people across the world. But I believe, so long as video game designers give adequate coverage to narratives of literary works and pay enough attention to the functions of literature, there will appear a kind of interface literature that fuses video games, science fiction, and literary masterpieces which may work as a healthy alternative and save those helplessly and hopelessly indulging in video games.

For all the above reasons, some people believe that video games are endowed with the potential to become the best suited form of storytelling for our time. In my opinion, however, for video games to become a post-literary text, theories of computer games need to reformulate their ideology and doctrines. Right now, there are two schools of game theories: ludology

18 Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 4.

19 Luo Kuan-chung, *Romance of the Three Kingdom*, translated by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2002).

and narratology. Narratologists recognize the role of video games as a storytelling medium, although its narrative function is based on cyberdrama and interactive fiction, in which a video game presents a simulated story world where a player engages in responding to what happens to him or her. Ludologists argue that a video game is first and foremost a game and should be understood and designed exclusively with the ludic logic of play and entertainment in mind. Although they do not deny the elements of narratology such as characters, plots, events, and traditional aspect of narrative in video games, they strongly believe that the narrative function is secondary, if not incidental, to video games. Clearly, the former is friendly to literature and literary studies while the latter is not. But neither is preoccupied with the educational and moral functions of traditional narrative in literature. This can be clearly observed in the discussions and debates among theorists and scholars of game studies. In the discussions and debates among game studies scholars, the time-honored didactic function of narratives was generally overlooked and the attention was almost exclusively focused on the technical aspects of games.[20] The neglect should be held responsible for the grave consequences of video games in society.

For video games to become friends to literature, they need to integrate more canonical literary works into the process of design, and take into account the traditional function of literature as a medium of moral education. Up to the present, only a few classical works have been transferred into video games. Although the integration of canonical works and computer games has aroused scholarly concern over whether this is a rebirth or degeneration of classical literary works, at least, the practice has provided an opportunity for refined literature to revive itself under the pressures of STEM. It is therefore necessary to explore the gamification of literature further. I believe, if the corporate creators of computer games do not completely surrender to the profit-driven policies and fulfil their fair share of social responsibilities, a combination of digital games and literary works will give rise to a new literary genre that can rival traditional literary works. But can they resist the working logic of late capitalism and brush aside the invisible hand of the market? This is the crux of the matter! ▲

20 See collected articles in Mark Wolf & Bernard Perron, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003); and especially, Gonzalo Frasca, "Ludologists love stories, too: notes from a debate that never took place," in Marinka Copier & Joost Raessens, eds., *Level-up: Digital Games Research Conference* (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2003).

The *Athenaeum Review* podcast features conversations with leading thinkers about the ideas that shape our world.

Yve-Alain Bois (Institute for Advanced Study) on Matisse, drawing and phenomenology

Sandra Russ (University of Michigan) on pretend play in childhood

Suzanne Preston Blier (Harvard University) on risk, power and identity in African art

Annabel Daou (artist) on history and public experience in Beirut

Martin Powers (University of Michigan) on the Chinese influence on Western ideals of meritocracy, individualism and good government

Mark Johnson (University of Oregon) on ethical naturalism and the moral imagination

Abigail Solomon-Godeau (independent scholar, Paris) on photography, power and desire

John Mraz (Universidad Autónoma de Puebla) on the bracero program, Los Hermanos Mayo, photography and national identity in Mexico

Sandra Luz Lopez Barroso (filmmaker) on her film Artemio, migration and the Costa Chica of Oaxaca and Guerrero

Vlad Glaveanu (Webster University Geneva) on a sociocultural approach to creativity

Michael Lobel (City University of New York) on commercial culture, realism and Pop Art

Thomas Gaehtgens (Getty Research Institute) on the Museum Island in Berlin

Stephen Asma (Columbia College Chicago) on why we need religion

The *Athenaeum Review* podcast is hosted by Ben Lima, and produced by Oskar Olsson, Yvan Tina and Andrew Oh.

Find us on **Creative Disturbance** (creativedisturbance.org), iTunes and Stitcher.

Forthcoming in *Athenaeum Review*

Carol Anne Costabile-Heming on Jenny Erpenbeck's novels of Berlin

Mark Dennis and Andrew Fort on contemplative studies

Gabriel Finkelstein on nineteenth-century secularization

Blake Hestir on self-knowledge

Jason Hill on cosmopolitanism

Darrin McMahon on Steven Pinker's enlightenment

Daniel Orlovsky on Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Red Wheel*

Mark Rosen on Leonardo

Barry Strauss on ten Caesars

Bonnie Pitman on art, mind and brain

Liz Trosper on Laura Owens at the Dallas Museum of Art

Athenaeum Review
School of Arts and Humanities
The University of Texas at Dallas
800 West Campbell Rd. JO 31
Richardson, TX 75080-3021

athenaeumreview.org