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Nate Gilbert, Editor-in-Chief
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From the President:

The eighteenth annual conference of the GPA was held online on May 19-20, 2023. Our keynote speaker was Andy Davidson, internationally acclaimed writer of three novels—*In the Valley of the Sun*, *The Boatman's Daughter*, and *The Hollow Kind*—and Assistant Professor of English at Middle Georgia State University. In "Because the Earth Is a Haunted House: Teaching and Writing Horror in a Post-Everything World," Andy explored lessons learned, both personal and professional, in teaching and writing within the genre. He also tried to answer the perennial question every horror writer dreads: "Why horror?" A version of that address is included in this volume of the journal. We also awarded the Vicki Hill Memorial Graduate Recognition Award to Caroline Black for her paper, "The Cure: The Art of Melancholy in *Disintegration*." This year's conference was particularly exciting as it marks the first time the GPA accepted papers from international participants. I hope we continue to feature global voices at the conference going forward.

The 2023-2024 academic year will be my last as President of the GPA. I will be passing the baton to Robert Mullins after a long tenure in this position, but I will continue to serve the association as the liaison for conference coordination with Middle Georgia State University. My involvement with the GPA remains one of the most rewarding professional development activities of my academic career; I have enjoyed mentoring the next generation of scholars and providing a venue to showcase high quality, regional scholarship via the conference and national and international scholarship via the journal. Perhaps most significantly, I cherish the friendships I've made with other members of the GPA. I want to thank all the members of the GPA, particularly the officers and regular conference attendees, for making this experience such a positive and meaningful one for me, and I anticipate many more years of scholarly friendship and fellowship to come.

This edition of the journal is the first published under the direction of our new editor, Nate Gilbert. We are grateful to Nate for picking up the

mantle from our former editor, Farrah Senn, and look forward to a bright future for the journal under his editorial leadership.

Dr. Lorraine Dubuisson, President
Georgia Philological Association

Introduction

From the editor:

Dear readers and fellow GPA members,

It has been my privilege to serve as the new Editor-in-Chief for this latest volume of the *Journal of the Georgia Philological Association*. I acknowledge the hard work that has gone into editing and publishing the journal by my predecessors, most recently Farrah Senn. I thank her and the rest of the members on the editorial board for their invaluable assistance in guiding me through the entire process of bringing excellent scholarship to a public audience. Although I had the opportunity to work as an editorial assistant for two scholarly journals when I was in graduate school, much has changed since those days; I am grateful for the patience of the editing team and of the authors whose work appears on the following pages as I tried, and sometimes failed, to communicate my ideas to them through numerous emails and phone calls. A bicycle accident in late May of this year presented me with additional challenges, so this edition is later than I had originally planned. I hope you find that it has been worth the wait.

A little about me: I attended graduate school at the University of Idaho and at Washington State University. While at WSU, I applied for an editorial assistantship with *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* and *Poe Studies/Dark Romanticism*. For three semesters, I worked under the exacting and excellent tutelage of an associate editor and several top scholars of nineteenth-century American literature. Graduation and the job market took me in a new direction and for the past eighteen years, I have been teaching for the Department of English at Middle Georgia State University (formerly Middle Georgia College). I look forward to this return to academic scholarship, editing, and publishing.

As Dr. Dubuisson noted in her foreword, the GPA welcomed several international presenters at the 2023 conference. Although we were unable to include any papers submitted by international scholars in this volume of the journal, we look forward to publishing more work from around the globe in the future. We are, however, able to share the work of an internationally-recognized author, Andy Davidson. A transcript of his keynote address at the conference begins this year's collection of articles: "Because the Earth is a Haunted House: Teaching and Writing Horror in a Post-Everything World." Davidson's address is followed by a fascinating

study of an emerging genre in children and adolescent literature: fantasy fiction that features strong African American protagonists. Amy Cummins' "B. B. Alston's Powerful Representations of Blackness in *Amari and the Night Brothers*" provides us with a closer look at the work of an author who offers an alternative to the sometimes racist and often Eurocentric views expressed in the Harry Potter series: Amari is a young African American who makes her way into the supernatural realm beneath Atlanta, Georgia, and uses her magical skills to survive numerous challenges.

Valerie Czerny's compact analysis of one of Austen's novels, "Contrapuntal Comedy in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*," is our next article. Using semiotics and Roland Barthes' ideas of re-presentation, Czerny encourages us to reconsider the structure of this novel in musical terms. Benjamin Elliott, one of our graduate student presenters at last year's conference, provides us with a thought-provoking examination of the healing power of language for a family of Vietnamese immigrants: "'A Fountain by Another Name': Communication Breakdown, Language, and Meaning in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*." Next, we have John LeJeune's "Xenophon on Politics, Horses, and Horsemanship." I find this article to be a refreshingly readable foray into Greek philosophy—who knew that horses could teach us so much about human behavior and relationships!

Farrah Senn's article on the flapper character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's work closes out the section of edited articles for this volume. Senn argues that by juxtaposing the flapper with the traditional mother figure in his stories, Fitzgerald demonstrates how a new generation of women can bring about feminist cultural revolutions, both in America and in his ancestral Ireland.

I am very grateful that three of my colleagues at Middle Georgia State University have provided us with excellent reviews of three fine books. First comes Rhonda Crombie's review of James Shapiro's *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us about Our Past and Future*. Crombie reminds us once again how the most famous writer in the English language continues to be relevant for twenty-first-century American readers. Second, we have Monica Miller's review of *Eudora Welty and Mystery: Hidden in Plain Sight* (Jacob Agner and Harriet Pollack). This edited collection emphasizes that the famous American author was also an

aficionado of the mystery novel and collected a large number of these books during her lifetime. Mystery fans and Welty scholars alike should find plenty to interest them in this book.

We end our publication with Shane Trayers' review of a book that is targeted for a more popular audience, but that is certainly still relevant for academics: Julia Galef's *The Scout Mindset: Why Some People See Things Clearly and Others Don't*. This eminently readable and well-researched work reminds us that, too often, we react to new information with a soldier mindset—that is, we seek to defend a current opinion or identity at all costs without careful self-reflection. Instead, Galef argues that we should adopt a scout mindset: admit when we are wrong, and then change our views in response to the latest and best information available. Trayers notes that this book can be used both in the classroom as a helpful guide for students to evaluate research and as a reality check for academics when responding to emotionally-charged political topics and social issues.

I wish to thank all of you, contributors and readers alike, for continuing the important work of philology wherever you are, passing on to the next generation of scholars, thinkers, and readers the importance of language, texts, and meaning. I look forward to working with you and serving you as a colleague and a friend.

Nate Gilbert, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of the Georgia Philological Association

"Because the Earth is a Haunted House: Teaching and Writing Horror in a Post-Everything World" Keynote Address, 18th Annual Meeting of the Georgia Philological Association

Andy Davidson
Middle Georgia State University

In October 2022, my third novel *The Hollow Kind* was released. By way of promotion, I took part in a wide-ranging conversation with author Stephanie Feldman for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. It was called "The Earth is a Haunted House," and in that conversation Stephanie and I talked about what horror has to say about the environment, as well as the sense of existential dread that seems to hang over us all nowadays. We also talked about how history informs horror, both the distant and the recent past. I've been thinking about that conversation ever since, especially in light of the pandemic and the lingering effects we all see on ourselves, our students, and our professions. With your indulgence, I'd like to explore that a bit, and also frame what I do, as a horror writer and as a creative writing teacher, within this context, this idea that we're all, in a sense, united by a kind of shared horror, in this haunted house we call home.

Traditionally, the American haunted house story is the story of a place where bad things happened, and good things cannot thrive. Something tragic occurred within the walls—a young girl committed suicide by cyanide; a father went crazy, murdered his whole family; a socialite tortured slaves--all stories of the distant past, until, decades later, the house goes up for sale. It's made into apartments, and ghosts begin to appear in windows. Or a young family moves in, only to find some malevolent presence urging them to "get out." Or the house changes hands over the years, as various owners, perhaps among them Nicolas Cage, are drawn to its macabre and horrific past. Most haunted houses are creaky, angry, tired old things that want very much to be left alone, to protect their secrets. They have their own agendas, their own pain. Usually, there's a

vein of loneliness at the center of these stories, whether the house itself is lonely, or the people moving in; in the best stories, it's both.

Almost always, there is a point in the story when we as readers can't help wondering: *Hey, idiots, why don't you leave! The house has ghosts that visit you in the night? Well … walk out the door! Forget about this dump! Save yourself!* Of course, sometimes characters do leave, but it's always in the last few pages, and by then it's usually too late—something sinister has already hitched a ride with them, even if the house itself has burned to the ground or been swallowed by the earth. Or, maybe the writer tries to answer the question of "Why don't they leave?" with a plot machination: the river's flooded and the bridge is out; there's a snowstorm. *Leave? We got a great deal, leave, are you kidding*? *You can't walk away from a great deal, not in this market! So what if it's called "the ax murder house."* Houses don't have memories, right?

More often than not, these families, these couples, these poor lost souls, they just don't go anywhere. Instead, they think they can tough it out and solve the mystery of their new home, only to be consumed by whatever evil lives there.

In the science fiction genre, one of the great themes has always been our dying planet. In science fiction, the answer to the question of "Why don't we leave?" is simple. "Let's go!" says Bradbury. "We may not like what we find," says Heinlein, but, says Asmiov, "It's a hell of a lot more hopeful out there than what we're up to here, overcrowding the planet while we suffer food shortages and build robots."

In the fantasy genre, the answer to "Why don't we leave?" is just, "Hey, we're already gone!" After all, fantasy is just that: an escape to imaginary worlds, even if those worlds are so often dark and complex mirrors of our own. What is *The Lord of the Rings*, after all, but the greatest epic ever told about the comforts of home?

In horror, though, something always compels us to stay on the wrong side of the threshold. For me, the question of why don't you leave has a very simple answer: *Where else would you go?* The Holiday Inn, maybe, but after that? I mean, after all, your house is your home, right? New, old, it's the place you've claimed. We make our stand here, don't we? If not here, where else?

That's all thinking from the inside out, from a character's perspective. Thinking from the outside in, from the writer's perspective, characters put down roots in haunted places because, if they don't, there isn't much story to tell. There's a lesson there, I think, for all of us: How can we be the heroes in our own horror stories if we run away from the horrors? Which, for me, is the central preoccupation of horror as a literary

genre: facing that which frightens us most. And this, lately, is also the preoccupation of my own creative writing students, who, in their short stories, in their poems, are opening doors into dark rooms, turning on lights, watching the shadows scatter.

I recently had a bright and wonderful student accepted into the MFA program at the University of North Carolina. She wrote stories of siren songs, satanic bargains, matricide. In one of her stories, a heroine finds herself wounded and seemingly alone on a lakeshore, until she notices a man standing among the trees, watching her:

> *Melanie freezes, feeling her body … draining of blood on the lakeshore. She wants to press her hand to her stomach, knows that she should. I have to stop the bleeding. But if she moves the man will know she's alive.*

Stories of violence. Abduction. And of fears far more mysterious than physical harm, things somehow incalculable in their terror.

*

The subtitle of this presentation is "Teaching and Writing Horror in a Post-Everything World." Switching gears, I'd like to unpack that a bit. I've been teaching full-time since 2004, when I graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Master of Fine Arts in fiction. I began teaching online—southern literature, American literature, and creative writing. By 2007, I had moved to Georgia and was teaching here. In 2017, I published my first novel. Over the last twenty years, the bulk of my teaching has been online, so when the world came to a stand-still in 2020, one month after my second novel was published—I had just finished a book tour—the transition to teaching fully online, for me, was fairly straightforward.

Unfortunately, as we all remember, this was not the case for many of us, including our students. Two, three years later, I think we're just now coming to understand how the pandemic fundamentally changed the way we, as educators, do our jobs. More importantly, the students have changed. We see higher fail rates, higher absenteeism, and in my own experience, greater numbers of students who are suffering from mental and emotional trauma.

Which brings me to the question I get asked more than any other question, as a writer. If I'm honest, it's one I get tired of answering, because

there is no satisfying answer to it, no explanation that makes anyone feel any better for having asked it. And that question is, "Why horror?" Sometimes, this gets followed up with, "You seem like such a *nice* man …" As if being a decent person with a semi-pleasant disposition—my bare minimum standard, really, for human behavior—negates being haunted by something. Negates experiencing, feeling, or trying to understand the nature of our own haunted lives!

"I'm nice," I say, with a tight smile, "because I write horror."

But what does it mean to frame what you do, as a teacher and as a writer, in terms of "a post-everything world"? Right now, we're living through an age in which the effects of the immediate past are still being felt in our daily lives. I see this in the stories I tell, in the books I read, and in the students I teach. We—and they—cannot shake the lingering effects of the last dark room we stumbled into.

Honestly, when we think about the moment we're in, it seems to me the question isn't why horror, but why *not* horror. We're all haunted, after all, by headlines of war, the rise of authoritarianism, racism, insurrection, violence against children—all of this on top of whatever personal, private burdens we carry. What is horror but Hamlet's mirror held up to nature, giving us that clear, sober view back into ourselves—to the very heart of that which troubles us most?

But this isn't the only way to answer that question, "why horror?" There's also my own personal affinity for the genre. I've been publishing scary books for six years, but I've been reading them since I was a kid. I started with Stephen King's *IT* and never looked back. Since I started writing in the genre professionally, I've joined various writing organizations and gotten to know other horror writers from one end of the publishing spectrum to the other—everyone from *New York Times* bestselling authors to small-press indie authors to self-published writers. I've met and corresponded with childhood heroes. I know librarians in Michigan and Illinois who promote horror at the regional and national levels, as well as book bloggers, book reviewers, and publishers. Horror, in many ways, has become the place of my heart, the home that saved me from this haunted Earth.

In truth, I got in on a good deal, because right about the time my first book landed on shelves, horror had just found its footing again among readers. Horror sections were being reintroduced at major chain bookstores like Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, and the names weren't just King and Koontz. For the first time since the industry collapsed in the early 1990s, horror was SELLING. Why? Well, the year was 2017. 2016

was, as you might remember, an election year. It was, for so many, the beginning of a long dark time of alienation—not only from what seemed to be the very foundational principles of society and democracy, but also from family, from people we thought we knew and understood. Suddenly, in the midst of trying to understand so much that was awful in the world, the horror genre found new readers.

*

Today, there's a buzzy phrase I hear over and over when I go out on a book tour or talk to other writers or advocates for my genre: "Horror is having a moment."

This is true not only for booksellers and professionals; it's true in academia, as well. The Gothic has resurged among scholars; there is new interest in the intersection of feminism and horror, particularly as it relates to slashers and the male gaze. These aren't new ideas, but they have been renewed, and, as we've said, in creative writing, students are keen to tell scary stories, to write about the things that frighten them.

Thinking about the work my students are doing—from sophomores to 4- and 5000-level workshop students—they're writing stories about identity, about how we perceive characters who are different; they're writing about complex societies with rich political landscapes; they're writing stories about sickness, grief, and death. They're working through the immediate past and even, sometimes, the continuing present, shaping the hurt that some of them know (because that is what we do, as writers) into stories that lend perspective, meaning, and truth to our experience.

It's also what we do as teachers.

And so, alongside the known voices of Raymond Carver, Flannery O'Connor, Ernest Hemingway, I share with them the work of writers like Stephen Graham Jones or Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, or Haley Piper and Eric La Rocca, because theirs are unique, talented voices telling stories about monsters, stories about elk women bent on vengeance for crimes against nature, ghosts right out of indigenous lore, stories about society's collapse, stories of disruption, the establishment of a new status quo of what constitutes "mainstream" literature. These are the stories of a post-

modern, post-political, post-pandemic, post-climate, post-everything world—which is not to say we've moved past any of these things; rather, we live with their effects daily—and the horrors these writers see in the real world are giving way to stories that not only challenge traditional, entrenched perspectives, but offer a balm to those of us who feel as if those perspectives have somehow made us less than what we should be, both individually and collectively. I'm happy to say that my students are reading those stories, and my students are writing those stories if only to say, yes, we *are* haunted, we are monsters, but we can become something better.

B. B. Alston's Powerful Representations of Blackness in *Amari and the Night Brothers*

Amy Cummins, PhD
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Beneath the streets of Atlanta, workers for the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs manage the secrets of the supernatural world. Brandon Bruce (B. B.) Alston's *Amari and the Night Brothers* (2021) opens with protagonist Amari Peters trying to find her brother Quinton who is missing and presumed dead. Amari takes her quest for Quinton into a training program and competes for a chance to follow in his footsteps by joining the Department of Supernatural Investigations. She finds a bureaucratic, hierarchical system through which she navigates badge testing, a Crystal Ball ceremony, trainings, and competitive tryouts. Amari's existence as a person with innate magic exposes the hypocrisy of the Bureau's rejection of magicians even as it uses magical objects to regulate other people's magic. Alston's critique emphasizes the social exclusion and discrimination Amari faces in her middle school and at the Bureau. In this first work of a new series, Alston offers positive representations of Blackness, which he associates with power and knowledge. Significant usages of the motif of flying connect with Amari's African American heritage and model empowerment. A cycle of mentoring shares access with the supernatural world operating in tandem with the real world. Thus, Alston uses Amari's heroic journey to disprove discriminatory stereotypes and offer a more positive way to interact with society.

Contexts in Children's and Adolescent Literature

In *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games,* Ebony Elizabeth Thomas exposes how Blackness has been negatively represented in fantasy literature, television, and film, resulting in "the challenge of getting readers to voluntarily *choose* to identify with the Dark Other" (19, emphasis in original). Thomas argues that "in order to achieve true justice, exploring the perspectives of those interpellated by the fantastic as the *monstrous*, the *invisible*, and the *always dying* is essential" (165,

emphasis in original). This change requires "rethinking the cartographies of our imaginations" and advancing "beyond the charted territories of known fantastic worlds" (165). Works by African American creators move society toward improving this cultural "imagination gap" (Thomas 6).

Fantastic as well as realistic fictions play a role in depicting the fullness of contemporary African American lives. Literature provides necessary "counter-narratives about Blackness" in order "to challenge the misconceptions about Blackness" in the media (Tulino et al. 32). It is crucial to study and share with young readers books "that reveal courage and inspiration on the parts of their Black protagonists" and that depict "the ongoing praxis of resistance to dominant narratives of anti-Blackness" (Tulino et al. 34). Zetta Elliott exposes how African American speculative fiction uses aspects of postmodern fantasy such as ambiguity "to respond to alienation, displacement, and distortion within American society and the field(s) of science fiction and fantasy" (17). And as Elliott has done with her speculative fiction, aiming to "allow Black children to encounter magic within their own diverse Brooklyn neighborhoods" (19), the African American, South Carolina-based author Alston takes up this challenge when he shows the adventures Amari finds in Atlanta, both above ground and in the hidden, supernatural realms.

Alston joins an important tradition of African American authors writing fantasy and science fiction for an adolescent readership. Some authors known as realists, such as Walter Dean Myers and Joyce Carol Thomas, also wrote science fiction (Bishop, *Free* 201). Early speculative series books such as Virginia Hamilton's *Justice* (1978-81) and Patricia, Fredrick, and John McKissack's *The Clone Codes* (2010-12) were scarce because publishers emphasized literary realism. Contemporary fantasy series targeting adolescent (both middle grade and young adult) readership include Tomi Adeyemi's *Legacy of Orïsha* (2018-23), Kwame Mbalia's *Tristan Strong* (2019-21), Jordan Ifueko's *Raybearer* (2020-21), Tracy Deonn's *Legendborn Cycle* (2020-22), Dhonielle Clayton's *Marvellerverse* (2022-23), and Jamar Perry's *Cameron Battle* (2022-23). Such series are especially important because all readers need access to inclusive books that can function as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (Bishop, "Mirrors" ix).

Applying Farah Mendlesohn's categorization of fantasy genres, *Amari and the Night Brothers* is a crossover type. The novel begins as an "intrusion fantasy" when the fantastic new world interrupts the everyday one, then turns into a "portal" fantasy when characters enter a new world through a type of doorway (Mendlesohn xix). Portal fantasies often turn into quests with mandatory goals, such as Amari's objective to find

Quinton. Alston conveys the "sense of wonder" characteristic of portal fantasies (Mendlesohn 9): vividly depicted details of Amari's experiences include enchantments such as elevators that have personalities, clothing that fits anyone, and eyedrops that enable seeing the supernatural. Amari encounters beings such as boogey people, fairies, leprechauns, shapeshifters, and yeti. Like *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), *Amari and the Night Brothers* targets a middle-grade readership and has a tween protagonist who wields magic, undergoes a training program, and battles a powerful villain.

Scholar Giselle Anatol's postcolonial analysis of the Harry Potter series demonstrates why it needs supplanting as an influential fantasy series. While Rowling's series appears initially to oppose discrimination, it portrays "the complete assimilation" of non-white characters into the primarily white Hogwarts world, thereby suggesting that in order for one "to be accepted, popular, and successful, one's differences must be ignored" (Anatol, "Fallen" 174). Racist ideologies permeate Rowling's series, for instance when "Harry's androcentric perspective on goblins gets transmitted as a Eurocentric perspective on other races and cultures—one that is not challenged" (Anatol, "Victorian" 121). Anatol argues that readers cannot question Harry's perspective due to Rowling's establishing such a "close identification with the boy hero" ("Victorian" 122). By contrast, Alston's book centers on the first-person voice of an African American female protagonist who succeeds and helps others despite experiencing discrimination due to her background, socioeconomic status, and magical abilities. Readers encounter the perspective of Amari Peters in a genuinely inclusive book that celebrates rather than erases differences and that challenges rather than perpetuates injustices.

Alston's fantasy novel follows what critic Domino Renee Pérez emphasizes about Daniel José Older's *Shadowshaper* (2015) and Zoraida Córdova's *Labyrinth Lost* (2016) novels: they all disrupt systemic whiteness in fantasy young adult literature. The novels "assert the race or cultural association of the protagonists" and, "in the process, refuse the expectation of heroic whiteness" (77). Amari joins the heroines Sierra and Alex as outsiders who take on evil even "without having been properly trained about how to use their fantastic abilities" (74). These innovative, inclusive fantasy series for a tween and teen audience have found readers and fandom. Indications of the favorable reception of *Amari and the Night*

Brothers include winning the 2021 Barnes and Noble Children's and Young Adult Literature Award in the Young Readers category, achieving bestseller status, and appearing on Best Books lists and recommended reading lists for grades three to eight.

Amari and the Night Brothers supports several major themes that scholar Rudine Sims Bishop identified in 2007 as appearing across African American-authored literature for young readers. Bishop noted that authors and artists have created a body of literature that:

> (1) celebrates the strengths of the Black family as a cultural institution and vehicle for survival; (2) bears witness to Black people's determined struggle for freedom, equality, and dignity; (3) nurtures the souls of Black children by reflecting back to them, both visually and verbally, the beauty and competencies that we as adults see in them. (*Free* 273)

These thematic elements permeate the experience of reading *Amari and the Night Brothers*. Love for her brother and mother sustains and motivates Amari. She perseveres through obstacles due to motivation to find Quinton. Amari struggles to receive fair treatment and to maintain her dignity. Symbolizing freedom struggles, Quinton's partnership with Maria Van Helsing, which gained them the nickname "VanQuish," was so successful that they became famous in the supernatural world, yet they were taken captive and held prisoner by Raoul Moreau when they tried to apprehend him. Amari achieves the position as Junior Agent and develops proficiency in using her life experiences, her learning, and her newfound supernatural abilities in order to pass the tryouts, find her brother, and resist villainy.

Testing and Tryouts

Alston builds on conventions about choosing practices in speculative fiction series. The departmental assignment method at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs compares favorably with processes in other books yet still causes limitations because the bureaucracy has systemic flaws. The method for departmental assignment includes badge testing, the Crystal Ball ceremony that magnifies a skill to a supernatural ability, the requesting of preferences, and the tryout process. Suspense escalates for whether Amari will be cut in the tryouts. But the novel shows how Amari's character and integrity, not only magical abilities, enable her to succeed. Agents have some mobility within the badge system and among departments, but the system benefits the Bureau. *Amari and the Night*

Brothers reveals that any system preserves privileges and tends toward closed rather than open access.

Speculative fiction for young readers often depicts adolescents assigned to groups or competing for places. Categorization manifests the social need for and resistance to group identification. While the impulse to classify and taxonomize is fundamental to humanity, the permanent assignment of roles limits people. Prescribed lack of movement between groups is dystopian, and adolescents need the right to change roles. The deceitfulness of authorities in dystopias suggests the system is rigged. Balaka Basu writes about classification in fantasy and "the pleasure of being sorted," a phrase pointing to the influence of Rowling's Sorting Hat, the artifact that decides the Hogwarts house assignment for each student and is questioned but "never fully overthrown" (23). More recently, *The Marvellers* (2022) by Dhonielle Clayton presents a magical school that is inclusive and revises the categorizing process.

Badge testing, the first measurement that Amari undergoes, assesses innate ability and is mechanized rather than involving choice. As a first step after being nominated for consideration by the Bureau, each person has an initial meeting with a recruiter, Mr. Ware. He has Amari use a tube-shaped object that "works like a thermometer" (45). The result determines badge level, and badges "represent your current potential" (44). When Mr. Ware guesses Amari might be assessed as a cardboard badge, which is near the bottom of the long list, his stereotypical prediction causes Amari to reflect: "Of course the Black girl from the projects would have an awful badge. Why would I think the supernatural world is any different from my own?" (45). Despite the racist and classist preconceptions that exist in the supernatural world as in the real world, Amari tests at the highest possible magic ability. The red liquid in the tube rises fast and causes the device to shatter. Mr. Ware does not interpret this unexpected result or apologize for his assumption. He tells Amari to report to the Bureau the next day and gives her the first of many books she reads in the program, *One Thousand and One Careers*, which describes position options in the Bureau and the required badge levels for the jobs.

The Crystal Ball ceremony held upon the trainees' arrival at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs includes badge presentations and imposed talent enhancements. Badges indicate ability upon entrance but do not

define a person forever. Chief Crowe declares, "Don't allow your initial badge to define your career with the Bureau. Hard work can improve your badge over time" (79). Crowe illustrates this mobility through her own example, starting at a low, wooden badge level and progressing to a golden badge. However, the badge hierarchy still exists as part of a bureaucratic system. The public ceremony brings cadets forward in sequence from lowest to highest badges to receive the talent-enhancement publicly. The Crystal Ball ceremony identifies a "unique talent" and magnifies it instantaneously "into a supernatural ability through an ancient gem gifted to us by the famed elf Merlin" (78). The Crystal Ball endows a ten percent growth of supernatural ability. Significantly, the trainees are not allowed to select which innate ability is enhanced. This limitation undermines the role of trainee decision-making.

The moment illustrated on the book cover—created by Godwin Akpan, a digital artist based in Lagos, Nigeria—portrays a turning point in the novel. Amari, who has earned the extremely rare moonstone badge, causes a commotion in the auditorium when she places her hand on the Crystal Ball for talent enhancement: the Crystal Ball appears to crack and nearly shatter, and the screen announcing enhanced ability reads "Dormant Magic to Active Magician (Illegal)" (86). The cover shows Amari gazing directly at the viewer as her hand moves onto the Crystal Ball. When the Crystal Ball remains undamaged, Bureau members attribute the illusions to Amari. The directors evaluate Amari, weighing her on a "Magic-Meter," which determines that she is completely magical (89). One director declares Amari should be ejected immediately because "there is no such thing as a good magician" (94). External attacks happening at the same time as Amari's arrival at the Bureau make people even more skeptical, but an agent with the power to read intentions evaluates Amari and perceives her innocence (92). The directors allow Amari to stay and be monitored.

Amari's life experiences grant her wisdom throughout the multiple stages of the tryouts and finale. In the opening tryout, she is the first person to earn a perfect score since her brother Quinton achieved the same a decade earlier. Amari knows how to negotiate a difficult scenario because being afraid "doesn't give us the right to attack. Where I'm from that happens a lot—you get labeled as bad or scary just by how you look or what neighborhood you're in" (214-215). Amari's lived experiences make her a good partner to Dylan.

The system allows agents the possibility to shift roles. Movement within the badge system shows that the Bureau does not simply lock a person in one place. Mr. Ware tells Amari that a trainee can change

specialty in the second year of training but would need to try out for the new department (43). Agents also can transfer among jobs later. Maria and Quinton had agreed to work together for "five years as field agents and then five years as training agents and, at the end, we'd stick with the one we liked best" (400). This ability to choose is part of their effective teamwork. While the idea of finding a place where one fits and belongs is appealing, limitations on mobility within the system deserve exposure.

Although the directors waive rules against magicians to let Amari stay and compete for a place, the training program reveals the Bureau's hypocrisy in its discriminatory policies against magicians. The distinction between allowing magical objects but forbidding "people [from] being too magical" is artificial at best (89). For example, the fictional Atlanta hotel building above the Bureau sits "on a natural magic wellspring" (59), and "the Bureau operates on either advanced technology or magical objects" (62). Furthermore, Merlin's Crystal Ball enhances every agent's skill because the Supernatural World Congress has a law that "in order for one to be allowed entry into the supernatural world, one must *be* supernatural" (78, emphasis in original). Regulating the magic level of people removes autonomy. Undermining the Bureau's control, magicians from the Van Helsing family have already been agents who could keep their powers hidden. The judgments by the Supernatural World Congress and its subsidiary organizations such as the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs are contradictory and incompatible with equitable functioning. Amari shifts public opinion about magicians in ways that could lead to changing the rules. Amari proves a magician can be a good person.

Challenging Bullies and Discrimination

Contemporary issues affecting adolescents, such as disparities in school discipline, bullying by peers, and discrimination, also appear within *Amari and the Night Brothers*. The book opens at elite private school Jefferson Academy on the last day before summer. Amari has shoved a bully for taunting Amari that her brother, Quinton, is dead. The mother of the bully insists that the school revoke Amari's scholarship because "I don't pay what I pay in tuition to have my daughter assaulted in the hallways!" (4). Amari's mother reminds Principal Merritt that "those girls have harassed my daughter since she first set foot on this campus," including

cyberbullying on social media (4). Principal Merritt says that those offenders "received written warnings" (5), but there is "a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to physical altercations. School rules dictate she [Amari] be expelled. Taking her scholarship is the smallest punishment I can offer" (4). This penalty is in effect an expulsion because Amari's family cannot afford the tuition. As Amari thinks, people like the bully's family who have a lot of money "can do whatever they want with no consequences while the rest of us have to watch our every step" (3). Reverberating across the entire book, this incident aligns readers with Amari in her resistance to the elitism and privilege of people who mistreat her.

The social critique Alston provides through this incident resonates with current understanding of how zero tolerance policies in schools disproportionately affect learners who have been pushed to the margins. Research by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw with Priscilla Ocen and Jyoti Nanda shows that African American high school students are more likely to receive "harsher disciplines" such as suspension for infractions than students who are not African American would receive for the same infractions (26). Realities of over discipline and punitive disparities include the facts that among female students, African American students are "punished more than other girls," and African American male students "are disciplined more than any other group" (19). The devaluation creates a "hidden toll" of racism (19). Bullying and harassment contribute to insecurities and can lead to school push-out (36).

Amari repeatedly recalls the bullying at Jefferson and compares it to how she is treated derisively at the Bureau by Lara Van Helsing and Lara's similarly-privileged friends: "[I feel] the same 'outsider' spotlight shining down over me as I had back at Jefferson Academy. [. . .] Lara huffs and I see it—that same I'm-better-than-you attitude flashes in her eyes that I used to see in Emily Grant's" (Alston 112, 117). Additionally, Lara demeans Amari's ambition and says about Quinton, "one ghetto kid stumbling into fame is rare enough, don't you think?" (118). Amari's roommate Elsie observes, "the supernatural world isn't much nicer than the known world" (119). Peers resent Amari because of her moonstone badge and magician status.

Another incident involving a painted caricature and message on Amari's bedroom wall further conveys this resentment. Amari describes that "Painted over my bed is a Black girl with two X's for eyes and a stake in her heart. NO MAGICIANS ALLOWED is written just below it" (236-237). In the hallway, Amari asks Lara if she created the offensive message,

and Lara says she did not but warns Amari, "Face it, nobody wants you here" (237). When Amari and Lara go against each other, Amari falls on her back. Someone in the hallway shouts, "'No magicians allowed!' Then a few more join in. Soon the hall echoes with the chant. Everywhere I look, kids shout at me" (237). Amari is prone and vulnerable, harassed by peers who want her gone. These words and images evoke reminders of how segregation and violence are still part of Amari's everyday experiences despite her successful completion of the tryouts. Agent Magnus, the adult authority, interrupts and tells everyone to be quiet or else face expulsion. While Magnus and the other agents in charge of the Junior Agents care about Amari's well-being, they can do little to protect her from danger. This moment parallels Amari's punishment for pushing Emily Grant down in the opening chapter of the book, and the perpetrators, because of their privileged status, have little to fear while Amari, as the underprivileged victim, must suffer.

Lara Van Helsing, like Emily Grant, is a wealthy, white adolescent trying to force Amari out. The students from legacy families have connections, tutors, and coaches to help them compete, and as Elsie observes, "It's like their parents are buying them a spot in the Bureau" (315). Amari, who knows she needs "to outwork them all," successfully outperforms her detractors (326). In retaliation, Lara obtains Amari's private file and then publicly taunts her by telling everyone about Amari's discipline referrals and financial aid at her previous school. This harassment leads to the public incident in which Amari's magically-created duplicate stops Lara from dumping a plate of spaghetti on Dylan's head and instead dumps it on Lara's head (316). Despite multiple agents petitioning for Amari's removal because she is a magician, Magnus does not levy any punishment or remove Amari from training. Ultimately demonstrating that wounds can be healed, Lara apologizes and reconciles with Amari at the end of the book due to gratitude after Amari brings Lara's sister Maria back alive.

While Amari pursues the training program primarily to find her brother, she is acutely aware that acceptance as a Junior Agent would mean gaining the needed scholarship money for the next school year. Mr. Ware explains that a person gaining a position will "receive a scholarship to any school in the country, no matter how exclusive, and no matter the cost"

(43). Failing in the tryouts would mean returning home and having her memories erased. One of Lara's taunts warns Amari about "merit kids who go out for fancy specialties only to fail the tryout and get sent home without a scholarship" (Alston 117). Amari's mother, who works as a nursing assistant, believes that education is Amari's "ticket" to future opportunity and is glad that what she thinks is the "leadership training" program offers a scholarship that would help with tuition, like it had for Quinton (55). When Chief Crowe tells Amari at the end that she has earned the Junior Agent job, Amari confirms that this means earning the scholarship as well (395).

The Bureau perpetuates hierarchies by failing to provide employees from non-legacy families, such as Quinton, with a cover story in the everyday world for their jobs in the supernatural world. The income Quinton sent his mother did not appear legitimate when investigated after his disappearance. This mistake caused police officials in the mundane world to assume Quinton was involved in illegal activities. A detective interrogated Amari's mother about whether she had "seen a paycheck or even a pay stub" from Quinton's work (255). The complication highlights the advantages of legacy families who have resources to create cover stories as well as to help family members through the tryout process. The non-legacy families lack sufficient protection or support for either the everyday or supernatural realms.

These challenges demonstrate how the magical and mundane worlds mesh, and how the Bureau both is and is not a different place from her school. The Bureau of Supernatural Affairs offers some mobility, yet it constrains choices. The ideological oppression of magicians becomes institutionalized oppression, not only excluding but also imprisoning magicians. However, Amari's characterization exemplifies pushing back against discrimination and asserting one's right to earn a position in any space. Critics Christian Hines and Doricka Menefee have argued that fiction can support a "Black girls' literacies framework" including "skills and proficiencies," "sense-making of multiple identities," "intellectual development," and "advancing criticality" (71-72). Amari Peters shows these attributes as she applies her multiliteracies to persevere, grow in understanding of herself and the world, and bring positive change.

The Motif of Flying

The element of flying used at key moments in Alston's novel has a foundation in African American culture. While one aspect of the cultural legend relates to flying out of bondage, it is also "about African American

history and claiming one's place and space in America" (Barnes 76). The trope of flying, "symbolizing freedom," appears regularly in African American literature for young audiences (Bishop, *Free* 150). In Virginia Hamilton's version of the folktale "The People Could Fly," African people have retained the power to fly despite no longer having wings and being held in bondage. A woman rises in the air and out of sight with her child after "magic words" are said (167). Jacqueline Woodson evokes the story in her picture book *The Year We Learned to Fly* (2022), as the protagonist's grandmother learned the ability from "the people who came before." For Alston, the flying motif signals joy and empowerment through the ability to defy gravity with three magical objects: the flying boat The Jolly Roger, the supernatural footwear Sky Sprints, and the flying carpet experience with Director Horus. These objects all involve moments in which Amari's family and heritage come into play.

The Jolly Roger heralds the beginning of Amari's supernatural adventure and is part of the mentorship cycle. Amari first experiences the flying boat that belongs to Quinton and Maria in the interactive recording that Quinton makes to introduce Amari to the supernatural in the event of his being lost in action. Quinton says his recording will show her "how vast and how wonderful the world really is" (22). From a vantage point in the sky, Amari peers through a special telescope at the undersea International Railways of Atlantis (22). The liberating feeling of flight connects Amari with her brother. Quinton tells Amari about the "nomination for consideration" and sets in motion her tryout process for the Bureau (28). The Jolly Roger reappears when Dylan Van Helsing uses it to transport Amari to the location where Moreau is hidden, leading into the climactic battle with the two villains (380). Dylan becomes part of Amari's mentorship cycle because he teaches Amari a great deal about magic even though he is villainous. Then, in the last chapter, Amari brings her neighborhood friend Jayden onto the renamed "Jolly Roger 2.0" to soar in the sky and view the undersea railways, just like Quinton had shown her. Amari follows the injunction of lifting as one climbs by creating opportunities for others. After having encouraged Jayden to stay in school and to work at a legal job, Amari secures him a "Nomination for Consideration" in the Bureau so he can learn about magic (408). The

bookended appearances of the flying boat at the start and end shows a cycle of mentorship.

The flying motif is next seen in Amari's learning how to use Sky Sprints, shoes that enable the wearer to defy gravity and walk in the air. Overpowering the fundamental force of nature shows that anything is possible for Amari. Unlike most students whose families provide them with the necessary supplies, Amari is one of only three trainees wearing used Sky Sprints from the equipment room. "Mine look like worn-out sneakers and smell like feet," she thinks (171). But finances do not limit her aptitude. Amari discovers "how easily moving in the Sky Sprints comes for me" (171). She picks up quickly on running along walls, avoiding obstacles, and walking across open air while maintaining her balance. Her dexterity functions as an allusion to wings and the folkloric ability for flight. Signaling the symbolic importance of Sky Sprints, the shoes along with Stun Sticks are depicted in Godwin Akpan's spot illustration on the title page that later reappears as the heading for the chapter in which Amari first trains with Sky Sprints (167).

The central incident involving flying holds such significance that Alston portrays it on the novel's frontispiece, as the verso to the title page. Akpan's illustration shows Amari and Director Horus seated on a flying carpet in outer space, watching stars so that he can "cast constellations" for her (275). Director Horus, a highly respected member of the Bureau, is an important African-heritage adult mentor for Amari. He is "dark-skinned" with "golden eyes" and wears blue robes with "a matching blue African kufi hat embroidered with silvery stars" (272). This embroidery signals Horus's identity and his respected role leading the Department of Good Omens and Bad Fortunes.

The ritual of casting constellations provides recognition and celebration of Amari's heritage. Amari and Director Horus fly through the rain and clouds on the carpet to rise above the weather systems. Alston creates an image of this supernatural experience as he describes Amari molding stardust into "mounds of light" and throwing "glowing sprinkles" into the air with a leap (275). Director Horus, like a diviner, interprets the created images, first seeing her ancestors from the past: "You are descended from great African tribal queens, from fierce warriors who protected the innocent, from renowned travelers who sought the thrill of adventure" (277). Then the stardust images shift "into a young girl on her knees before a man with a whip" and change again to show men and women marching, even against the blast of a fire hose" (277). Director Horus interprets these images from eras before Emancipation and then

during the Civil Rights movement by saying: "There is resilience in your blood too. The willpower to endure seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Though your ancestors were once slaves, their descendants fought for equal rights" (277). Horus's interpretations celebrate memory and collective identity. The next stardust image shows Amari's mother and Quinton, people who love her the most, followed by symbolic animal representations of a two-headed snake, a small snake, and an elephant.

The two-headed snake image functions as a riddle, "an enigmatic statement or description that contains a hidden meaning to be guessed" (Ishengoma 144). African riddles are "a type of art form" that "involve analogy" and are part of an active learning process that hones skills in reasoned analysis and critical thinking (Asimeng-Boahene 162). Horus explains to Amari that snakes "typically represent magicians in these constellations" and that what is threatening the Bureau threatens her personally (Alston 279). This riddle foreshadows a truth about Moreau revealed one hundred pages later. Amari cannot yet decode this riddle to understand that a two-headed snake refers to a magician who has "stolen magic from another magician" (389). The ending reveals that Dylan is secretly the apprentice of his mentor Moreau, and they had seized Maria and Quinton to drain their power to the point of death. Amari figures out that "the smaller snake in my constellation with Director Horus was actually my own magic" (404). Another riddle that Amari must solve does not even appear to be one at the time of utterance. The man playing the role of Raoul Moreau in Blackstone Prison tells Amari when they first meet, "There shall be only one lie between us, and I've already told it" (162). Amari later solves this wordplay to understand that the man is impersonating Moreau (368). Hidden clues become clear only in retrospect.

The Black Book and the Black Key

Terms like the Black Book and the Black Key signal the importance of blackness and prove crucial to the narrative's conflict and resolution. Alston uses the color black to represent power and knowledge instead of negativity. This approach helps in the urgent effort to correct the pernicious symbolic association that inaccurately links blackness with being "impure" or "evil" and whiteness with good (Gayle 93). Alston rewrites the discriminatory usage in which "the traditional purpose of darkness in

the fantastic is to disturb, to unsettle" (Thomas 19). Rather than embodying a "Dark Other" stereotype that must be defeated, Amari, as a first-person narrator, invites her audience to identify with her. Amari defeats violence rather than creating it; she builds relationships and skills rather than crushing people. Alston's novel demonstrates that rare final stage of "emancipation" in what Thomas terms "the dark fantastic cycle" (28). Experiencing this book is like "liberating the fantastic from its fear and loathing of darkness and Dark Others" (Thomas 29).

The Black Book and Black Key represent magical power that conveys authority and control; they are not inherently bad but could be misused if brought together. Thus, the Black Book and Black Key become conduits for revelation of character and values. A "black book" in general usage designates a grimoire or a guidebook to ritual and magic. In *Amari*, the Black Book is a spell book created by the Night Brothers. The Bureau keeps it locked for safekeeping in a vault. Dylan steals the Black Book, but to open and read it requires the Black Key (288). An anonymous Key Holder bears the duty of protecting the Black Key and passing it down through generations. Amari learns about the Black Key due to Elsie's borrowing from Director Horus a book that has the magician Rasputin's handwritten notes (287). In this way, Alston shows characters of color using knowledge to unravel the plot of powerful, wealthy people who seek even more privilege.

With both the Black Book and the Black Key, Dylan could wield unimaginable power. Dylan destroys Moreau because Moreau is about to kill Amari and drain her magic for himself. When Amari refuses to side with Dylan, he attempts to siphon her magic. Amari, in contrast, is not tempted by power because, as she tells Dylan: "You shouldn't hurt the people that care about you. I don't want power. I just want my brother back" (390). Amari rejects Foul Magick—which she has tried only once—and adheres to Fair Magick in defeating Dylan (391). Despite Dylan's assumption that she would lack strength to defeat him with Fair Magick, she does so, capturing him in a "cage of lightning" so that he can be detained and rehabilitated (394).

Amari's refusal to kill or use Foul Magick represents what scholar Esther L. Jones identifies as a "Black feminist ethic of relationality" (226). Jones sees this ethical process at work in another fantasy novel, *Children of Blood and Bone*, where it denotes a value system that "embraces the strength to fight but also the strength of restraint in that fight" (Jones 226). Like Adeyemi's *Legends of Orïsha* series, Alston's *Supernatural Investigations* series shows magic both as literal reality and "as a metaphor for resourcefulness

and resilience" (Jones 231). Akin to Zélie's restoration of magic in *Children of Blood and Bone*, Amari shows that magicians can be good and deserve a place in the Bureau. Amari's focus on finding her brother and doing the right thing means that she is not vulnerable to the self-centered ethic of Dylan, who sacrifices his sister to gain more power in the test of character involving the Black Book and the Black Key. Facing this challenge, Dylan's greed brings about his downfall.

Amari succeeds in her quest to find Quinton, but he remains in stasis, a condition like a magical coma. Maria facilitates a telepathic conversation between Quinton and Amari. Quinton urges his sister to "go out and do and see everything. That's what I want for you. Be as great as I know you can be. When I do wake up, and I will, I expect to hear lots of stories!" (402). These words show the importance of Amari's family bonds that help her to find and use the magic and potential within her. The situation with Quinton in stasis remains as a cliffhanger setting up the novel's sequel to come, *Amari and the Great Game* (2022).

Conclusion

The training methods in the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs both offer and undermine empowerment and agency by trainees. The process of trying out for scarce positions in the most selective department instills an atmosphere of competition which offers opportunities for mobility in a hierarchical, bureaucratic system. In other words, there are both good and bad elements within the Bureau. The social exclusion that Amari experiences in the Bureau training program parallels but remains distinct from what she faces at Jefferson Academy, as Alston offers social critique on school discipline, the ubiquity of bullying, and elitism. The hypocrisy of the Bureau's forbidding magicians and regulating magic levels is exposed but not resolved. Amari sees some of the rules waived so she has the chance to prove herself and gain admission to the specialization she seeks. She accomplishes what her elders could not in finding VanQuish and apprehending antagonists and, in the process, starts changing people's minds about magicians. The scholarship she wins enables her to attend the school of her choosing next year. Amari even trusts the Bureau enough to bring her friend Jayden into the system as well by securing him a chance to try out for a position.

The motif of flying within *Amari and the Night Brothers* brings light to Amari's African American heritage and provides empowerment. The Jolly Roger connects Amari, Quinton, and Jayden in a cycle of mentorship and contributes to the sense of wonder in this richly realized fantasy world. Amari's proficiency with Sky Sprints allows her to walk on air. Illustrated in the frontispiece, Amari's flying carpet ride with Director Horus includes casting constellations and celebrating her history. As supernatural powers allow for bending the laws of nature, Amari's newly discovered magic is transformational. The cycle of mentoring from Quinton to Amari to Jayden shares access to the supernatural realm. Through an African American protagonist and elements of setting, conflict, and plot, Alston offers affirming, powerful representations of Blackness and makes an important contribution to the field of fantasy fiction for young readers.

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Contrapuntal Comedy in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Valerie Czerny, PhD
East Georgia State College

In his *Glossary of Semiotics*, Vincent M. Colapietro defines "representation" as "the process by which one thing stands for another . . . or by which it is presented, depicted, or portrayed in some fashion" (171). If we consider literary language as a system of representation, whereby events, objects, and persons are "presented, depicted, or portrayed in some fashion," then we might turn to one of the founders of formalism, Victor Shklovsky, to grasp the idea of a system which *re*-presents. Roger Webster, in *Studying Literary Theory*, explains that Shklovsky argued that

> in most activities perception becomes a habitual, automatic process where we are often unaware of, or take for granted our view of things and the relations between them. Poetic, or literary, language could disturb this 'habitualization' and make us see things differently and anew. This is achieved by the ability of poetic or literary language to 'make strange' or defamiliarize the familiar world. (38)

Shklovsky claimed that "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life," and thus what is most important is not an object, but the way in which an object is *perceived*. When we perceive an object, or a text, through art, then that object or text has been *re*-presented to us (qtd. in Webster 38). Webster points out that while Shklovsky's ideas are beneficial in terms of experimental writing, literature that uses accessible language does not have the effect of "defamiliarization" (38). However, what sort of literary construction, exactly, makes language accessible? If a text, as an art form, necessarily uses a system of *re*-presentation, then the very system employed must somehow disturb our automatic processes of perception. Explaining that Shklovsky's theory shows "that all versions of reality are constructed," Webster also points out that the "realist novel . . . establishes itself as natural and normal, but this too is an effect" (38-39). The "effect" or the act of recovering "the sensation of life" occurs through art because of the *system* of *re*-presentation it employs, but the *perception* of that *re*-presentation

is what makes us, as readers, "sit up" as co-authors of a text—as opposed to "sitting back" as "consumers" expecting to be indulged.

Roland Barthes describes a text as art (or as a system of *re*-presentation) that functions as a movement from one level to the next, where sequences in narratives "move in counterpoint." A narrative "at once 'holds' and 'pulls on'" when "functionally, the structure of narrative is fugued" (103). Barthes's discussion emphasizes the necessity of an informed reader—one who, for example, can recognize when narrative sequences are "imbricated in one another." In such situations, "a sequence is not yet completed when already, cutting in, the first term of a new sequence may appear" (103). When an informed reader recognizes the system of *re*-presentation, or the forms used in a text, then structure becomes all-important. Perhaps those most engrossed in the prominence of structure within a work are composers and conductors of musical pieces, and Barthes, focusing on form in much the same way as a conductor would, extends musical terminology into his discussion of texts.

In a similar manner, a focus on Jane Austen's novels in terms of musical conceptions is helpful in order to "defamiliarize" the "familiar world" of what Claudia Johnson, in a reference to Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice*, calls the "moral imagination." Johnson argues that Darcy "cannot be an acceptable husband until his moral imagination has been broadened enough to respect the dignity of those outside his 'family circle'" (90). In the same way, as informed readers of texts who are able to recognize narrative sequences, we who assist in constructing texts through interpretation do well to broaden our imaginations by recognizing that the primary value of art (or *re*-presentation) rests upon the *effect* that the artful recovery of "the sensation of life" produces. That effect, in essence, controls our responses, as well as our "moral imaginations," and an understanding of that effect can only assist in the "broadening" of our constructive imaginations. Certain narrative sequences that identify Anne Elliot's character in *Persuasion* seemingly provide the "sensation of life" in terms of Anne's characterization, but we must remember that "this, too, is an effect." Austen's use of structural "counterpoint" in representing Anne's relationship with the Musgroves acts as an artful contrivance that invariably elicits—as the "sensation of life"—a certain negativity in her protagonist, but when, as readers, we recognize Austen's artful contrivance, our automatic processes of perception are disturbed. Thus, such a non-reflexive recognition defamiliarizes the familiar world that the plot propagates, whereby that dawning comprehension opens up our capability

of apprehending in each characterization a fluent harmony, composed by a master hand.

To explore the ideas of counterpoint and the fugue more explicitly, I present a scene created by Peter Shaffer, the author of both the play and the screenplay for the film, *Amadeus*—an exploration of the life and music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Shaffer reveals a scene in which the character, Mozart, in the presence of the emperor and the emperor's council, defends his composition of the Italian opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*. Describing a particular scene that he has written for the opera, Mozart asks the emperor to imagine a duet where an engaged couple argue on stage. Then, a scheming maid enters, and duet, he says, becomes trio. Then, the husband's valet, who has been plotting with the maid, enters, and trio becomes quartet. Then a "stupid old gardener" enters, and quartet becomes quintet. With the addition of characters one at a time, quintet becomes sextet, sextet becomes septet, and so on. Such sustained music, the emperor and the council learn, can carry on in the listening ear for twenty minutes unabated. Only in music, Mozart asserts, can twenty individuals "talk" at the same time without creating noise. The structural form employed in music creates harmonies, and such harmonies, to use Shklovsky's terms, "'make strange' or defamiliarize the familiar world."

Although Mozart, in Shaffer's portrayal of him, contends that only in music can so many voices speak at once without creating noise, Barthes suggests that such a form can be and *is* present in a readable text when he uses the terms "fugue" and "counterpoint" to describe narrative structure. Although a narrative is linear, where one character speaks at a time, Barthes argues that a "vertical" aspect occurs in the reading of a text, where linear sequences are "imbricated in one another," and so create a "hierarchy" within the text. In *Persuasion*, a series of scenes are presented not where all characters speak at once, but where one character, Anne Elliot, through her relationship with the Musgroves, becomes the central focus of several "layers" of thought. If one thinks of the term "imbricated" in terms of a creative placement of roofing tiles, then Anne is a central "tile"—upon which the other "tiles" are placed—so that a circular, rising design emerges from such placement. Anne has entered into the company of her sister, Mary—the wife of Charles Musgrove—and the Musgroves. The "layering" technique within the text begins with Charles, who confides to Anne that

his theory about raising children is much better than his wife's: "'I could manage them very well, if it were not for Mary's interference,' was what Anne often heard him say" (41). Mary's view, that "Charles spoils the children so that I cannot get them into any order," creates no response in Anne, for "she never had the smallest temptation to say, 'Very true'" (42). Here, we might say, is Shaffer's duet, where the character Anne is Mozart's opera's audience.

Duet becomes trio when Mrs. Musgrove, Mary's mother-in-law, enters the scene. Mrs. Musgrove wishes she could invite Mary and the children more often to the Great House, but, she explains to Anne, they are "troublesome": "I believe Mrs. Charles is not quite pleased with my not inviting them oftener; but you know it is very bad to have children with one that one is obliged to be checking every moment; 'don't do this', and 'don't do that'; or that one can only keep in tolerable order by [giving] more cake than is good for them" (42-43). The "music" continues with Mary's views on Mrs. Musgrove and her treatment of servants—especially the maids: "But I am sure . . . that her upper house-maid and laundry-maid, instead of being in their business, are gadding about the village all day long." That idea is followed with Mrs. Musgrove's view that she has "no very good opinion of Mrs. Charles's nursery-maid" (43). The entrance of the maids could now be considered a "quartet," and the "quintet" and "sestet" are heard through Charles's sisters, the Miss Musgroves. While Mary's view is that Mrs. Musgrove does not "give her the precedence that was her due" at the Great House, one of the sisters remarks to Anne—in the space of a conversation about people of rank—that

> I have no scruple of observing to you, how nonsensical some persons are about their place, because all the world knows how easy and indifferent you are about it; but I wish anybody would give Mary a hint that it would be a great deal better if . . . she would not be always putting herself forward to take the place of mamma. . . . It is not that mamma cares about it the least in the world, but I know it is taken notice of by many persons. (43-44)

What would appear to be "noise" in life, controlled under the form of art in the text, becomes a harmony of sorts around a central "note," Anne, who remains not silent, but steady in the development of the narrative "fugue": "How was Anne to set all these matters to rights? She could do little more than listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to the other; give them all hints of the forbearance necessary between such near neighbours, and make those hints broadest which were meant for her sister's benefit" (44).

The ideas presented in this brief "fugue" continue throughout the novel, for Anne's character emerges as one that is rarely noticed by the others, yet she provides the structure around which the others exist. Interestingly, Anne is not given the opportunity to dance, as are Mary and the Miss Musgroves, because she is accomplished at the piano: "She played a great deal better than either of the Miss Musgroves, but having no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents, to sit by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well aware" (44).

Perceived as having "no voice," Anne nevertheless is the central "tile"—even the central beam that holds up the roof—and her central role, her usefulness, is something of which she is "well aware." Mary sounds out Anne for her *usefulness*—as nurse, as confidante, and as nanny—rather than for her character (Sodeman 795), but it is the *re*-presentation of the "sensation of life" that wants to separate character from usefulness. To see the art form—the contrivance—that places Anne at the center of a narrative fugue allows character and usefulness to merge so that usefulness loses its negativity and gains necessity. Discussing a later scene, Melissa Sodeman remarks that "Anne's discussion of men's and women's constancy with Captain Harville takes place in Wentworth's hearing . . . [so that] the private and the domestic are imbricated in the public and the national" (798). It is only through an analysis of the art form that Sodeman is at liberty to extend the interpretation of a scene into the "public and the national."

In the same way, if Anne's character is seen as a tonal center, then the effect of the perception of her usefulness as a negative trait on a first reading can be transformed into a positive trait on a second reading when it is understood that the lack of "knowledge of the harp" and of "fond parents," as well as the seeming lack of a voice, represent absences that are necessary, just as rests are needed in a measure in a musical composition. Due to their omission of sound, rests, although seemingly absent, are very present and provide dynamics in musical—and we can also say, in literary—compositions. Thus, what seems to be quiet actually possesses agency. Anne, aware that she has talent, is also aware that it is "little thought of," but that very cognizance provides agency. Even though she does not actively seek it, she possesses centrality—a centrality that is not

domineering, but comic—and thus harmony is created through her, as the tonal center. In other words, the problem of disorderly children in the Musgrove scene extends from Mary's children to the Musgrove sisters and includes "mamma," who also behaves like a child. Supposedly unimportant, Anne—as confidante—provides a sense of authority for a group of disorderly children. Her central position is comic because she is not a mother; she is not even married. Because she is refreshment, however, and because she knows as much, she *re*-presents that needful pause before a crash of symbols (such as Louisa's fall at Lyme) announces the beginning of a new movement, or before happy strings announce a beautiful strain of music (as her long wait and determination not to marry for the sake of status are rewarded with marriage to a man she admires and loves).

Just as Anne's intelligence about her position in the Musgrove circle provides her with agency, so should the constructive imaginations of informed interpreters of texts encompass more than that "sensation of life" that is *re*-presented in texts. An informed reader's awareness of structure, or of the system of *re*-presentation within a text, is what creates art, for such obvious symmetry is not readily visible, or "readable," in life. In the same way, when a system of *re*-presentation is produced through the mind of a master, then the symmetry can draw interpretive attention away from its artful contrivances. A text functioning as art, claims Barthes, is "without noise" (89). Expert in composition and in hearing the music of humanity, Austen, like Shaffer's Mozart, defamiliarizes the familiar world so expertly that we sometimes perceive that which has been made "strange"—through harmony—as familiar. So in tune is she with human folly that we forget the art of art and learn to dislike, or to consider prudish or weak, that which is most telling in us. What we create, through interpretation, can prove to be either limited or "broadened enough," like Darcy's "moral imagination," and, if broadened, will emerge as perception that recognizes, in a text, the workings that exist outside the "family circle"—that exist on the other side of judgment, in the orchestral world of reconcilable sight.

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"A Fountain by Another Name": Communication Breakdown, Language, and Meaning in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Benjamin Elliott
Georgia College and State University

Abstract

As a narrative centered on the immigrant experience and the difficulty of dealing with trauma, Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* is deeply concerned with the ways we communicate with one another and the reasons we have for doing so. At its core, *OEWBG* is a son's letter on an intensely-othered upbringing to a mother who does not and cannot understand; by using this communication to reassess life events, Vuong gains a new handle on past traumas while still lamenting the difficulty inherent in deep emotional expression and the impossibility of language to salve some wounds. Vuong's work is both an epistolary novel and a deep analysis of the ways in which language interacts with our understanding of the world around us, the feelings inside of us, how we deal with our emotions through communication, and what it means to understand oneself and to be understood by others.

Introduction

Foundationally, Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* is a text obsessed with language and understanding, and it interweaves these ideas through its tender story of outsiders, lovers, and losses to interrogate bold questions of signification, emotional processing, and human connection on a variety of levels. Centered on a young immigrant's first brushes with love, prejudice, mental illness, and death, the semi-autobiographical text is an epistolary novel written from a primarily-English-speaking son, "Little Dog," to his non-English-speaking mother that includes all the experiences and ruminations he wishes he could share regarding his difficult, alienated, and sometimes secretive upbringing. Here, Vuong writes his own life experiences into his text, wielding language as a tool to analyze and re-name his trials of yesteryear in an attempt to find some kind of emotional closure. Simultaneously, the contents of the novel itself-- focusing on othering, alienation, and prejudice--lean into this theme of closure and allow Vuong to assess what it means to understand one

another and what it means to understand oneself. The text's world of miscommunication and misunderstanding makes literal the barriers of communication that often remain only emotional, and, in giving them form, questions and conquers these interpersonal and intrapersonal dividers in a way that is both highly subjective from the author's experience and incredibly resonant with readers.

Historical Context

Vuong's backstory in *OEWBG* is at once an introduction to the text's author and an expository preface to the liminal space Vuong/"Little Dog" occupies within the novel. In 1988, Ocean Vuong was born in Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam, and, from the very start, faced difficulties due to his heritage ("About"). Even before his birth, Vuong was marked by his mother's mixed-race bloodline as the daughter of a Vietnamese woman and a white American sailor.

Colloquially referred to as "Amerasians," mixed-race individuals were often persecuted and were prevented from finding legal work under Vietnamese law; these difficulties would go on to shape Vuong's mother's life, eventually resulting in the family's immigration to America (Armitstead). Due to these racial tensions, Vuong's grandmother would go as far as to place Vuong's mother and her two sisters in three different orphanages, hoping to obfuscate their heritage and thereby protect her children. They would not reunite until after Vuong's birth. Following an outing of Vuong's mother by a Vietnamese policeman, fears of persecution drove Vuong's family from Vietnam and into a Philippine refugee camp when Vuong was only two years of age. From there, Vuong's family sought asylum for eight months before eventually moving to Hartford, Connecticut (Armitstead). Once in Hartford, Vuong's family settled into the working class, supporting themselves as nail salon manicurists and factory laborers ("About"). Vuong grew up poor, racially othered, and sexually marginalized in the care of his traumatized and struggling mother and grandmother. It is this upbringing that makes up the events of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, beginning with Vuong's earliest childhood, traveling through his tumultuous teen years, and ending with his young adulthood.

After the text's events, Vuong began his secondary education by attending nearby Manchester Community College; his life changed forever

when a faculty member demanded that her students rise to the occasion of difficult material. As Vuong said of the assignment in an interview, "The first day we were offered the gift of potential, and not only offered it--it was demanded of us" (qtd. in Armitstead). This challenge enticed him, coaxing him into a new world of art and self-expression. From there, Vuong went on to discover a new love of learning and language, but, desperate for a way to care for his mother, he shelved this love to pursue an international marketing degree from New York's Pace University. However, he soon found himself disenchanted with "learning how to lie" and dropped out of the program after only eight weeks (Armitstead). Following this decision, Vuong approached poetry, spending time at open mic sessions and meeting writers. This led him, eventually, to pursue an English degree from Brooklyn College where, as Vuong would state in an interview, he "found [his] people" (qtd. in Armitstead). Following his graduation with a BA in nineteenth-century American literature, Vuong pursued a Masters of Fine Arts from New York University.

After this outstanding success, Vuong published his semiautobiographical first novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, in 2019 to further significant acclaim. That year, his text won an American Book Award, a Mark Twain American Voice in Literature Award, and a New England Book Award, alongside several important shortlists for other prominent literature prizes, such as the 2019 National Book Award for Fiction and the 2019 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. An adaptation of Vuong's novel by film studio A24 was announced in 2020, though concrete details pending the project's development have yet to surface. In 2019, Vuong would also receive a MacArthur Fellowship, further cementing himself as a meteoric author. His most recent work, *Time is a Mother*, was published in early 2022, receiving rave reviews from publications such as the *Chicago Review of Books*, the *Associated Press*, and *NPR*.

In addition to his books, Vuong has published extensively in various periodicals including *The New York Times*, *American Poetry Review* (which, in fact, awarded him the Stanley Kunitz Prize for Younger Poets later), and *The Nation* ("No by Ocean Vuong"). Vuong also currently serves as an associate professor in the University of Massachusetts's MFA Program, teaching courses centered on contemporary and twentieth-century poetry, Queer/ LGTBQ literature, and nineteenth-century American literature.

Literature Review

With its recent 2019 publication date, little scholarship currently exists regarding Vuong's novel, making it somewhat difficult to locate ideologically-related criticism. There are, however, a handful of notable exceptions. The first of these, Birgit Neumann's "'Our Mother Tongue, then, is No Mother at All-- But an Orphan': The Mother Tongue and Translation in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*," analyzes the role of a culture's "mother tongue" in diasporic literature by looking closely at the role the Vietnamese language plays within the text: "[this paper] assesses the importance of the tongue within the broader context of contemporary migrant and transcultural fiction and reveals how the tongue functions as a trope to explore possibilities of self-articulation after the loss of the mother tongue" (277). Neumann also analyzes the strain placed on the text's core familial relationship by language. Within the novel, there exists a central language gap within even Vuong's own family, and in the book, Little Dog attempts to bridge this gap by teaching his mother snippets of English. In Neumann's reading, this act of translation heightens the inequity between the two languages, emphasizing the foreignness of both. Here, Neumann takes the unequal cultural footing of a new immigrant's life and shows how it is internalized in language: even through an act of linguistic bridge building, we can further isolate ourselves from one another. Vuong's mother quickly grows frustrated and feels patronized by Little Dog's attempts to educate her, further entrenching their linguistic divide. With only broken language between them, Vuong is prevented from linguistically reaching his mother or teaching her how to reach him, a core theme of the text.

The University of Montana's Quan Manh Ha and Mia Tompkins cover similar ground in "'The Truth is Memory Has Not Forgotten Us': Memory, Identity, and Storytelling in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*." In this essay, the authors examine *OEWBG* as a diasporic text, examining the profound ways in which Little Dog and his family are marked by the Vietnam War and its ensuing fallout. Particularly, they look at the way Little Dog's mother and grandmother are shaped by war and carry that trauma forward onto Little Dog: "The novel demonstrates transgenerational trauma, as parents experiencing the terror of war raise

their children and pass on their psychological and emotional pain" (199). In exploring intergenerational trauma, *OEWBG* makes it clear that suppressed trauma reverberates, seeking to find a voice. By calling attention to unseen and unrecognized injustices, the novel, in the words of the authors, "attempts to preserve the truth of a suppressed legacy and to reclaim [Vuong's] ethnic identity by reconstructing and narrating his family's tumultuous past" (Ha and Tompkins 199). Here, the necessity of communication in dealing with trauma is underscored and highlights the text's preoccupation with its characters' inability to communicate.

Additionally, this exploration is partially rooted within trauma theory and tragedy theory. Though not necessarily a "tragedy" by design, Vuong's novel meets many qualifications of a "tragic" work; by classifying the work this way, we get a glimpse into the emotional underpinnings at play in the text. As discussed in Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's "Theories of Tragedy," literary tragedy consists of four primary elements. First, a tragic work must have an "identifiable and sympathetic" protagonist to act as the audience's point of reference and emotional gateway to the text's events (118). Once the audience becomes invested in the character, the character must then suffer a significant loss to create sympathy in the audience (Bennett and Royle 119). In the case of *OEWBG*, this point of entry is usually Little Dog, but with the novel's shifting perspective, Little Dog's family sometimes steps into center focus, eliciting sympathy from the audience due to their vulnerability. The text's most central loss is the death of Trevor, Little Dog's lover, and here Bennett and Royle's next element of tragedy appears: "the third is that the downfall or death of the central character should be felt by the spectator or reader to be both inevitable and 'right' but at the same time in some sense unjustifiable and unacceptable" (119). Though one may argue with the authors' usage of "right," Trevor's eventual death by drug overdose is far from a surprise considering his frequent hard drug use throughout *OEWBG*, but through Little Dog (and to a lesser extent, Trevor's father), the audience still feels the tragic loss of a youth and love cut short. This cocktail of emotions brings forth the fourth and final element: "apocalypticism," or a reflecting sense of doom and mortality: "it is not just the death of the protagonist with which we are presented in a tragedy. . . we are also drawn into thinking about our own death. . . . [T]ragedy always engages with a broader sense of death and destruction, a shattering of society or the world as a whole" (Bennet and Royle 119).

Another significant component of tragedy that interacts with Vuong's novel in a significant way is the moment of "anagnorisis." As

Bennett and Royle define it in "Theories of Tragedy," "anagnorisis refers to the idea of a moment of revelation or recognition, especially the moment when a protagonist experiences a sudden awakening to the truth or to self-knowledge" (119). Though some classical tragedies possess more moments of recognition, often this moment occurs at a crucial or climactic point in the plot that interacts meaningfully with the tragedy. Leon Golden discusses a similar concept in his summative article, "Aristotle, Frye, and the Theory of Tragedy": "For Aristotle, tragedy is an imitation (mimesis) of actions involving the pitiable and fearful dimensions of human existence" (47-48). This feeling is, however, dispelled by realization via catharsis, or "the process of intellectual clarification by which the spectator comes to understand, under a universal heading, the nature of the particular pitiable and fearful events that have been depicted" (Golden 48). In its final act of renaming, *OEWBG* closes with Little Dog's own moment of anagnorisis-catharsis, in many ways the most significant act of emotional closure within the text. In its reflectivity, the work's final ruminations re-organize the tragic circumstances of the entire text, reflecting a new, healthier mindset regarding Little Dog's relationship with trauma itself. In turn, this moment speaks to *OEWBG* as a work with traditionally tragic qualities, creating a useful framework for viewing Little Dog's closing revelations as the work's emotional resolution.

Ox-Tail and Mood Rings: Language Barriers with the World and Translation Pressure

As a novel centered on a family of immigrants, *OEWBG* presents the linguistic difficulties of a non-English speaking family and the complex role these difficulties create for an English-speaking child. Without English-speaking adults in a family unit, children, whose developing brains are geared towards language acquisition, will often act as translators, but in having to take on this role, children change the power dynamic they have with their parents while also experiencing a significant amount of social pressure. Vuong skillfully displays this complicated role in the novel's market scene in which Rose, Little Dog's mother, and Lan, Little Dog's grandmother, attempt to procure oxtail from a butcher. Not noticing the desired meat in the display, Rose attempts to speak Vietnamese to the butcher. Unsurprisingly, the butcher doesn't understand the language,

which reduces Little Dog's mother to humiliating pantomime in attempting to communicate: "Floundering, you placed your index finger at the small of your back, turned slightly, so the man could see your backside, then wiggled your finger while making mooing sounds. . . . But he only laughed, his hand over his mouth at first, then louder, booming" (Vuong 41). Here, the breakdown in communication creates a need for a new communicator: the young Little Dog.

However, Little Dog has similar issues due to the specificity of his mother's request, noting that "[he] didn't know that oxtail was called oxtail" (Vuong 41). Little Dog feels shame for his reasonable failure following his similar inability to communicate, and his family leaves the market with a sad haul of "Wonder Bread and a jar of mayonnaise" (42). He internalizes this shame, "promis[ing himself that he] would never be wordless when [his mother] needed [him] to speak for [her]" (42). The assumption of this responsibility thrusts Little Dog into all kinds of strange adult situations that ask undue maturity of him. For example, Little Dog has to call his mother's boss to try to get her hours at the clock factory reduced since "she was falling asleep in the bathtub after she came home from work, and. . . [Little Dog] was afraid she would drown" (43). In these situations, Vuong depicts the necessity of communication by any means: Little Dog must compensate, translating the needs of his family to the world.

Likewise, Little Dog, too, must translate the words of the world to his family, something Vuong represents in the same market sequence. Following their failure to secure oxtail, Rose purchases mood rings as a conciliatory act, attempting to brighten the day's sour mood (Vuong 42). At the day's end, the family has returned home, and Little Dog is massaging his mother, something the author signifies as "care and love. . . pronounced clearest through service" (44). During the massage, the comfortable mother gestures towards the ring, asking Little Dog, "Am I happy?" (44). Presumably, the chart of the mood rings is in English, so, again, Little Dog must assume an active role in the signification process. However, Little Dog is similarly unsure of the ring's meaning. He supplants this lack of information with warm assurances and wishful thinking, telling his mother that she is, in fact, happy. In "interpreting" the ring's meaning, Little Dog speaks his own reality in an attempt to please. In this scene, Vuong lays bare Little Dog's linguistic responsibility: he *interprets* not only the words but shapes the message itself in interpreting. Again, meaning is abstracted and refracted through Little Dog; he must stand between the world and his

family every step of the way, experiencing pressures that cannot be healthy for a developing child.

Plastic Antennae: Communication Barriers within the Family/ Effects on Intergenerational Trauma

Another significant language barrier in the text resides within Little Dog's own household. There are many ways in which culture and language deficiencies prevent Little Dog from truly communicating with his mother. The entire text, as epistolary novel, is itself an attempt to cross this barrier that, while ultimately fruitless, is symbolically rich. Beginning his text with "Dear Ma," Vuong builds his novel as an open-ended half-conversation attempting to "go back through time" and share the unshareable experiences of his troubled youth (16). A scene that depicts this well occurs when Little Dog comes home following Trevor's death. Grief-stricken, Little Dog arrives at his mother's home late in the night and obviously distraught, but when asked by his concerned mother what has happened, Little Dog conceals the truth, stating only that he "hates him" (168). Vuong, who concealed his homosexual relationship from his mother, is unable to grieve because his mother isn't even aware of Trevor. This inability to express emotion creates an unfulfillable desire in him to radiate "singular meaning" and truly share how he feels with his mother, to elevate his emotions beyond language into something ultimately experienced by others. The result is that he ends up scorning language for its failure:

> It's in these moments, next to you, that I envy words for doing what we can never do—how they can tell all of themselves simply by standing still, simply by being. Imagine I could lie down beside you and my whole body, every cell, radiates a clear singular meaning, not so much a writer as a word pressed down beside you. (167)

Through this text, Vuong seeks to share himself with his mother in new ways as part of his healing process, making no effort to hide his intentions. The result is an incredibly sweet and self-conscious novel that attempts to patch broken hearts through naming trauma. As part of this healing process, Vuong must, however, depict where he began, and for much of *OEWBG*, Little Dog defines himself via trauma. Early on in the text, Little Dog's child-self imagines that "a bullet is lodged inside him. . .

floating on the right side of his chest" (82). Little Dog believes that this imaginary bullet "was always" within his mother's womb, acting as the "seed [he] blossomed around," a very literal symbol of his inherited trauma (82). Since the bullet has been within him since birth, Little Dog is destined to inherit this trauma from the very start; thus, in the almost paternal role of the "bullet-seed," Little Dog seemingly becomes a literal child of war itself, something that highlights the profound stresses placed upon his family. However, by altering his perspective, Vuong is able to reconceptualize his relationship with trauma and assume a healthier mindset.

A Rose by Another Name: The Act of Re-naming as Trauma Navigation

The act of symbolic re-naming appears frequently in *OEWGB* in a variety of different contexts. Usually, characters shift something's name as a means of protection and obscurement, as with Little Dog's "name." Little Dog receives his name from Lan as part of a tradition from her village that gives smaller children diminutive nicknames to hide them from evil spirits: "a child, often the smallest or weakest of the flock, as I was, is named after the most despicable things . . . [b]ecause evil spirits, roaming the land for healthy, beautiful children, would hear the name of something hideous and pass over the house" (Vuong 29). In this tradition, "Little Dog" functions as both a term of endearment and an acknowledgement of weakness. As Vuong notes, "to love something, then, is to name it after something so worthless it might be left untouched—and alive," something that simultaneously reflects Lan's decision to hide her children and the prejudice that drove Vuong's family from Vietnam (29). Here, the act of re-naming is a nod to Lan's home culture, a ward against evil, and an insult all at the same time. By giving such a significant role to re-naming within the text, Vuong preps his audience for his final denouement.

Vuong symbolically touches on the idea of re-naming and perspective by referencing Marcel Duchamp's infamous sculpture of an inverted urinal, *Fountain*. A proto-Dadaist sculpture, Duchamp's work is, simply, a urinal turned upside down, abstracting the device by divorcing it from its function. As Vuong observes, "by turning a urinal, an object of stable and permanent utility, upside down, [Duchamp] radicalized its reception. By further naming it *Fountain*, he divested the object of its intended identity, rendering it with an unrecognizable new form" (Vuong 190). Referencing an artwork whose identity is rooted in perspective helps Vuong seed the idea of perspective's value and foreshadow his closing re-

interpretation of his experiences. Here, Vuong's seems to emphasize the elevation of Duchamp's subject from the ordinary and distasteful to the sublime and artistic, depending on the way it is presented. Similarly, Vuong reinterprets trauma as a means to conquer it in his closing perspective shift.

Powerfully, Vuong rises above this trauma, recontextualizing it in the work's closing act of re-naming to shift into a more positive mindset. Here, it is his willingness to view his prior traumas from a new perspective that allows him to grow. Like Duchamp's sculpture, Little Dog must reorient his perspective in order to grow and heal. Rather than envision himself and his family as products of war, Vuong chooses not to define them by their traumatic past but by their ability to triumph in the face of hardship. In this shift, he is able to alter his perspective on his family's tragedies and assert that, though they come from the Vietnam War's "epicenter," they are not defined by their proximity to violence (219). Instead, Vuong insists that, in re-situating and blossoming, they come not from destruction but from the beauty of rebirth: "In that war, a woman gifted herself a new name—Lan—in that naming claimed herself beautiful, then made that beauty into something worth keeping. . . . We were born from beauty" (Vuong 219). Here, Vuong poeticizes his grandmother's literal re-naming as an act of rebirth. His family are not victims of tragic historical circumstance marked by their scars but instead stalwart survivors decorated valorously. As Vuong quotes from Barthes, "A writer is someone who plays with the body of his mother, he says after the death of his own mother, in order to glorify it, to embellish it" (90). Though his mother isn't dead, Vuong "glorifies" his mother and grandmother in de-emphasizing trauma and emphasizing survival. In his words, they are not "the fruit of violence," but a fruit through which "violence has passed and failed to spoil" (Vuong 219). Here, Vuong reverses his former negative mindset, changing the way he talks and thinks about past traumas to begin healing rather than continuing to hurt.

In a symbolic description of walking into a burning house with his mother to set the table, Vuong shifts from negative to positive reflection, pivoting the text's meaning from a story of surviving trauma into one of rising above it:

> I remember the walls curling like a canvas as the fire blazed. . . .
> You straighten up, dust off your pants. Night drains all colors from

> the garden. We walk, shadowless, toward the house. Inside, in the glow of shaded lamps, we roll up our sleeves, wash our hands . . . then, with no words left between us, we set the table. (221)

Surrounded by chaos, the figures still push onward, cleaning themselves and getting on to the work before them. In their obstinate forward progress, they shirk the more-permanent grasp of tragedy in the name of the mundane and, in Vuong's eyes, the beautiful. Like sharks, they continue to live because they refuse to stop moving.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *OEWBG* is a text preoccupied with exploring trauma and communication barriers within its central family; Vuong names these barriers, ruminates upon them, and explores how they can be navigated. Though the text itself is predicated upon a fundamental language barrier, it communicates in spite of this barrier. Vuong is able to come to meaningful conclusions about human relationships with trauma and trauma's effects on mindset. With his trauma laid bare, Vuong cleans his closet of proverbial skeletons, and, in re-witnessing these events, gains new insight into his family's relationship with trauma. It is this insight that allows him to unveil the power of re-naming perspective to help address tragic circumstances. Though the scars of *OEWBG* may never heal, Vuong's skilled poetic hands trace tattoos over the scar tissue, highlighting an indomitable inner strength from within a "Little Dog."

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Xenophon on Politics, Horses, and Horsemanship

John LeJeune, PhD
Georgia Southwestern State University

I. Xenophon, Horses, and Rhetoric

"Since he often spoke too vehemently in the course of his inquiries," wrote Diogenes Laertius of Socrates, "men pummeled him with their fists or tore his hair out, and for the most part he was laughed at and despised. And he bore all these things so patiently that once when he had been kicked, and someone expressed surprise that he stood for it, Socrates replied, 'If a donkey had kicked me, should I have taken it to court?'" (Diogenes 53). So much for Socrates' opinion of the Athenian masses. By comparison, Socrates' description of his wife Xanthippe, recorded in Xenophon's *Dinner-Party*, was flattering by Greek standards: "'I notice,' said Socrates, 'that people who want to become good horsemen keep not the most docile horses but ones that are high-spirited, because they think that if they can control these, they will easily manage any other horses. In the same way . . . I have provided myself with this wife, because I'm quite sure that, if I can put up with her, I shall find it easy to get on with any other human being'" (*Conversations* 232).

Though uttered in jest, Socrates' language here is, as always, deliberate. If Diogenes' story (relayed from Demetrius of Byzantium) is believed, Socrates compared members of the Athenian demos to the lowest of Greek equids, bred for menial labor and steered crassly by the whip and goad. As Mark Griffith discusses in an extraordinary account of equids in Greek culture, the Greek attitude towards donkeys was "one of condescension and disapproval: donkeys are inferiors, incapable of higher culture, and deserving only of the roughest treatment." One could hardly be more insulting to the Athenian public. In contrast, the Greek horse—and by comedic extension Xanthippe—was "high class," "tall and elegant, long-haired, luxurious, refined, militarily spectacular and respected, distinctively named, finely adorned, expensive to keep, and fastidious in its diet, voice, and activities—and thus 'noble'" ("Horsepower and Donkeywork" 228). If Socrates was a jackass for jesting about his wife, it remains noteworthy—even a sign of respect—that he characterized her as a spirited thoroughbred, even a noble warhorse.

Nor are these the only examples of Socratic horseplay. In the writings of both Xenophon and Plato, the two students of Socrates whose works survive in their entirety, one finds a consistent use of horse analogies in their Socratic dialogues, and, particularly in Xenophon's case, several other works of history, philosophy, and practical education. Recent scholarship has highlighted the prominence of animal metaphors in Plato's writing (Bell and Naas), often with emphasis on horse analogies (Bell, Belfiore, LeJeune, Marshall, and Naas) where scholars focus either on Plato's *Apology*, in which Socrates famously calls himself "a kind of gadfly" attached by the god to the "great and noble horse" of Athens (*Five Dialogues* 35), or on Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates analogizes the soul to a charioteer attempting to simultaneously steer a noble and ignoble horse—steadily but moderately—towards objects of beauty. Recently, I have contextualized these passages by exploring the salience of Plato's (and Plato's Socrates') horse analogies to his ancient Greek audience in the article "Chasing Secretariat: Plato, Socrates, and the Education of the Horseman." Approaching Socrates' horse analogies in light of Greek and Athenian views on class, education, and politics, I argue that "the horse analogy represents not only Socrates' political philosophy, but his practical political theory" (LeJeune 83). More specifically, I argue that for Plato's Socrates, horsemanship forms a critical analogy to political leadership and civic education, and that a successful leader is much like a horseman.

While the case for horsemanship has been made for Plato and *his* Socrates, considerably less has been said about Xenophon, the actual Socrates' other famous student writer. This is both surprising, and important. It is surprising because horsemanship plays just as great, if not a greater, a role in Xenophon's corpus than in Plato's. A theme of horsemanship pervades not only Xenophon's Socratic dialogues, but also Xenophon's extraordinary range of philosophical, historical, and educational writings. In the words of E. C. Marchant, Xenophon was "both an excellent judge of a horse and a highly accomplished horseman" (qtd. in Xenophon, *Hiero and Other Treatises* 65), having served on the Athenian cavalry and written treatises on cavalry command and horsemanship. Given the centrality of horsemanship in Xenophon's life, it follows that this background would influence his thinking.

The topic is important for several other reasons. First, since horses are so prominent in Xenophon's writings, tracking this equine theme may reveal consistencies (or inconsistencies) of philosophical thought across Xenophon's corpus that are not otherwise apparent. Or, to put it differently, horses provide a convenient means of traveling from text to text to examine common themes. Second, taking the horse seriously as a cultural symbol facilitates a more accurate reading of Xenophon. As I have argued elsewhere regarding Plato, one cannot fully grasp Xenophon's writings without also accounting for the social and cultural resonance of the Greek horse, which meant something in particular to their Greek and Athenian audiences. Third and finally, since the horse theme also pervades the writings of Plato, studying Xenophon's work through this lens opens fresh pastures for comparing these two thinkers on Socratic themes. T. J. Saunders, contrasting Xenophon's Socrates with Plato's, cites Socrates' "massive horse sense, not philosophical acumen" (qtd. in Xenophon, *Conversations* 62). But are these not compatible? Maybe Socrates had both.

Appreciating all this, this essay pursues a more critical understanding of the role of horsemanship and horse analogies in Xenophon's writings. How does Xenophon's own "horse sense" influence his writings, and what practical and philosophical conclusions follow? My argument proceeds in five steps. In Section II, I briefly discuss Xenophon's biography and scholarly reception. This sets the context for examining his writings. Section III analyzes Xenophon's treatise *On Horsemanship* as the foundational text for linking Xenophon's philosophy and horse sense. Section IV subsequently draws parallels between Xenophon's analysis of horsemanship and the philosophy of leadership, education, and human nature manifested in his philosophical works, most notably Xenophon's Socratic dialogues and the short dialogue *Hiero the Tyrant*. I argue that Xenophon sees in horsemanship important parallels with political education and the good statesman's leadership of citizens. However, Section V discusses this model's limits, and how Xenophon, most notably in the epic narrative of *The Education of Cyrus,* teaches that while horsemanship is a valuable primer on political leadership, equally valuable lessons are learned by recognizing what makes humans different from horses, and that approaching humans as if they were trainable animals bears its own set of dangers. Section VI reflects on the habits of horsemanship Xenophon offers as a model of virtuous living.

II. Xenophon's Life and Writings

In terms of background, "Xenophon was the son of Gryllus; he was an Athenian of the deme of Erchia" (Laertius 63). Most estimates place Xenophon's birth in the late 430s or early 420s BCE (Greer 9), making him approximately four decades Socrates' junior and thirty-years-old at Socrates' death in 399 BCE. By the best historical conjectures, Xenophon's father owned a large farm approximately ten miles outside of Athens, and his family was wealthy enough to enable Xenophon to join the elite Athenian cavalry. Adelia Greer writes that Xenophon "as a child, would have spent many of his early years on [his father's] farm. It is most likely that during these years Xenophon's love of hunting, horses, and other country pursuits would have developed" (10). Consistent with his oligarchic background, Xenophon as a teenager befriended Socrates and came under his influence. According to Diogenes, "It is said that Socrates met him in a narrow lane, extended his staff and blocked his way, inquiring where each kind of food was being sold; on receiving an answer, he then asked, 'Where do men become good and honorable?' Xenophon was perplexed, and Socrates said, 'Follow me, then, and learn.' And from then on he was a student of Socrates," being also "the first to note down Socrates' words" (63).

As a mature adult, Xenophon's cavalry service would have started at age twenty (Greer 11) and included battlefield experience during the latter years of the Peloponnesian War (Anderson, *Xenophon* 18). Crucially, after Athens' defeat by Sparta in 404 BCE, Xenophon's cavalry experience implicates him in the defense of Athens' notorious Thirty Tyrants, an oligarchic regime imposed by Sparta to wage terror against its political enemies and subsequently deposed by revolutionary forces in 403 BCE. This affiliation left a deep stain on Xenophon's reputation in Athens. J. K. Anderson reports that "the entire body of cavalry, on paper a thousand strong, was enrolled in the Three Thousand," a group of loyalists given special privileges by the Thirty (53), and Xenophon, "hardened to violent death" (49) by war, was surely among them. Nonetheless, though "it seems likely that he stood by [the Thirty] to the end," he was also "thoroughly ashamed" of his involvement, which by the end was "under compulsion" (55), as "he and other decent men were forced to countenance actions which evidently horrified and shamed them" (Anderson, *Xenophon* 52-53).

The circumstances surrounding the rise and fall of the Thirty and the lingering suspicion in Athens of the oligarchic sympathies of the cavalry class likely help explain Xenophon's decision to leave Athens in 401 BCE, ignoring Socrates' advice and joining a Greek mercenary army in service of Cyrus the Younger, pretender to the Persian throne. After Cyrus's untimely death on the battlefield, Xenophon came to lead around ten-thousand stranded Greek mercenaries on an Odyssean journey back towards Greece, an experience recounted in the historical memoir *Anabasis*. During this journey, he eventually served under, and befriended, the Spartan King Agesilaus. Committing himself to Agesilaus, Xenophon probably fought on the Spartan side against Athens at the Battle of Coronea in 394 BCE. Sometime during this period (from approximately 399 to 394) Xenophon was formally exiled from Athens, presumably for acts of political disloyalty. After Coronea he "accompanied Agesilaus back to Sparta . . . where he was honoured as a *proxenos* of Sparta and granted an estate at Scillus just south of Olympia," where he settled for the next twenty years (Greer 20). It was here that Xenophon composed most, if not all, of his written corpus.

Xenophon's writings include a historical sequel to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (the *Hellenica*, or *A History of My Times*); the aforementioned *Anabasis* (a.k.a., *The Persian Expedition*); instructional treatises on horsemanship, hunting, and cavalry command; a panegyric to his friend Agesilaus; several Socratic dialogues and an account of Socrates' trial; and other practical and philosophical writings of varying lengths, including a book-length, fictional account of the Persian Empire's origins—*Cyropaedia*, or *The Education of Cyrus*. In antiquity, Xenophon's work was popular and respected. "Xenophon was widely admired as a man of considerable parts," writes Jacob Howland, "whose virtues of intellect and character were displayed in a noble harmony of speech and deed. Romans and Greeks alike regarded him as an exemplary warrior, a model of political leadership, an eloquent orator, and an inspired author" (875). Those otherwise unfamiliar with Xenophon today may recognize him from the popular works of Machiavelli who, as Leo Strauss notes, "mentions Xenophon in the *Principe* and in the *Discorsi* more frequently than he does Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero taken together" (106, note 3). Only a few generations ago, the *Anabasis* was standard reading for classically-educated schoolchildren.

By the twentieth century, however, Xenophon's literary stature had become tenuous. "In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," writes Strauss, "he is compared as a philosopher to Plato, and found wanting; he is compared as a historian to Thucydides, and found wanting" (26). If J.

M. Moore rather gently calls Xenophon's "grasp of practical detail…superior to his theoretical and philosophical discussion" (*Aristotle and Xenophon* 68), then George Cawkwell is more blunt: "He was not a man of great intellect. One has only to compare his Socratic dialogues with those of Plato to see that . . . His philosophy is second-hand and second-rate" (*Persian Expedition* 26). Nor have Xenophon's historical writings fared better. Based on primary sources discovered in the early to mid-twentieth century, Cawkwell cites a "sharp decline in Xenophon's credit" as a historian, noting that "no work of ancient literature has in this century suffered so sharp a decline in reputation as Xenophon's *Hellenica*" (*History* 8, 15).

Without minimizing Xenophon's liabilities, we can attribute some of this reception not to lack of talent, but to method. As Greer aptly summarizes, "All of [Xenophon's] works are didactic in nature and moralistic in force; he wrote to instruct in the ways that he saw most fit for a man to live his life" (6). Xenophon's writings are unabashedly autobiographical, sometimes by recounting actual lived events but more often by giving a running application of lessons derived from his lived experiences—the skills he acquired, the people he met, the places he visited, and the campaigns he fought. A more recent generation of scholarship, much of it inspired by Leo Strauss, has recognized that works like *Hiero the Tyrant*, *The Education of Cyrus*, and Xenophon's Socratic writings bear no shortage of philosophical depth (Strauss; Bartlett; Howland; Johnson; Moore, "Self-Knowledge"; Nee; Nadon; Newell; Pangle; Reisert), while his philosophy in turn is quite distinctly "a mixture of practical common sense and traditional morality" (Anderson, *Xenophon* 2). In stark contrast to Plato's more ironic approach, Xenophon's Socrates is like a practical consultant who guides interlocutors to concrete resolutions. As Fiona Hobden writes, "For readers familiar with the Platonic dialogues, it is noteworthy that Xenophon's Socrates makes only limited use of *elenchus*, a style of a cross-examination that involves refutation of another's opinion" (45). Hobden also notes that "Socrates' lessons on human affairs are not decontextualized analyses of abstract phenomena," but "often arise in response to immediate situations," and are "conducted in a straightforward way, [as] they serve a practical purpose" (47). In this vein, Cawkwell's rather critical description of Xenophon's history as

"moralizing memoirs" is fully consistent with Xenophon's intent (*Persian Expedition* 26); wherever possible, Xenophon focuses on and incorporates wisdom from events he lived or from which he learned, and "his primary purpose is the moral one of depicting virtue" (Cawkwell, *History* 43). Even *The Education of Cyrus*, a rather long and complex fictional work, abounds with personal insights on hunting, horses, and cavalry, to say nothing of the leadership qualities he observed in others.

In summation, when considering the meaning of Xenophon's corpus, the biographical element looms large, and if one biographical theme dominates this pattern, it is undoubtedly the horse. Xenophon's treatises *On Horsemanship* and *How to be a Good Cavalry Commander* obviously stand out in this regard, but the horseman's sensibility connects all of his work. As noted in Greer's singular and exhaustive examination of Xenophon's horsemanship and the Greek horse, even "setting aside the *Art of Horsemanship* and the *Cavalry Commander*, which are centered on the horse, Xenophon mentions horses 450 times in his other works both in military and social contexts." These numbers "show that the horse is never very far from Xenophon's mind" (Greer 29).

III. Xenophon's Horseman as Leader and Educator

To date, the connection between Xenophon's horsemanship and his philosophy has been recognized only vaguely by scholars. Hobden, for example, suggests that Xenophon's *Cavalry Commander, On Horsemanship*, and *On Hunting* "might be considered a triptych, through which the author cultivates the next generation in their civic responsibilities, oriented around military participation and leadership," but does so without follow-up (66). Strauss cites a pattern of Xenophon linking horses to "virtue" in several dialogues, encouraging the reader to further explore these connections (119, note 25). Finally, David Johnson places Cyrus's creation of the Persian cavalry, a key political event in *The Education of Cyrus*, at the center of Xenophon's message. To my knowledge, however, the most direct and substantial contribution to this field is Greer's outstanding dissertation on *Xenophon and the Ancient Greek Cavalry Horse*; but its interest lies principally in Greek horses and horsemanship and not in Xenophon's larger corpus.
My analysis naturally starts with Xenophon's treatise *On Horsemanship*, until today the most important ancient Greek source on the topic (see Anderson, *Ancient Greek Horsemanship*). The treatise offers detailed practical advice for the horse trainer, and one can practically imagine oneself in the barn. Xenophon places extraordinary emphasis, for example, on the care and strengthening of a horse's feet.

On Horsemanship also communicates two distinct pillars of Xenophon's philosophical horse sense—ideas either inspired by, or strongly reinforced by, his relationship with horses. The first involves Xenophon's special attention to a horse's spirit and character, including attributes he will elsewhere apply to humans. Through attention to the horse's soul, Xenophon focuses on the positive moral relationship between a trainer or rider and the horse, a relationship grounded on calm communication and trust. His method anticipates what is today called "natural horsemanship": "That there is an art to how humans relate to horses has been acknowledged since the ancient Greeks," writes Lynda Birke, "when Xenophon published his 'Art of Horsemanship'" (219). "The emphasis is on kindness, with particular emphasis on communicating with—and learning to understand from the horse's point of view—the natural behavior of horses." Horse owners believe this approach enables "a closer, more trusting, relationship with their horses" (218). The second pillar involves horse education proper—especially the practical problem of how to train a spirited horse to be orderly and obedient. As I discuss below, Xenophon's methods in this regard are consistent with "natural horsemanship," but with added emphasis on positive reinforcement. And his approach to human education is informed by his experience with horses.

While much of horse training involves physical fitness, much of what Xenophon says about horses involves their soul, spirit, and character. On multiple occasions in *On Horsemanship*, Xenophon refers to combining "strong character and sound body" in a horse, gauging a horse's "willfulness," and recognizing its "strength of character" (*Hiero and Other Treatises* 100, 101). On this point, he devotes much of *On Horsemanship* to "the best way of managing a horse in case it turns out to be either excessively lively or excessively sluggish," for "those which are either so sluggish that they often need urging on, or so high-spirited that they often need careful coaxing, make constant demands on a rider's hands and adversely affect his morale in times of danger" (112, 101). The education of a horse thus involves "good feet and gentle disposition," being "fairly fast" and "willing and able to endure hard physical work," but "above all if it is obedient" (101). The latter—the moral education of the horse—means

achieving a spiritual balance: enough willfulness and hot blood to win combined with unshakeable discipline to hold the victory.

Perhaps most notably, in training a naturally-spirited horse, Xenophon emphasizes practices that do not *punish* the animal for its excessive spirit but instead attempt to calm and reassure it and establish constructive communication from its rider. "[S]uppose a lively horse is starting to speed up too much and you want to check it; you should not give it a sudden wrench, but gently rein it in, calming it down rather than forcing it to a halt" (112). Xenophon notes, for example, that "the first thing to appreciate is that spirit in a horse is the equivalent of anger in a human being. So just as the best way to avoid infuriating someone is not to say or do anything that will irritate him, you are least likely to arouse a high-spirited horse if you avoid annoying it" (112). Xenophon also advises against using rough bits with such horses or engaging them in activities like running at very top speeds that will excessively excite them. Finally, he also suggests that a good trainer-rider will serve as a model for the horse, communicating and transferring his own confidence; thus, "when surrounded by clamouring voices or the sound of a trumpet, it is important not to let the horse see you discomposed and not to do anything to disturb it either" (113).

The horse must also be taught, and this leads to the second pillar of Xenophon's philosophy of horsemanship. Most importantly, Xenophon emphasizes that teaching a horse is most effective when a system of predictable rewards and a cultivation of trust between rider and horse render its cooperation morally *voluntary*. "The best way for you to teach a horse what it is supposed to do," he writes, "is to reward it when it does what you want and punish any disobedience" (112). Fear will never produce a reliable horse, but from a young age, the colt should "[associate] being alone with hunger, thirst, and bothersome flies, and the company of people with food, drink and relief from distress" (99). Avoid anger and unnecessary punishments, for "compulsion and blows only make the horse more afraid" and will undermine relations of trust (106). Instead, reward the horse immediately and regularly for good behavior, and have the horse spend enough happy time with humans from a young age to make it crave their company. Apply a rough bit when absolutely necessary for compliance, but relax the intensity where trust and experience permit.

Xenophon acknowledges the limitations of reason with horses: "Whereas the gods have given us human beings the ability to use reasoned argument to teach other people what to do, you can obviously not use reasoned argument to teach a horse anything" (111-112). But despite the

horse's lack of philosophy, Xenophon suggests that it must at least *understand* what it is doing and not simply be brutalized into submission. Not only will brutal tactics more than likely produce a bad outcome (ranging from sapping the horse of all spirit to encouraging a violent reaction), but "when a horse acts under compulsion it does not understand what it is doing, and the action is just as inelegant as a dancer's movements would be if he were trained by whip and spur." Indeed, "under that kind of regime the same goes for a horse as a human being: both of them are far more likely to look ugly than attractive. No, however dazzling and attractive a display the horse is required to put on, it always has to do so of its own accord, acting only on the aids the rider gives it" (117). There is not only utility but also beauty when rider and horse march in step.

Xenophon's focus on relations and interaction distinguishes his method from crude Skinnerism. A well-trained horse must trust and coordinate with its rider or trainer. It must believe that good actions will be rewarded and that as far as it obeys commands, it will never be harmed. Indeed, it must always draw confidence from being with its rider; and its rider, in turn, must always be mindful of reinforcing that confidence: "The single most important precept and lesson is never, in any of one's dealings with the horse, to get angry with it. The point is that anger and foresight do not go together, and so we often do something that we are bound to regret later" (106).

Under extraordinary circumstances, a more violent intervention may be necessary. Xenophon suggests, for example, that a trainer (especially early on in a horse's training) carry "at least two bits," and that "one of them should be smooth and have good-sized discs, while the other should be rough and have heavy, small discs." He further advises that "the pimples of the rough bit should be sharp enough to hurt the horse when the bit is inserted into its mouth and make it drop the bit into place; when it is given the smooth one instead, then, it will be such a relief that it will carry out on the smooth bit everything it has been trained to do on the rough bit" (114). Critically, even here the emphasis is on moving to the smooth bit as quickly as possible, for punishment and violence disrupt the flow of cooperation that training seeks to build. Elsewhere, especially for "lively horses," he recommends smooth bits categorically, stating that "if

you do put a rough one in the horse's mouth, a slack rein must be used to make it simulate a smooth bit" (113).

IV: Horsemanship, Leadership, and Xenophon's Philosophy of Man

One of the curiosities of Xenophon's Socratic writings—which include *Socrates' Defense*, *Memoirs of Socrates*, *The Dinner-Party*, and *The Estate-Manager*—is the number of horse references that appear spontaneously in conversation. We have already mentioned Socrates' discussion of his wife, and coincidentally, Socrates elsewhere approvingly compares *himself* to "an impecunious horse" that happens to be a "good horse," since it confirms that "my becoming a good man is not out of the question" (Xenophon, *Conversations* 327). Many such references would appear spontaneous rather than systematic, but it remains true that throughout these dialogues Socrates offers sustained philosophical engagement grounded in equine themes.

One such occasion occurs in *The Estate-Manager* and involves a lengthy conversation between Socrates and Isomachus, a wealthy landowner with whom Socrates engages about farming and estate management. Their discussion eventually turns to the training of agricultural foremen. "The issue's not a laughing-matter," says Socrates, "For the ability to make people good at wielding authority obviously entails the ability to teach them mastery; and the ability to make people masters entails the ability to make them kings." Socrates thus parallels running an estate to ruling a kingdom, for both require good monarchic leadership. Isomachus, now positioned as a monarch, transposes this, in turn, to horse training: "[C]olts learn to obey trainers," he says, "because something nice happens to them when they are obedient and because they get into trouble when they are disobedient, and this goes on until they submit to the trainer's will" (335). He subsequently distinguishes ruling humans from ruling animals since "human beings can be made more obedient just by force of argument, by proving that it is in their interest to obey," but then immediately reverses course because "where slaves are concerned, the training which is apparently designed only for lower animals is very effective for teaching obedience; for you'll get plenty of results by gratifying their bellies" (335-36). Ultimately he devotes far more attention to the latter.

Isomachus applies this training "for lower animals" to his foremen and claims to instruct his foremen to train *their* workers in the same way, as if all of them were horses (rather than humans). In fact, the same methods are used even to teach honesty on the farm where Isomachus

combines "Draco's and Solon's legal codes" to "punish transgression," with "some aspects of the royal Persian laws." The latter "not only punishes criminals, but also benefits those who are law-abiding," and "has the effect of showing that honesty is more lucrative than dishonesty" (337). In sum, though Isomachus recognizes that some men will work for "recognition" rather than "profit," the vast majority of his farm hands respond to the same reward-punishment system assigned by Xenophon in *On Horsemanship* to horses, with the ideal relationship being based on reward rather than punishment.

That Xenophon saw an analogy between horse training and human education is also clear from a striking example that occurs in *Memoirs of Socrates* where, in introducing Book IV of this work, Xenophon describes Socrates' approach to dealing with various interlocutors:

> He did not approach everyone in the same way. If people thought that they were naturally talented and were scornful of instruction, he explained to them that the natures which are regarded as the best have the greatest need of training. He pointed out that the best-bred horses are spirited and impetuous, and that if they are broken in when they are quite young, they become more manageable and better than the others; but if they grow up unbroken, they are very difficult to control and worse than any others. (177)

Immediately after, Socrates analogizes this horse-breaking model to the education of influential citizens, writing that "in the same way, the best types of men, people with exceptional strength of mind and ability to carry through whatever they undertake, if they are educated and learn to do their duty, become excellent and most useful people, because they perform a great many important services; but if they grow up uneducated and ignorant, they turn out worse and cause more harm than anybody" (178).

In these passages Xenophon, through Socrates, shows particular concern for the cultivation and education of great souls for which horse training seems to be a useful model. The crux of Xenophon's analogy is the horse's extraordinary strength—and the great capacity for good *and* danger that such strength entails—combined with the cultural symbolism of nobility and warlike courage attached to the Greek horse. On this point, it is notable that the Greeks considered horse riding a vital component of

aristocratic education and consciously analogized the noble education of youths to that of horses. As Griffith summarizes, the former "needed to learn to be obedient and disciplined, while still preserving a free and noble spirit; they had to be willing, dependable servants of others (their teacher or leader; their rider or driver) and yet also trusty and self-reliant comrades to their peers, as well as being potential leaders of others in due course" ("Horsepower and Donkeywork, Part Two" 332). The analogy to Xenophon's sketch of the equine soul is apropos. Anyone who mishandles a horse not only risks injury in private but death on the battlefield. At the same time, the horse represents extraordinary potential at a person's disposal if its power can be steered in the right direction and disciplined. Promising youths—the future leaders of the Athenian polity—represent the same danger and promise.

Xenophon insists in *On Horsemanship* that, especially when dealing with spirited horses, the trainer or rider should avoid actions of anger, cruelty, or pain where possible and instead find ways to establish calmer communication and relations of trust within the security of a positive reinforcement scheme. The goal is to make the spirited horse's cooperation voluntary without sapping its spirit. Predictably, in the *Memoirs*, Socrates' engagement with one spirited youth—"the handsome Euthydemus," who "had collected a great many writings of the best-known poets and sages, and . . . consequently . . . now considered himself to be more enlightened than anyone of his age-group, and entertained high hopes of becoming unrivalled in eloquence and administrative ability" (178 – 79)—proceeds in a remarkably similar fashion.

One might call this particular conversation the "breaking" of Euthydemus: "I shall next describe what [Socrates'] attitude was towards those who thought that they had received the best education and prided themselves on their wisdom," writes Xenophon (178). Seeing a great but untrained spirit in Euthydemus—one who seeks a career in politics and administration but has hitherto rejected any outside instruction, being sufficiently impressed by his own book collection—Socrates first attends local gatherings and enters conversation to "stir up Euthydemus," prodding him slightly and sometimes by name (179). This prodding (like applying a rough bit at first), conducted in group settings, prepares Euthydemus to accept Socrates' one-on-one conversations (the smooth bit). In these conversations, Socrates reveals to Euthydemus the emptiness of his bloated self-confidence, capping the argument with a horse *buyer* analogy:

> Who do you think knows himself—the man who merely knows his own name, or the one who behaves like people buying a horse? They don't consider that they know a horse in which they are interested until they have satisfied themselves whether it's obedient or disobedient, strong or weak, swift or slow, and how it stands with respect to all other qualities which make a horse desirable or undesirable as regards its usefulness; and the man I am thinking of has in the same way ascertained his own ability by examining his own qualifications in respect of human relationships. (186)

Socrates appeals to Euthydemus's horse sense to expose his lack of wisdom. Euthydemus fancies himself something of a noble horse—as does Socrates!—but as such, Euthydemus should think to examine himself—*Know Thyself*—with the same care and with the same discernment of the truly important (rather than superficial) qualities as a serious horse buyer (Moore, "Self-Knowledge" 406–409). As Christopher Moore notes, Socrates "needs to teach Euthydemus, who does not accept the value of teachers, that he needs teachers" (404). Via slightly harsh methods, Socrates achieves this goal. Then "when [he] realized that Euthydemus was in this frame of mind, he stopped teasing him and explained as simply and precisely as he could what he thought was necessary for Euthydemus to know, and what lines of action were best for him to follow" (Xenophon, *On* Horsemanship 190).

Both Isomachus in his conversation with Socrates and Socrates in his conversation with Euthydemus apply educational methods inspired by Xenophon's experience with horses. In both cases, the analogy is of a trainer to the horse as a teacher to the student. However, in Xenophon's short dialogue *Hiero the Tyrant*, horsemanship is extended to the relationship between statesman and citizens. In this dialogue, the poet Simonides questions the fifth-century tyrant, Hiero of Syracuse, about "how the life of a tyrant differs from that of an ordinary citizen with respect to the pleasures and pains of human life" (*Hiero and Other Treatises* 7). Hiero offers what at first seems a stunning response—namely, "that an ordinary citizen of adequate means experiences far more pleasure and suffers far less and far less intensely than a tyrant" (8). According to Hiero, the tyrant lives in a state of perpetual war with and perpetual fear of his "oppressed subjects" (13). He states that "a truce or a permanent peace puts an end to

war for ordinary citizens, but there's no peace between a tyrant and his subjects" (13). Because of this, the tyrant paradoxically cannot tolerate even the finest qualities in his subjects: "He worries about brave people using their courage in the service of freedom, about clever people intriguing against him and about morally good people being chosen by the general populace as their champions. So fear makes him do away with such people" (17). Midway through the dialogue, the dilemma thus facing the tyrant reaches its apex with Hiero's now familiar horse analogy:

> I can assure you that when a tyrant is afraid of any of his subjects, it is hard for him to see them alive, but also hard for him to kill them. As an analogy, imagine someone with a good horse who is nevertheless worried that it might fatally let him down: the horse's good points make it hard for him to kill it, yet it is also hard for him to keep it alive and make use of it, when he is worried that in a dangerous situation it might prove fatal for him. The same goes, in fact, for any possession that is irritating but useful: it is as much of a nuisance to have it as it is to do without it. (19-20)

Hiero's confession to Simonides reveals the deepest corruption of tyranny insofar as the leader's grip of fear over his people—the constitutive element of tyranny—comes at the great cost of destroying their virtue. It is as if a jockey, unable to control his spirited colt, simply beats it into submission, thus killing its spirit and limiting its use on the track or on the battlefield.

Simonides returns to this metaphor later, and he encourages Hiero, instead of weakening his people, to win them over through positive reinforcement. He advises Hiero to offer military units "prizes for excellence of equipment, drill, horsemanship, courage in battle and honesty in negotiations"; farmers "prizes for the estate or village which farmed the land most admirably"; and traders "a reward for the person who brings in the most business" (24). In sum, Simonides argues that "there are no more cost-effective commodities than those which are paid for with prizes" (25). He also advises Hiero to arm his citizens and to fund public works, projects, and festivals: "Try to outdo all these people in benevolence," suggests Simonides, "because if you beat your friends in benevolence, your enemies will never be able to stand up to you" (28), with "all desiring to serve you" (27).

In general, Simonides urges Hiero to elevate, rather than weaken, his citizens' spirit, to win their voluntary cooperation via positive reinforcement and relationships of trust—to act as a good horseman, or a king, rather than a tyrant. He acknowledges the risks of doing so—that

"human beings are no different than horses in the sense that some of them become more ungovernable the more their needs are satisfied," as if to confirm that Hiero's citizens are, in fact, like horses; in response, he suggests employing a mercenary bodyguard that will defend both Hiero and his citizens from harm (25). This measure aligns metaphorically with Xenophon's suggestion in *On Horsemanship* for the sound trainer to carry both a smooth and rough bit and to use the latter sparingly. The mercenary guard functions as both, when necessary protecting the king from the people with violence, while most of the time reinforcing the benevolent relationship between the people and their ruler, whom they love only because he benefits them.

V. *The Education of Cyrus* and The Limits of Horsemanship as a Political Model

In *On Horsemanship*, Xenophon distinguishes between horses and humans: "Whereas the gods have given us human beings the ability to use reasoned argument to teach other people what to do, you can obviously not use reasoned argument to teach a horse anything. The best way for you to teach a horse what it is supposed to do is to reward it when it does what you want and punish any disobedience" (*Hiero and Other Treatises* 111-112). Xenophon's training techniques have been scrutinized by modern experts, but his basic strategy is generally supported (Boot and McGreevy; Birke). Melanie Boot and Paul McGreevy, for example, write that "Xenophon's essay shows clear appreciation that horses are calmer, more relaxed, and more easily trained when they have positive associations with humans and that these associations can be achieved when humans address social and environmental needs" (367), but on some occasions, "he [Xenophon] fails to recognize that positive associations can occur only if the stimuli are predictable and constant" (368). "He also," they say, "assumes that horses have higher mental abilities than seems likely to modern scientific observers" (368), particularly when describing a horse as acting "of his own accord" (370).

Perhaps, as a lover of horses who spent considerable time working with them and depending on them for his life, Xenophon might be excused for some romanticism. On the other hand, my father, himself an accomplished horseman, would say to his grave that every horse has its

own personality, a good horseman knows if a horse is enjoying itself, and a smart horse can sense almost intuitively what its jockey wants. In any event, for Xenophon horses were clearly similar enough to humans in their response to certain kinds of training that he turned out the analogy and let it run for miles. But in the end, even Xenophon would acknowledge its limits.

The problem comes to a head in Xenophon's longest fictional work, *The Education of Cyrus*. Xenophon's prose epic examines the political methods of a fictional version of the historical founder of Persia, and fittingly, it begins with a commentary on the difficulty of ruling humans versus animals. "[H]erds," Xenophon says, "are more willing to obey their keepers than are human beings their rulers. . . . Nor have we ever perceived a herd uniting against its keeper," whereas "on the other hand, human beings unite against none more than against those whom they perceive attempting to rule them" (*Education of Cyrus* 21-2). Immediately, then, Xenophon alerts the reader to the idea that animal analogies might *not* be entirely appropriate in matters of political rule. Humans, unlike animals, factor things like reason, honor, and calculated interests before they obey, and unlike animals, they may consciously disobey if any of these seems out of order.

The ensuing story, epic in scope, offers a stylized fictional account of Cyrus's upbringing in Persia and later in Media, followed by a rapid rise to power grounded in military and diplomatic success. The Persia of Cyrus's youth is described as an austere regime, resembling the Spartan regime of Xenophon's lifetime, where noble youths are trained principally in discipline and justice. Only after visiting relatives in luxurious Media does Cyrus learn to ride a horse, and he refuses to return home until he masters the art of horse riding. In adulthood, after having been educated in both the austere Persian and profligate Median regimes, Cyrus assumes command of a combined Persian-Median force that, buttressed over time by allied leaders and armies either conquered or incorporated along the way, conquers Babylon and defeats the rival Assyrian king. In the process, Cyrus establishes himself as king and ruler of virtually all the Middle East.

Space limitations preclude analysis of the intricate plot particulars, but regarding the relevance of horsemanship as a model of leadership, the most important and consistent plot point of *Cyrus* is the protagonist's establishment of a merit-based system within his own military and amongst his allies whereby soldiers are immediately rewarded for their prowess on the field. This skillful system of reward, combined with a strategic policy of generosity, lenience, and forgiveness towards the conquered, as well as

a dutiful attention to training, largely explain the strength and cohesion of Cyrus's empire.

A pivotal episode in Book II anticipates how Cyrus will generally proceed. Working alongside his uncle at the head of the Persian-Median army and anticipating a decisive battle against Assyrian forces in which they will be substantially outnumbered, Cyrus spontaneously expands the size of Persian heavy infantry—previously limited to the elite Persian Peers—by offering any who wish a chance to enroll and offering the poor free access to arms: "You have heard all; you see the arms," Cyrus says. "Let the one who wants take them and be enrolled with the captain into the same order as we. Let whoever is content with a mercenary's station remain in servile arms." Xenophon writes that, "The Persians heard him and believed that if, upon being called upon to obtain the same [rewards] by sharing in similar labors, they were not willing to do so, then justly would they live in want for all time. Accordingly, all enrolled, and all took the arms" (65). Notably, and with potentially grave ramifications for the long-term sustainability of Cyrus's regime, Cyrus's reform at this juncture constitutes nothing less than a "fundamental transformation of the Persian community," which, as Johnson argues, "comes at a cost. Cyrus has replaced the egalitarian ethos of the peers of old Persia, who lived as equals once they had completed their strenuous education and who believed that virtue was its own reward, with a meritocracy in which those whose deeds are more deserving get a larger share of the rewards" (187).

Cyrus subsequently "announced contests to them in whatever he knew to be good for soldiers to practice," including rewards of promotion within the ranks (*Education of Cyrus* 65). Later Cyrus puts the question directly to his soldiers about how rewards should be divided in the future. "Do not," Cyrus says in explaining this decision to his captains, "consider how you will again fill out your ranks with citizens, but just as you seek whatever horses may be best, not those from your fatherland, so also take from all [sources] such human beings as you think will most contribute to your strength and good order" (73). Subsequently, in front of the full assembly of soldiers, Cyrus poses the question: "[L]et anyone stand up here and speak . . . whether he thinks virtue will be more practiced among us if he who is willing both to labor and to risk the most will also obtain the most honor, or if we know that it makes no difference to be bad, for we all

will similarly obtain equal shares" (74). Predictably, after a few speeches, "It was decided that each be honored in accord with his worth and that Cyrus be the judge" (76).

For the rest of the epic (until the end when Cyrus adopts the accoutrements of an emperor), Cyrus adheres to a cyclical pattern of mostly abstaining from the spoils of war and distributing them instead to his soldiers based on performance. Significantly, in the chaos that follows the defeat of the Assyrian alliance, Cyrus realizes the need to create a Persian cavalry to facilitate this, for "when he saw the deeds of the Medes and the Hyrcanians, it was as if Cyrus blamed both himself and those with him, since the others seemed at this time to be flourishing more than they themselves and to be acquiring things, while [the Persians] themselves seemed to be waiting in a place of relative inactivity" (125). Cyrus's concern is with the long-term equity of the spoils and with it the stability of his system. Immediately prior, he had recommended to the Persian soldiers—to that point exclusively infantry—as a gesture of friendship and magnanimity, to allow the Medes and Hyrcanians to divide the spoils of war, but when he sees the latter's cavalry seizing far more than his Persian infantry, he fears the upset of the meritocratic balance. Accordingly, and immediately, Cyrus gets to work by using the horses won in battle to supply a new Persian cavalry, even making a law amongst his captains that "it be shameful for anyone to whom I provide a horse to be noticed going on foot" (128).

With the Persian cavalry established alongside the others, the spoils of war will be grand, and Cyrus has plenty to distribute. He "made contests in all things human beings care about for the sake of war, and he gave prizes in a magnificent way to the winners" (186). Later on the march to Babylon, "regarding the Lydians whom he saw making noble displays with weapons, horses, and chariots and trying in all things to do what they thought would gratify him, these he led with their weapons. Regarding those whom he saw following along ungraciously, he gave their horses to the Persians who joined the campaign first, and he burned their weapons" (219). With the spoils of ensuing victories, "he armed no fewer than forty thousand Persian knights, and he distributed many horses from the captives to his allies" (220).

Cyrus's system of benefaction, through which he establishes an empire covering the entire known world, is patterned on the relational, trust-building, and, most of all, positive reinforcement strategies previously mentioned. Cyrus's leadership of soldiers echoes Xenophon's method of training horses in *On Horsemanship*, and it is patterned almost directly on

Simonides' advice to Hiero on how to rule willing subjects in *Hiero the Tyrant*. Beyond that, the salience of Xenophon's horse sense is reinforced on several occasions in which Xenophon, Cyrus, or other characters compare Cyrus's soldiers to horses (see, for example, 67, 73) and centaurs (127 – 28). Cyrus's methods appear to work, and they win him loyalty from not only his soldiers, but even from conquered enemies who subsequently become allies.

Shockingly, the peace and order Cyrus achieves crumbles upon his death, for as Xenophon tells it, "When Cyrus died. . . his sons immediately fell into dissension, cities and nations immediately revolted, and everything took a turn for the worse" (273). Explaining this jarring about face in *Cyrus* has become an industry in itself among Xenophon scholars. The strongest, though hardly unanimous, consensus is that Cyrus's relation to his citizens and soldiers, while perhaps benevolent, is also corrupt. Wayne Ambler, for example, calls it "impossible to think of Cyrus as having secured anyone's freedom"—rather, "it becomes clear that Cyrus does not so much reward true merit as he rewards obedience and service to himself" (18). In the same vein Joseph Reisert calls Cyrus "a sort of moral black hole around which the whole galaxy of his subordinates and subjects will come to revolve," and who "[corrupts] his troops by teaching that virtue is not to be practiced for its own sake but only in order to secure external goods" (302, 303).

Lorraine Pangle observes that "Cyrus comes to understand extraordinarily well the passions and vulnerabilities men share with animals and uses them to great effect to gain and hold power," but "what most fundamentally fuels his ambition is not a passion for justice but a more elemental affection, a desire to please and benefit his own, a desire indeed to please and benefit as many as possible, thereby making them his own" (310, 312). And as W.R. Newell suggests, "In its completed state, Cyrus's empire is a gigantic household embracing the households of its millions of individual producers" (900)—in other words, relations of pure interest, not of virtue.

In this respect, Cyrus's relationship to his soldiers and citizens is analogous to what Leo Strauss described as Simonides' relationship to Hiero—namely, that "if Simonides can be said to recommend virtue at all, he recommends it not as an end, but as a means" (93). Or, to put the point

another way, if it is no wonder that a well-trained horse responds positively and obediently to the rider who offers him what is pleasing and who rewards its good behavior with nothing but pleasure, then it should also be no surprise when, supposing its virtuous master cannot be found, the same horse submits willingly and without thought to the next rider, good or evil, who offers to fill his bucket. Where there is no philosophy but only pleasure, there is no virtue. If this lesson means relatively little when applied to animals, it can make or break cities when applied to citizens.

VI. Conclusion: The Habits of Horsemanship

Close reading of Xenophon's *Cyrus* thus reveals a critical delta between the statesman's and horseman's arts, or the limitations of viewing politics narrowly through the horseman's lens. But not all horsemen wish to become statesmen, and for Xenophon horsemanship (as distinct from statesmanship) provides one worthy answer to the question of how one ought to live. To be a horseman is at once to be a leader, educator, companion, and student. As W. E. Higgins writes, Xenophon "underlines the ties binding the excellent man and the training of the excellent horse" (135). Among these ties is the recognition that both leadership and self-improvement derive from the same impulse to improve others. In Xenophon's account of horsemanship, "the equestrian student, in learning to train and develop a horse, learns to benefit himself" (136). Initially, this benefit may seem only a matter of self-preservation while riding or in battle, but the nuances of horsemanship involve much more. They require patience and self-control in the trainer or rider. They require careful attention to the physical and emotional characteristics of the horse and a serious attempt to grasp its nature. They require caring for another while caring for oneself. They inevitably result in a few falls or injuries. In sum, they both require and instill virtue, and "the horse, even as it is trained, becomes itself the vehicle of instruction" (136).

Through this process, good horsemanship achieves more than mere security. It also brings about a sense of friendship and cooperation between horse and rider, and a unique experience of grace and power while holding the reins. The real horseman, like the true leader, recognizes the beauty of this combination, and is trained to understand that neither is complete without the other.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's Flappers: Supplanting the Pious Mother Figure with the Modern Irish Idea

Farrah R. Senn, Ed.D
Andrew College

In the body of critical works on the writing of F. Scott Fitzgerald, two major concentrations of study include his portrayal of "Americanness" and what to make of his women: both the women in his life and in his works. However, a more interesting lens through which to view his female characters concerns not their "Americanness" or auto-biographical relevance, but their relation to Fitzgerald's hereditary homeland of Ireland. Under further scrutiny, one of Fitzgerald's favorite characters, that of the quintessential American flapper girl, represents a response to the religiously-devout and matronly persona that developed in post-independence Ireland. By inductively examining the female characters in a sample of his works including "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," "The Offshore Pirate," *The Beautiful and the Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby*, a composite of celebrated characteristics emerges. This composite is more fully situated by setting it against the backdrop of the author's contemporary context, which both encompasses and connects the social liberation of the American female and the national liberation of Ireland. From that perspective, Fitzgerald's flappers stand in stark contrast to the piety and demureness proscribed for women in the years after Irish independence and attributed to the nation-state's image as a whole. While the morally arduous mothers in Fitzgerald's work parallel the plight of post-independence Irish women and stand as personifications of the nation itself, his free-spirited flappers unapologetically take center stage, suggesting a supplanting of the repressed and matronly tropes with a more vivacious and independent model as the new Irish ideal.

Fitzgerald's Flappers

Fitzgerald consistently features the flapper character in many of his short stories and novels. Looking through samples of his work, one can see that this character tends to have certain traits, beliefs, and tastes; these works also contrast the flapper-girl character with what she is not, either in the form of another character or in the form of "old guard" ideas. While

characters like Bernice in "Bernice Bobs her Hair," Ardita in "The Offshore Pirate," Gloria in "The Beautiful and the Damned," and Daisy in *The Great Gatsby* do seem to exhibit some of the characteristics of the flapper girls of the Jazz Age, this character type also contrasts interestingly with the trope of the religious Irish mother/nation that developed after Ireland gained independence from Great Britain. This trope, too, is represented in many of Fitzgerald's works. Looking at the pairing of these two types of characters in different works reveals patterns in behaviors and relationships that go beyond the plot to exemplify marked contemporary inter-generational disparities and extreme societal changes taking place during that period.

Bernice, Marjorie, and Mrs. Harvey in "Bernice Bobs Her Hair"

One of the most illustrative of his works about flappers is the short story "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" from the aptly-named collection *Flappers and Philosophers*. The interplay of Bernice, her cousin Marjorie, and Marjorie's mother Mrs. Harvey is telling, especially in regards to the generational gap. One of the opening passages sets up this contrast:

> At these Saturday-night dances it was largely feminine; a great babel of middle-aged ladies with sharp eyes and icy hearts behind lorgnettes and large bosoms. The main function of the balcony was critical. It occasionally showed grudging admiration, but never approval, for it is well known among ladies over thirty-five that when the younger set dance in the summer-time it is with the very worst intentions in the world, and if they are not bombarded with stony eyes stray couples will dance weird barbaric interludes in the corners, and the more popular, more dangerous, girls will sometimes be kissed in the parked limousines of unsuspecting dowagers. (Fitzgerald, "Bernice" 585)

Here, the older women both literally and figuratively "look down" upon the younger set. Besides this tongue-in-cheek description of older, more conservative women, the narrator also comments how "bored" a couple looks as they contemplate getting married once the man finds suitable employment, an obvious knock at the mundaneness of matrimony.

In stark contrast to the unbecoming description of the stony-eyed women in the balcony, the character Marjorie has a "fairy-like" face (585),

recalling the rich Irish mythical tradition of the beautiful and magical creature. She also scandalously tests her suitors by determining whether she missed them or had affairs with other boys when she was away. She considers other girls stupid. In fact, the narrator says that Bernice saw Marjorie as cold and as difficult to talk to as men: "Marjorie never giggled, was never frightened, seldom embarrassed, and in fact had very few of the qualities which Bernice considered appropriately and blessedly feminine" (587-88). Several actions underline her coldness, especially when Bernice attempts to confront her. While Bernice bawls, Marjorie is coolly bored. When Bernice confronts Marjorie about her lack of femininity, Marjorie retorts: "Girls like you are responsible for all the tiresome colorless marriages; all those ghastly inefficiencies that pass as feminine qualities. . . . The womanly woman! . . . Her whole early life is occupied in whining criticism of girls like me who really do have a good time" (591-92). Marjorie seems to revel in her personal lack of traditional feminine demeanor.

Despite her lack of femininity, or perhaps because of it, Marjorie is popular both socially and romantically. Cousin Bernice, on the other hand, could not seem to get any attention other than the obligatory dances from men Marjorie cajoled into entertaining her. She is described as "dopeless" and boring (585). While Marjorie feels other girls are stupid, Bernice has been looking forward to spending intimate time with her cousin with the usual giggling and crying of "female intercourse." This desire for feminine homosocial bonding further delineates these characters.

Besides Fitzgerald's overt descriptions of these characters, Marjorie's instruction to Bernice elucidates her ideal. She encourages Bernice to not be "dainty" in mind, but to be dainty in person, to have an ease of manner, to attend her personal appearance, and to be nice to "sad birds" (593). In other words, women should be intelligent, yet easy-going and physically alluring. Her recommendation that Bernice bob her hair to increase her appeal becomes central to the plot.

While the character of Marjorie shows everything Bernice is physically and socially not, the specter of parental morality is both present and imagined in this work as well. Though not physically in the setting of the story, Bernice's mother is present throughout: "She knew that even in Eau Claire other girls with less position and less pulchritude were given a much bigger rush. She attributed this to something subtly unscrupulous in those girls. It had never worried her, and if it had her mother would have assured her that the other girls cheapened themselves and that men really respected girls like Bernice" (588). Her mother's conservative instruction

conditioned Bernice to believe that being popular required being promiscuous and unscrupulous, and that these qualities were bad.

In addition to the psychological presence of Bernice's mother, Marjorie's mother is physically present in the story. Mrs. Harvey counsels Marjorie several times that she should be more hospitable towards her cousin mainly as a point of social propriety. "There's no courtesy these days" (588), she says in a conversation with Marjorie. The narrator then comments: "Mrs. Harvey's voice implied that modern situations were too much for her. When she was a girl, all young ladies who belonged to nice families had glorious times" (588). While the contrasting character descriptions imply a comparison, this passage explicitly enumerates the distinction between generations.

Other passages also indicate the existence of—if not the presence of—such morally superior mothers. The narrator describes Bernice's visit as "parent-arranged" (588) and Bernice herself as "brought up on the warm milk prepared by Annie Fellows Johnston and on novels in which the female was beloved because of certain mysterious womanly qualities, always mentioned but never actually displayed" (588). In the climax of the story when Bernice does finally bob her hair, she mentions that "even the thought of her mother was no deterrent now" (599), and later when the new hairdo is discovered by Mrs. Harvey, this sentiment is echoed when she says, "Oh, Bernice, what'll your mother say? She'll think I let you do it" (601). The mothers' approval or disapproval is a concern throughout the story.

The flapper character's response to this morally superior stance shines through the prose and dialogue as well. At one point, Mrs. Harvey calls Marjorie a "silly child" and tells her that most of her ideas are "idiotic" (589). The next passage blatantly illustrates the relationship between these two generations: "There was another silence, while Marjorie considered whether or not convincing her mother was worth the trouble. At eighteen our convictions are hills from which we look; at forty-five they are caves in which we hide" (589). Again when Bernice confronts Marjorie, she lays out her case that Marjorie's actions have been an affront to "common kindness," but Marjorie implores her not to quote *Little Women*, asserting that it was "out of style" (591). She continues, "What modern girl could live like those inane females? They were models for our mothers. . . . Our

mothers were all very well in their way, but they know very little about their daughters' problems" (591). Mrs. Harvey and Bernice's mother, characterized as the older, more conservative generation, provide the frame of reference for the flapper character, Marjorie. Bernice is a transitional character, caught between these two ideals, at first clinging to traditional mores, then finally bending to the modern sensibilities. This general contrast between the conservative mothers and the flapper girls is evident throughout several of Fitzgerald's other works as well.

Ardita in "The Offshore Pirate"

Fitzgerald features another flapper character in the short story "The Offshore Pirate." Ardita, like Marjorie, is calm and mechanical and does not like to be bored. One passages reads: "The cry was wrung from Ardita with the agony of a lost soul. 'Will you stop boring me!' she said to her uncle." (Fitzgerald, "The Offshore Pirate" 502). Her coolness throughout the alleged kidnapping is notable as well. The narrator also highlights Ardita's selfishness and how she prefers selfish people in general (507). However, Ardita balks at being called a flapper at one point (508), instead referring to herself sarcastically as "a virtuous flapper" (502) in another passage. Carlyle, her romantic interest, also refers to her as a flapper and asks her to "swear on your honor as a flapper—which probably isn't worth much . . ." (505).

She exhibits the characteristic rebelliousness, however, and the narrator states that "When Ardita defied convention—and of late it had been her chief amusement—it was from an intense desire to be herself" (508). She also exhibits the scandal-seeking nature of the flapper. She tells Carlyle, "The only thing I enjoyed was shocking people; wearing something quite impossible and quite charming to a fancy-dress party, going round with the fastest men in New York and getting into some of the most hellish scrapes imaginable" (516). Although her attempt to impress Carlyle with this statement seems almost like a performance, it serves to show what she deems as impressive.

Fitzgerald includes a related metanarrative aside near the climax: "Most of us are content to exist and breed and fight for the right to do both and the dominant idea, the foredoomed attempt to control one's destiny, is reserved for the fortunate or unfortunate few. To me the interesting thing about Ardita is the courage that will tarnish with her beauty and youth" (518). Here Fitzgerald indicates that Ardita's courage, though admirable, is problematic and unsustainable.

Like in "Bernice," generational issues are prominent in this short story as well. Ardita says, "I came along on this darn cruise with the one idea of going to Palm Beach, and you knew it, and I absolutely refuse to meet any darn old colonel or any darn young Toby or any darn old young people or to set foot in any other darn old town in this crazy state" (501). Ardita here establishes her aversion to both her uncle's parental advice and the older generation in general, emphasized further by her swearing.

In the same vein, an interesting parallel between this story and "Bernice" comes near the end. While on the island, the couple talk: "'We're enchained. The shades of unnumbered generations of cannibals are watching us from high on the side of the cliff there'. 'And I'll bet the cannibal women are saying that we dance too close, and that it was immodest of me to come without my nose-ring'" (520). This episode is reminiscent of the opening description in "Bernice" of the old women on the balcony looking down and criticizing the young people who they feel may lapse into immorality if not for their watchful eyes.

Although not physically present, the ideal of Ardita's morally superior parentage is represented in her uncle, who looked at her "disapprovingly." In fact, she scolds Carlyle at one point: "'Don't talk to me like that' fired up Ardita. 'I won't tolerate the parental attitude from anybody! Do you understand me?'" (514). But this is precisely Ardita's problem, according to her uncle: the "absence" of a moral mother figure, and that she is a flapper unchecked, until her uncle's scheme is fulfilled anyway. Again, the drastically dissimilar generational perspectives on femininity are the source of the tension.

Gloria and Mrs. Gilbert in The Beautiful and the Damned

The character of the flapper is not limited to Fitzgerald's short stories, but is also present and possibly more fully explored in his longer works. The conflict borne out in *The Beautiful and the Damned* between Gloria, the featured flapper in this story, and her mother Mrs. Gilbert continues the theme of the flapper and the pious mother figure. The narrator in this novel glorifies the flapper, saying that "'Beauty' will be a society girl—a flapper, and will love it." (225-27). This personified "Beauty," according to the narrator, is reborn every 100 years, and is "incomprehensible, for in her, soul and spirit were one—the beauty of her

body was the essence of her soul. She was that unity sought for by philosophers through many centuries" (225).

In the beginning of the story, Gloria drinks, gets "drunk on dance," flirts, and has affairs with several men. She is notably quoted as saying, "A woman should be able to kiss a man beautifully and romantically without any desire to be either his wife or his mistress" (281). Characteristically, like Bernice, Gloria bobs her hair, prompting the narrator to proclaim, "It was not fashionable then. It was fashionable in five or six years. At that time it was considered extremely daring" (288). As in other stories, there is also gender-blurring with the flapper. Anthony questions Gloria: "You like men better, don't you?" She responds, "Oh, much better. I've got a man's mind," to which he replies, "You've got a mind like mine. Not strongly gendered either way" (294). Gloria even makes a list in her journal of different types of husbands, calling those who want to stay in, have no vices and work for salary undesirable, along with the "atavistic master," the wife "worshipper," and finally, the most agreeable, "a temporarily passionate lover with wisdom enough to realize when it has flown and that it must fly" (302). Gloria's list illustrates her aversion to a traditional marriage, just as noted of the flappers in other of Fitzgerald's stories.

Fitzgerald again highlights the generational differences here, as in other works, by contrasting Gloria with her mother. Mrs. Gilbert contrasts Gloria, a "young soul," to "ancient souls" (233). She says that "Gloria has a very young soul—irresponsible, as much as anything else. She has no sense of responsibility" (233). Interestingly, Fitzgerald juxtaposes the aforementioned strange commentary on the ancient qualities of "Beauty" with Mrs. Gilbert's incongruent description of Gloria as a "young soul"; additionally, when the character Maury is describing Gloria, he says: "there was something about that little girl with her absurd tan that was eternally old—like me" (240), and Anthony describes her eyes as "gray, very level and cool, and when they rested on him he understood what Maury had meant by saying she was very young and very old" (246). The narrator brings the previous description of "Beauty" closer to Gloria, saying that "The sheath that held her soul had assumed significance—that was all. She was a sun, radiant, growing, gathering light and storing it—then after an eternity pouring it in a glance, the fragment of a sentence, to that part of [Anthony] that cherished all beauty and all illusion" (255). Here, then, the idea of the "young soul" is pitted directly against that of the "old soul."

Fitzgerald continues to emphasize generational differences by explicitly contrasting Gloria and her mother via the characterization of the family patriarch, Mr. Gilbert. One passage reads:

> He disapproved of Gloria: she stayed out late, she never ate her meals, she was always in a mix-up—he had irritated her once and she had used toward him words that he had not thought were part of her vocabulary. His wife was easier. After fifteen years of incessant guerilla warfare he had conquered her—it was a war of muddled optimism against organized dullness, and something in the number of 'yes's' with which he could poison a conversation had won him the victory. (234)

Fitzgerald further paints a rather bleak caricature of Mrs. Gilbert:

> Fifteen years of yes's had beaten Mrs. Gilbert. Fifteen further years of that incessant unaffirmative affirmative, accompanied by the perpetual flicking of ash-mushrooms from thirty-two thousand cigars, had broken her. To this husband of hers she made the last concession of married life, which is more complete, more irrevocable, than the first—she listened to him. She told herself that the years had brought her tolerance—actually they had slain what measure she had ever possessed of moral courage. (234)

These passages demonstrate how the patriarch, Mr. Gilbert, has conquered the older female, but has no control over the younger.

Anthony's "conquest" of Gloria, as described in the scene at the railroad station, provides another interesting contrast:

> This gave him a confused and increasing worry. It fitted so well with the Gloria who lay in the corner—no longer a proud Gloria, nor any Gloria he had known. He asked himself if it were possible. While he did not believe she would cease to love him—this, of course, was unthinkable—it was yet problematical whether Gloria with her arrogance, her independence, her virginal confidence and courage, would be the girl of his glory, the radiant woman who was precious and charming because she was ineffably, triumphantly herself. (337)

In essence, her ultimate submission, though apparently what he wanted, would make her less attractive to him. However, even in marriage Gloria maintains her flapper persona. Other wives are afraid of her, and Gloria is "profoundly unresponsive to any intimacy shown her by a woman" (354), just as Marjorie is in "Bernice." The parallels between Mr. Gilbert's "conquering" of Mrs. Gilbert and Anthony's attempt to do the same with

Gloria shows the older woman as defeated and the younger as unconquerable.

In addition to Mr. Gilbert's disapproval of Gloria, Mrs. Gilbert is brought to tears about her daughter's behavior in one scene: "She floated, between tears and plaintive helplessness, down the long story of Gloria's life" (261). The number of boys' hearts she has broken and the drinking and dancing establishments she frequents have broken her mother's heart.

Gloria's resentment of the older generation is borne out not only through contrast with her mother, but also in speech regarding Anthony's grandfather, the "reformer" Adam Patch. Gloria says of him: "I detest reformers, especially the sort who try to reform me . . . It's 'Oh Gloria, if you smoke so many cigarettes you'll lose your pretty complexion!' and 'Oh, Gloria, why don't you marry and settle down?'" (246). On the older generation's idea of marriage, she scoffs at her cousin Dick's idea that "the biography of every woman begins with the first kiss that counts, and ends when her last child is laid in her arms. . . . He says unloved women have no biographies—they have histories." Instead, Gloria says she hates "getting old and everything" and "I don't want to have responsibility and a lot of children to take care of" (249). The narrator seems to concur, speaking disdainfully of those with "hyphenated occupations" and their "giggling, over-gestured, pathetically pretentious women, who grow fat with them, bear them too many babies, and float helpless and uncontent in a colorless sea of drudgery and broken hopes" (252). There is a clear renunciation of traditional marriage and gender roles in Gloria's expressions.

Other passages also allude to Gloria's desire to throw off tradition and the influence of the past and older ideas. For example, she speaks of the futility of reverencing the past: "Beautiful things grow to a certain height and then they fail and fade off, breathing out memories as they decay. And just as any period decays in our minds, the things of that period should decay too, and in that way they're preserved for a while in the few hearts like mine that react to them. . . . Everywhere we go and move on and change, something's lost—something's left behind. You can't ever quite repeat anything" (315-16). Gloria goes further than claiming the past should not be repeated; she argues that it cannot be repeated. Given the clear contrast between Gloria and her mother, this concept that the past cannot be repeated provides a reason for the intergenerational tension.

Daisy and Jordan Baker in The Great Gatsby

Any discussion about Fitzgerald's works, especially about his flappers, would be remiss to omit the fascinating characters in his seminal

work, *The Great Gatsby*. The same pairing as noted in "Bernice," "The Offshore Pirate," and *The Beautiful and the Damned* are just as present in his most celebrated novel. In *The Great Gatsby*, the story's flapper, Daisy, follows the cinematic story line of girl-goes-flapper, fails, and returns to traditional decorum. In a sense, Daisy is somewhat of a failure as a flapper, resulting in the unsatisfactory conclusion of the novel.

Daisy exhibits some of the characteristics of the flapper girls in the other stories. When learning the gender of her newborn, she says, "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 30). At one point, she also exclaims that they are getting old because "if we were young we'd rise and dance" (114). But, Daisy may just be on the edge of flapperdom, according to her friend, Jordan:

> Daisy was popular in Chicago, as you know. They moved with a fast crowd, all of them young and rich and wild, but she came out with an absolutely perfect reputation. Perhaps because she doesn't drink. It's a great advantage not to drink among hard drinking people. You can hold your tongue and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don't see or care. (75)

Jordan is another flapper character in the story to whom readers should pay attention. She is a double of Daisy, as they are often together doing many of the same things, such lounging on the divan in the first scene and later dressing alike by "wearing small tight hats of metallic cloth and carrying light capes over their arms" (108). One interesting contrast is that Fitzgerald's narrator often refers to Jordan by her full name, "Jordan Baker," while usually referring to Daisy by only her first name. Jordan is unmarried and independent; Daisy is not. Upon first meeting Jordan at her end of the divan, Nick describes her as completely self-sufficient (24-25). He continues to describe her in the quintessential flapper gender-twisting terms of the day: slender, small-breasted, erect, and "like a young cadet" (26), as well as having "slender muscles in her arms" (31). She calls herself a "nice girl," and Tom calls her a "nice girl," but he also says her family should not let her "run around in the country this way" (31-32). Here it becomes apparent that Jordan's family is not traditional in the sense of having a mother and a father. The reader learns later that her father died

shortly after Daisy's wedding to Tom (114). Tom asserts that "the home influence will be very good for her" (32). Jordan resists this influence through her flapper qualities, however – she has a propensity to avoid things that are "too polite" (51).

While Jordan's parents are absent in the story, Daisy's parents, at least by influence, are very present. Daisy's mother is present in the form of her maid, shown, curiously along with Jordan, taking the drunk bride-to-be and literally giving her a cold bath and forcing her back into her dress and pearls (74). This act of the mother's maid imposes upon the free-drinking and free-thinking Daisy the traditional idea of marriage represented by the cold water, the dress, and the pearls.

Creating the Composite

Comparing the characters across these selections reveals a recurring composite pair. One is the pious mother trope. Whether present or only represented, this mother seeks to instill traditional Victorian values in her daughter. She takes every chance to counsel her daughter in manners, etiquette, and propriety. She is domineering, overbearing, and desires control over her daughter's behavior and choices. She is also described in *The Beautiful and the Damned* as "conquered" (234).

The other character, the flapper daughter, is rebellious toward her mother as well as the demands of traditional society. She smokes, drinks, drives, flirts, flies off the handle, has outbursts, seeks adventures, covets imagination, abhors boredom, and generally conducts herself with the utmost of coolness, even in intense situations such as being confronted by an upset relative or being kidnapped by a pirate. The effect of each of these characters is to show the other in sharp relief.

The Composite in Context

The constant juxtaposition of the pious older generation and the freer, modern flapper suggests a connection deeper than the surface story. The recurring characters interestingly envelop not only generational differences, characteristics, and traits, but also traits and characteristics of Fitzgerald's ancestral homeland and his perspective on contemporary America. While selections of his works illustrate, at the very least, a fascination with the character of the American flapper, the connection of this pious mother figure to Fitzgerald's ancestral homeland of Ireland is subtler but just as pointed. Understanding the context in both countries supports this interesting parallel.

American Flappers: A Feminist Social Rebellion

Prior to 1920, just as portrayed in the other characters in Fitzgerald's work, the strictures of Victorian morality ruled the social order in the United States. Laura Hirshbein notes that "The older generation was portrayed as a group of parents or grandparents who were born in the nineteenth century, remained committed to Victorian morality, and were nostalgic about the past" (114). Hirshbein recognizes that "the figure of the older woman based her authority on her role as arbiter of morals and manners" and that "some writers showed the pettiness of older women's concerns through representing generational conflict in terms of manners. In these representations, older women's assessment of the great crisis of the younger generation tended toward the ridiculous" (117). Just as Marjorie told Bernice that their mothers did not understand their modern struggles, "The young woman's representation of the younger generation identified it with the nation itself. . . there was no value in the knowledge gained by the older generation because it was of a world gone by" (116).

This character pairing in a sense represents the national social conflict of the era: the clash of the traditional and the modern. An answer to the confinement of Victorian strictures in the U.S. came in the form of the flapper. Understanding what it meant historically to be a flapper gives insight into one of Fitzgerald's favorite characters. The flapper was definitely a white, middle class figure (Reinsch para. 3; Hirshbein 112). Of Fitzgerald's flappers, Ole Reinsch notes that they exhibit "the obviously typical flapper-like behavior: smoking in public, driving in cars, dancing the Charleston or the Shimmy, excessive consumption of alcohol in times of prohibition, nightly celebrations in jazz clubs and at petting parties, where men and women had premarital sexual experiences" (para 2). Marjorie, Bernice, Jordan and even Daisy all fit this characterization nicely.

The boyishness of the flapper figure is seen as a rebellion against the contemporary construction of the female gender. Reinsch states that "The less 'feminine' a woman's appearance is, the less 'marriageable she is considered to be.'. . . The short hair, the objectively cut clothes that leads the attention from the 'feminine curves' to the legs, the sportive and slim body—all these outward attributes are not only a hype of fashion; it is the expression of a blurring of gender roles" (para 3). The flapper represents several things happening in the U.S. at the time: mass-produced textiles

meant more people could afford more fashionable clothes, more people owned cars and driving became more popular, more people were moving into the urban areas, and women's employment had risen significantly since World War I (Reinsch para. 4-5). The gender-blurring inherent in the flapper characters, like their real-life counterparts, is portrayed in their dress, ideas, mannerisms, and descriptions.

The flapper girl became a symbol of the Jazz Age with short hair, make-up, cigarettes, short skirts, and avid dancing, and was the antithesis to conservatives who felt these girls were an abhorrence to morality and religion (Sharot 84). Stephen Sharot contends that these changes in fashion and habits were indicative of a more profound change in women's behavior, including a freer and more sexually-liberated lifestyle (75). The typical flapper movie plot could be extended to fiction as well: the previously conservative girl transforms herself into the free and adventurous flapper, and after dodging the sexual advances of an undesirable man, she returns to the traditional idea of traditional marriage and settles down (80). The hallmark star of these flapper movies was probably Clara Bow, who exemplified the flapper spirit in her roles as a "flaming youth, of wild sexual energy, of lack of inhibition, of spontaneity" (Fishbein 248). The sexual freedom that Bow portrayed in movies such as *Dancing Mothers* and *It* became a social movement among females in the mid-twenties, propelled further by popular misconceptions of Freudian ideas—for example, that sexual repression was emotionally damaging (Fishbein 248-49).

In essence, the so-called "New Woman" of the Jazz Age in the years after World War I was the symbol of cultural, social, and technical progress. The generational conflict in these stories is an allegory of new and old in American society and evidence of rapidly changing social, cultural, political, and economic worlds (Hirshbein 113). Hirshbein goes on to state that

> Through gender- and age- specific (as well as class-specific) representations within American mass culture in the 1920's, social commentators worked out new definitions of youth and old age, as well as masculinity, femininity, and the relationships between the sexes. Furthermore, the rhetorical conflict between generations helped to frame important contemporary questions about national identity. (114)

Here the general divide ties in directly with national identity. In sum, the flapper girl represents the new America.

Ireland: A Cultural Rebellion

The symbolism borne out in the pairing of these characters in relation to the U.S can be taken a step further. In conjunction with the great changes happening in America in the 1920s, equally great changes were occurring in another country that wanted to throw off the British just like the Americans had: Fitzgerald's ancestral homeland of Ireland. These changes, however, had different social consequences for Irish women. One result of the Irish desire to cast aside English political influence was the concomitant desire to abandon English cultural influences and create a wholly independent culture (Ward 48). The Easter Rising of 1916 renewed Irish nationalism and spurred the Celtic Revival (Dowd 116), which increased interest in, awareness of, promotion of, and participation in all things authentically Irish.

Religion and gender played important roles in the Irish fight for independence from Britain in the 1920s. Catholicism served a crucial role in developing an Irish national identity, and after the war, the church became even more prominent in Irish society (McKenna 41-42). Church leaders were especially concerned with the behavior of women, promoting marriage and motherhood as the ideal state for the modern Irish woman; the sheer number of Catholics in the population meant that these ideas were carried and practiced throughout the country (McKenna 42). Traditionally feminine traits such as demureness, piety, self-sacrifice, and devotion to others were celebrated in public discourse (McKenna 45). Where in America the Twenties represented the dawn of a more socially free era, in Ireland there was a retrenchment of these social freedoms due to the renewed influence of the Catholic Church. These traits celebrated by such a religiously-influenced society, however, are notably everything the flapper is not, and the resultant repression is akin to that of the morally superior mothers in the works surveyed.

Although Fitzgerald's status as a quintessentially American novelist is well established, it is not unreasonable to link his ideas about the ideal American society with a parallel ideal for his Irish homeland. Critics like John Callahan have asserted that Fitzgerald himself used his stories to represent facets of the American dream and of the nation in general (374). Fitzgerald once stated that the American story is "the history of all

aspiration – not just the American dream but the human dream" (qtd. in Callahan 378). Thus, this American dream is the Irish dream as well.

Contemporary Irish Tropes

Besides the historical similarities that warrant comparison of characters' representations of changes happening in America and in Ireland, Fitzgerald's flappers also evoke other authors' Irish tropes. Other contemporary constructions of Irish identity in literature attribute the same traits to Irish characters that can be associated with the flappers' clashes with their moral and pious mothers, ranging from social climbers to the street tough (Dowd 14). Citing representations of Irish Americans in the works of Mark Twain, Harold Frederic, and Frank Norris, Christopher Dowd notes that "Those who fail to achieve at least the semblance of conservative, Anglo-Saxon gentility, manners, and thinking are denied the rights of full citizenship. [. . .]. Their Irish natures and sympathies mark them as socially rebellious, unequivocally dangerous, and uniquely unsuited for an American way of life" (59). In this regard, the flapper characters are more Irish than they might first appear

Dowd also compares Fitzgerald's representations of the Irish with those of T .S. Eliot: "For them, the quintessential modern man was the Irish American, and whether he was a hero or villain, the future of human civilization seemed tied to his ethnic inheritance" (115). Despite the relatively little conscious attention he gave to his heritage during his lifetime, Fitzgerald's friends saw it as an important influence in his writing (Dowd 135). Of Fitzgerald's own lived experience as an Irish American, Dowd says that he "experienced Irish identity as ambiguity, and in this sense, his work seems an authentic representation of a very common experience among Irish Americans of his generation" (136). Dowd further argues that "Fitzgerald saw Irish identity as enabling of intellectualism, spirituality, mysticism, wit, artistry, and visceral pleasure" (137), recalling the earlier description of the composite flapper characters from the works sampled. So, not only do his characters exhibit some of the same traits as Irish tropes in other contemporary authors' works, but Fitzgerald's critics and friends also saw a connection in his work to his family's homeland.

Similarities to the Works of James Joyce

While a peppering of Irish influence in Fitzgerald's work is easily observed by even the casual reader, the specific case of the Irish influence on the flapper and the mother-figure characters is subtler. However, the

same connection of sexual liberation represented by the American flappers to the national liberation of Ireland is present in the writings of one of Fitzgerald's contemporary predecessors, Irish author James Joyce, who began his career as the Irish Revival ensued (Eide 137). Although he appreciated the revolutionary spirit of Irish politics, Joyce took issue with specific positions taken by these promoters of Irish nationalism, particularly the sexually repressive nature of Irish culture and its strong ties with the Catholic Church (Eide 137). Regarding the character of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Marian Eide observes that "Stephen's investment suggests that the liberation of the Irish nation must bring with it a liberation from the more oppressive and hypocritical strictures imposed by traditional Irish morality and exemplified by the Catholic church's position on sexuality" (140). Eide also suggests that through Stephen, Joyce sends the message that there should be an independent morality that is not constrained by either Roman Catholicism or British imperial rule (140).

One scene in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* that Eide highlights is the exchange between Davin and the pregnant woman of Ballyhoura hills who stands in her doorway inviting him in, presumably for a sexual encounter:

> She represents a troubling yet auspicious alternative view of the nation he is writing for and about. This woman acts from a conscience that is freed from the repressive demands of traditional morality and that also metaphorically addresses the status of Ireland as a colony that demands its independence. In her figure and her choices, Stephen finds a model for his national esthetics as a coming into consciousness by way of an altered understanding of morality. . . Stephen's "Mother Ireland" is a figure of the plentitude and excess of creativity; hers is an erotic abundance that a nationalist might reject but Joyce clearly embraces. (144-45)

Joyce associates sexual liberation and national independence (Eide 151), suggesting that true Irish nationalism is impeded by the practice of sexual repression (155). For Fitzgerald, as for Joyce, sexual freedom and national freedom are intertwined through their characters.

Conclusion

Given the content, context, and contemporary Irish and American societies, why did Fitzgerald constantly pair these two character tropes? While simply representing his lived experience in the Jazz Age in which the flapper was a central figure would seem to call for a simple portrayal of the era and its people "as is," Fitzgerald's characters are more complicated than that. Conspicuously, it is not the similarities, but the differences between them that he highlights. By pairing the flapper figure with the pious mother character, Fitzgerald shows his readers both what these characters assuredly are and what they definitely are not. He is not just capturing and reporting on American life in the Roaring Twenties, but is holding up a portrait of Americanness to show his ancestral country the modern ideal of the nation state. Just as American women were becoming and feeling more liberated, Ireland needed to dispense with the matronly persona and become and feel more youthful and free. That is, "Mother Ireland" needed to become a "New Woman."

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A Review of *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us about Our Past and Future* by James Shapiro

Rhonda Crombie
Middle Georgia State University

Anyone reading the news in this country will still run across stories of star-crossed lovers who kill themselves when they fear facing life apart. There will always be soldiers and generals who are horrible leaders once they assume, by vote or power, higher political offices, and there are always men who end up murdering their wives in fits of jealousy. Besides being familiar with how Shakespeare's themes still echo loudly everywhere in this country, most people have no idea how closely intertwined Shakespeare's plays are to some American historical figures and time periods. James Shapiro discusses those intersections in his 2020 book *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us about Our Past and Future*. Shapiro, a Shakespearean professor at Columbia University for over thirty-five years and author of ten books about The Bard, is a longstanding expert in the field of Elizabethan studies. He divides his book into sections to discuss prickly, nation-dividing topics in *American* history such as Manifest Destiny, the Civil War, immigration, homosexual civil rights, and the emergence of women's rights. Within every division, Shapiro shows how each is, interestingly enough, connected to William Shakespeare.

After the first chapter, which deals with the contentious discussion of John Quincy Adams' clashing with the concepts of both slavery and *Othello*, in Chapter Two, Shapiro discusses Manifest Destiny and the expansion of America's borders and the ideals of capitalism and democracy. In 1845 at the military encampment of Corpus Christi, the manliest of men, bored of their duties, decided to put on a production of *Othello*. The regiment found a hunk-of-a-man to be Othello, but the question remained over which soldier should play the alluring, feminine Desdemona? They unanimously decided on a much more petite West Point graduate who was said to be strikingly beautiful in a dress. In fact, his commanding officers would not allow him to act the part for fear of

damaging his chances at a future military career. Who was this lovely Desdemona, instructed to promptly grow a beard to rid himself the reputation of being beautiful to men?: Ulysses S. Grant! One testimony asserts, "There was a broad streak of the feminine in his personality. He was almost half-woman, but the strand was buried in the depths of his soul. . . . In the army before the Mexican War, he was called the 'Little Beauty' by the officers of his regiment" (qtd. in Shapiro 26). This *beauty* became one of the toughest military leaders in American history, his dainty Shakespearean past tucked neatly away in his saddlebag.

Chapter Four, following a chapter on class warfare, highlights how Abraham Lincoln's life intersected with Shakespeare. Shapiro discusses that since Lincoln lived in poverty most of his life, he did not own copies of Shakespeare's works until he began his law practice. But once he did, he had an insatiable intellectual hunger for Shakespeare; he read, memorized, and then recited long passages for hours at a time. Ironically, Shapiro points out, someone else in Lincoln's life also loved to memorize and recite long passages of Shakespeare's works: John Wilkes Booth. After the assassination, Booth, hobbling on a broken ankle and starving, found Dr. Richard Stuart, a Confederate sympathizer in Virginia, who refused to treat the ankle or give him shelter, but did grudgingly feed him. Booth felt the need to pay him for the food, and the note he left with the money echoes imagery from both *King Lear* and *Macbeth*:

> I was sick and tired, with a broken leg, in need of medical advice. I would not have turned a dog from my door in such a condition. However, you were kind enough to give me something to eat, for which I not only thank you, but on account of the reluctant manner in which it was bestowed, I feel bound to pay for it . . . The sauce in meat is ceremony; meeting were bare without it. (qtd. in Shapiro 84)

Incidentally, just months before the assassination of Lincoln, Booth played Brutus in *Julius Caesar*--not that he needed any encouragement to kill the leader of a country.

After covering the still hot-button topics of immigration, definitions of marriage, and homosexual rights, Shapiro uses the bookends of *Shakespeare in a Divided America*, both its introduction and conclusion, to discuss the most recent intersection between America and Shakespeare: a production of the aforementioned play *Julius Caesar* in reaction to the quarrelsome 2016 presidential election. In a twist of star-crossed fate, Shapiro read Stephen Greenblatt's op-ed in the *NY Times,* a piece which would later become Greenblatt's book, *Tyrant,* which traces Trump's rise

to power through tyrannical figures in Shakespeare's plays. The director of The Delacorte, the celebrated outdoor Shakespearean theatre in New York City's Central Park, also read the op-ed and instantly decided to direct a version of *Julius Caesar*. The wildly-successful production included many of Trump's ill-reputed behaviors, such as the "grabbing women by their pussies" reference, "white men showing up on the stage wearing MAKE ROME GREAT AGAIN hats . . .," and a "tall, blond Caesar, dressed in a business suit and wearing overlong blue or red ties, resembled Donald Trump, and an elegant and Slavic-accented Calpurnia his wife Melania" (Shapiro XX-XXiii). Controversially, what some people might have secretly wished for, they saw: the Trump-like Caesar was viciously stabbed to death. The left/right division of America was once more reflected in Shakespeare's work, and this bloody spectacle of violence shocked American theater audiences on both sides of the political divide.

Unfortunately, one noticeable omission in this book is a more in-depth discussion of *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare's last tragedy about a driven military leader. With America's long history of military prowess and public trials of its uniformed heroes like Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf, Oliver North, and Colin Powell, to name a few, there are obvious comparisons to be made between the play and recent American figures. Skimpy references to this play and its themes are less than fitting in a book focusing on a country so driven by the military-industrial complex.

In his book, James Shapiro remarks that, "the future of Shakespeare in America can be predicted with no more accuracy than the future of the nation. But if Shakespeare continues to serve as a canary in the coal mine, one way of reckoning where things are heading is by looking at fresh controversies surrounding his work" (203). In the end, Shapiro's book is an interesting read for any history or literary buff.

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A Review of *Eudora Welty and Mystery: Hidden in Plain Sight*, by Jacob Agner and Harriet Pollack, Eds.

Monica Miller, PhD
Middle Georgia State University

One of the highlights of touring Eudora Welty's home on Pinehurst Street in Jackson, Mississippi, is seeing what a devotee of mystery novels she was. Not only are there stacks and stacks of Agatha Christie, Ross McDonald, and hundreds of other mystery novels throughout the house, but there is also the Raven Award trophy that she was awarded by the Mystery Writers of America proudly on display—the only award that the author ever had on display in her lifetime. (Her Pulitzer and other awards she kept in a closet.)

So the publication of *Eudora Welty and Mystery: Hidden in Plain Sight*, a collection of ten essays which consider the roles that mystery and detective fiction play in Welty's work, is an important contribution to Welty studies. Both Jacob Agner and Harriet Pollack, the editors of the collection, have written elsewhere about the importance of the mystery genre to Welty's work, and the expertise they have brought to this collection has resulted in a wide-ranging, insightful group of engaging essays.

While Welty's interest in the mystery genre is not unknown, many may be surprised by just how obsessed with it she could be. In fact, one of the most immediately useful parts of *Eudora Welty and Mystery* is the collection's appendix, which contains a list of the more than 300 "books belonging or adjacent to the mystery genre, by nearly a hundred different authors and/or editors" (222). Having this information readily available will likely bring further consideration of the role that this genre and these authors played in Welty's work by not only Welty scholars and scholars of southern women writers, but by scholars of the mystery genre itself.

From the beginning, the editors of the collection note how different concepts of "mystery" have permeated Welty's work and the analysis of that work. Beginning with Welty's own observation that fiction is "full of mystery"--in fact, fiction can help us "rediscover the mystery" of

life (3)—Agner and Pollack note that, "Mystery, then, is, and has long been, shorthand for the metaphysical in Welty's imagination" (3). The essays in this collection do important work of connecting such metaphysical understanding of mystery with the actual mystery genre. There are crucial connections between the readerly affect and experience of such metaphysical mystery at the heart of all mystery and the consciously created mystery within the detective novel.

For readers who may be more familiar with Welty's oeuvre than with the mystery genre, Michael Kreyling's essay "Eudora Welty and Mystery: Noir Variations" that follows the introduction provides an engaging and informative overview. Kreyling traces both the flowering of detective fiction within Welty's lifetime as well as the fondness for these novels by Welty and her parents. Kreyling carefully examines the "Golden Age of the Detective Novel" in the 1920s and 1930s, noting how Welty and her mother especially responded to particular authors and subgenres, emphasizing Welty's own preference for the hard-boiled detective genre.

Several essays make note of how Welty takes traditional detective and mystery genres and not only infuses her fiction with them, but also subverts many of their conventions, which provides for a rich reading experience. In co-editor Harriet Pollack's essay "When a Mystery Leads to Murder: Genre Bending, Hommes Fatals, Thickening Mystery, and the Covert Investigation of Whiteness in Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles,*" the author argues that, "If the mystery genre traditionally seeks to create order, Welty's modernist/postmodernist adaptation, as its title suggests, discomfortingly confronts disorder" (147). Specifically, Pollack identifies the following ways that Welty adapts and subverts generic conventions: "her playful adaptation of the country house formula, but also her anticipation of contemporary conventions both of the 'femme noir' written today by women regendering the notoriously problematic hard-boiled detective genre, and the 'civil rights' noir" (149). Similarly, Sarah Gilbreath Ford's "Unsolved Mysteries: Reading Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter* with Agatha Christie's *The Body in the Library*" includes a close reading of the Welty novel to demonstrate the significance of Welty's evoking generic tropes while refusing closure and a return to order: "Eschewing the easy clarity and finality of a classic detective story, the novel's genre bending reveals a valuing of complexity and the abiding mysteries of character" (180).

Finally, many of the essays refer to Welty's own deep friendship with Kenneth Millar, who wrote dozens of hard-boiled detective novels under the pen name Ross McDonald. Beginning as fans of each other's

work, the two developed a friendship so deep that their correspondence has been collected and published in *Meanwhile There Are Letters: The Correspondence of Eudora Welty and Ross MacDonald* in 2015. Suzanne Marrs, Welty's friend and biographer, and coeditor of the aforementioned collection, contributed the essay "Confluence: The Fiction of Eudora Welty and Ross MacDonald," the last essay in *Eudora Welty and Mystery*. Tying this intimate relationship, which began with a love of the mystery genre, to the theme of "confluence," which is central to much of Welty's work, Marrs both tells the story of their friendship and how it influenced their work (each writer dedicated a book to the other), and considers the mysteries—both literal and metaphorical—in many of their works. Marrs's essay works very well as the final piece of the collection as it ties together multiple themes which run throughout: Welty's personal love of mystery, the myriad mysteries at the heart of her work, the ways Welty's mysteries refuse easy (or any) solutions, and the ways personal and biographical aspects of Welty's life manifested themselves in her writing.

Eudora Welty and Mystery is an important contribution to both Welty studies and studies of the mystery genre. In the range of analysis, the biographical connections made, and the important references to archival material (both in Mississippi's Department of Archives and History as well as the list of the mystery and mystery-adjacent works in Welty's personal library), this collection is a very useful resource. As many scholars have alluded to the conventions of the genre throughout Welty's work for years, this new collection provides a needed contribution to the field, one which will be greatly appreciated by serious students and fans of the author for years to come.

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A Review of *The Scout Mindset: Why Some People See Things Clearly and Others Don't* by Julia Galef

Shane Trayers, PhD
Middle Georgia State University

The Scout Mindset by Julia Galef helps readers avoid major pitfalls in logic and critical thinking through a more flexible and fact-based way of thinking that contemplates bias, personal agendas, and identity influences and allows a person to see a situation as it really is. In the text, "scout mindset" (Galef's term for the concept) is juxtaposed with "soldier mindset," which is also referred to as "motivated reasoning." In a soldier mindset, the person is defending a position, attempting to find data that supports a personal conviction rather than examining facts and data to determine what is true. Galef uses a multitude of studies, anecdotes, and personal and professional examples to demonstrate that in many circumstances, scout mindset is often superior to soldier mindset in making decisions and judgments. Galef writes, "In this book, I'm proposing a kind of reform. I'm arguing that in many, if not all, situations, we would be better off abandoning our default setting of soldier mindset and learning to be in scout mindset instead" (16-17). Galef's conversational style and ability to translate complicated studies into easily understood concepts makes it an easy read, and her ability to question even her own motivated reasoning demonstrates a commitment to researched-based truth in argument. This text is sometimes funny, but more often eye opening. Organized into five parts, it could easily be used in a classroom, in part or in whole, or on a personal level simply as a self-check for whether or not motivated reasoning is clouding one's decisions and judgment.

In "Part I: The Case for Scout Mindset," Galef first convinces us that we do not need to completely abolish solider mindset as it does function better for us under certain circumstances, like staying within a community of people with similar beliefs, feeling good about ourselves, or establishing identity. However, through the well-told story of the historical Dreyfus Affair that featured a man wrongly accused of spying despite

evidence to the contrary, Galef demonstrates how wanting something to be true due to personal bias does not necessarily make it true. Often someone must be brave and strong to stand up for factual evidence in light of the shared bias of others. Luckily, this story had a happy ending where truth won out; the actual spy was caught, and the falsely accused was freed by someone using scout mindset over soldier mindset.

The last part of this section discusses the soldier mindset's more immediate value as opposed to the scout mindset's longer-term value. Additionally, it analyzes the human overestimate of social costs, like people lying to their own doctor to avoid embarrassment or judgment, despite how lying could have a negative impact on their treatment even though the doctor, in all likelihood, would not react to their truth in the way they anticipate. Galef states, "But when we leave the decision up to our instincts, even a hint of potential social risk prompts a reflexive 'Avoid at all costs!' reaction" (37). The author goes on to argue that although the soldier mindset protects us from hard truths, sometimes, like at the doctor's office, it might be better to face the truth and fix the things that we fear rather than deluding ourselves with only facts that support our entrenched views.

In "Part II: Developing Self-Awareness," Galef begins with studies about knowledge and education that do not correlate directly with scout mindset. "If knowledge and reasoning protect you from motivated reasoning, then we would expect to find that the more people know about science, the more they agree with each other about scientific questions," states Galef before referencing a study that proves just the opposite (46). Scout mindset requires an ability to constantly re-evaluate data in light of new research and information. This part of the work goes on to ask five questions that can test if a person is in scout mindset or soldier mindset. These questions include the concepts of telling other people when they are right, reacting well to personal criticism, proving ourselves wrong, taking precautions to avoid fooling ourselves, and surrounding ourselves with good critics.

The second section of Part II gives readers thought experiments that they can do on their own to examine whether or not they are unintentionally biased or prejudiced. These thought experiments include the following: The Double Standard Test, The Outsider Test, The Conformity Test, The Selective Skeptic Test, and The Status Quo Bias Test. Each one is a reliable way to double-check our thinking for motivated reasoning or self-delusion. They are easy to perform and entertaining to think through with different decisions or scenarios. Each of the thought

experiments comes with an example that would fit with most people's life experiences.

Lastly, this section analyzes the pitfalls of making assumptions based on one's belief in one's own accuracy. This includes an analysis of Spock from *Star Trek*. While Spock adamantly considers himself rational and logical, Galef's own analysis of Spock's use of words like "impossible" shows that his analytical skills are in reality lacking:

> The confidence level at which [Spock] seems to be well calibrated is when he judges something to be "likely"; those predictions do come true at a rate that matches his confidence level. Other than that, Spock's predictions are anti-correlated with reality—the less likely he thinks something is the *more* likely it is to happen, and the more likely he thinks something is, the *less* likely it is to happen. (Galef 77-78)

This quantitative analysis of what most *Star Trek* fans would expect as an outcome as opposed to the actual result is both hilarious and illustrative of how we often overestimate our confidence in a given answer. The data Galef uses to come to these conclusions is logical and well-grounded, unlike that of Spock.

Using examples of a real-life shipwreck survivor, an episode of *The Office*, and the AIDS epidemic, "Part III: Thriving Without Illusions" discusses the value of seeing the silver lining in bad situations and finding coping mechanisms when things go badly. Although no one wants to sink into depression or quit trying in such bad situations, Galef outlines the benefits of seeing an accurate picture, even when the boat is figuratively or literally sinking, in order to reach one's goals more readily. Other examples in this section include Jeff Bezos' and Elon Musk's abilities to see each of their company's projected performance in realistic terms, rather than in wishful terms, which Galef shows helped their successes rather than hindered them.

The last two parts of this book are particularly enlightening and useful. In "Part IV: Changing Your Mind," Galef uses a friend's idea of "updating" to mean changing one's mind about something due to new data or information. This part focuses on the value of accepting when one is wrong. While a soldier mindset means that a person would defend a position at any cost, a scout mindset means either admitting that one is

wrong or "updating" based on what arguments, information, and data are available at the time. If we consider this shift in thinking an update rather than a defeat, then it is easier to change position on important political, scientific, or academic issues, according to Galef; in order to search for and find truth, we must change our mind and/or admit being wrong. This section also advocates accepting confusion as part of the exploratory process. Citing Charles Darwin's dilemma on how a peacock's tail worked in natural selection, which took him years to figure out, Galef shows that we do not need to have all the answers right away, and that there is value in taking time to sincerely investigate confusing things. This section also warns us to surround ourselves with people who do not necessarily accept everything we believe immediately, as dissent can lead to questioning of prejudiced or biased ideas.

In the last section, "Part V: Rethinking Identity," Galef focuses on how ideas and beliefs can become a person's identity. With examples from the "mommy wars," politics, religion, and even Veganism, the book delves into the process by which what we believe becomes who we are. As Galef explains, "Beliefs crystallize into identities through the feeling of being under siege from a hostile world, much the way prolonged pressure bonds carbon atoms together to form a diamond" (187-88). Yet, once we see our belief as defining ourselves, it becomes much harder for us to change. The section defines eight ways to realize that a belief is an identity, and then warns not to let identity counteract new ideas, new information, or an update. For Galef, "Holding an identity lightly means thinking of it in a matter-of-fact way, rather than as a central source of pride and meaning in your life. It's a description, not a flag to be waved proudly" (200). If one can still process information and analyze data objectively, one will not fall into "motivated reasoning" due to community influence or into an identity that is reliant on a belief system.

As a whole, Julia Galef's *The Scout Mindset* is well-researched, entertaining to read, and makes readers question whether or not their fundamental core ideas are based on reality, data and information, or bias and personal prejudice. The book strives to give balanced examples of both liberal and conservative political positions, includes historical and popular culture examples, and maintains a balance of humor and seriousness that makes it a pleasure to read. *The Scout Mindset* would work well in a classroom as a way to teach how to evaluate sources and research or simply to remind us that sometimes we must admit to being wrong in order to be right. This book tells us that if we continually identify our motivated reasoning and seek the truth, then we can be open to new ideas and new possibilities.

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