THE Boothe Prize Essays

2004

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Introduction to the Humanities Program

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Arianna Lambie
Brendan Lehnert
Mark Liao
Anastasia Nevin
Rebecca Raybin
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Carol Yu Cao
Victor Cepeda
David Chen
Shayok (Misha) Chowdhury
Daisy Chung
Jenna Coalson
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FOREWORD

Thanks to the generosity of the late D. Power Boothe, Jr., his wife Catie, and their son Barry, the Boothe Prizes recognize and reward outstanding expository, argumentative, and research-based writing of first-year students in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric and the Introduction to the Humanities Program. Each quarter superior student work from courses in both programs is nominated and submitted to Boothe Prize committee judges. Winning papers are then collected for publication, and Boothe Prizes awarded at a celebratory ceremony each spring in honor of these talented student writers and their instructors.

As this collection of essays from spring and autumn 2003 and winter 2004 indicates, the selection process is no easy task at any of the judging stages. The essays represent the broad range and reach of many of Stanford’s first-year writers; they often are remarkable in their analytic power and sophisticated rhetorical skills, as well as their personal engagement with a topic or text. Their papers additionally reveal the varying kinds of research opportunities available to Stanford’s first-year students, and the quality of work students are able to do in a short period of time, usually on fairly unfamiliar material, all the while managing the difficult work of their other courses. We take particular pleasure, then, in honoring these superior young scholars.

Our special thanks go to the Boothe family for their support and encouragement of Stanford’s PWR and IHUM first-year students in offering the Boothe Prizes and making possible the publication of these essays. We are grateful, as well, to Cristina Huerta for expertly coordinating the annual Boothe Prize celebration ceremony. We also thank the Project Committee, a collaborative venture among faculty and staff from both PWR and IHUM who planned, edited, and produced The Boothe Prize Essays 2004: Marvin Diogenes, Erin Ferris, Lisa Haefele, Dan Newark, Emily Phillips, and Cheri Ross. Similarly instrumental are PWR and IHUM project editors Stacey Stanfield Anderson, Sharan Daniel, Erin Ferris, Lisa Haefele, Maura Heyn, Roland Hsu, Jeff Myers, Cindy Nimchuk, Ardel Thomas, and Kristi Wilson. We are particularly grateful to Susan Wilson, who designed and produced this volume, and who, along with copyeditor Megan Hendershott, graciously accommodated our rather demanding time constraints to finalize this volume. And, of course, these essays could not be printed without the efforts of the Boothe Prize Selection Committees: for the Program in Writing and Rhetoric, Christine Alfano, Corinne Arráez, Sharan Daniel, Marvin Diogenes, Andrea Lunsford, Chris
Phillips, Claude Reichard; and Erin Ferris, Maura Heyn, Roland Hsu, Jeff Myers, Dan Newark, Cindy Nimchuk, Kristi Wilson, Orrin (Rob) Robinson, and Cheri Ross for the Introduction to the Humanities Program.

Most of all, our thanks and congratulations go to the many talented first-year writers whose essays were nominated for the Boothe Prize, and, especially, to the students and instructors whose exemplary work now takes its place in the intellectual life of Stanford’s first-year programs.

—JOHN BRAVMAN
Freeman-Thornton Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
ESSAYS FROM THE
Program in
Writing and Rhetoric
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Boothe Prize Winners &
Honorable Mentions
INTRODUCTION

FIRST-YEAR WRITING, one of Stanford’s oldest traditions, has been taught since the founding of the University. The current Program in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) courses provide a setting for students new to the university to focus their intellectual energies on the art and craft of writing. PWR’s small, seminar-style classes offer students the opportunity to develop their writing abilities in academic analysis and argument with the meticulous and consistent guidance of an experienced writing instructor.

This year we have begun to implement the new second-level PWR 2 course, with added emphasis on oral and multimedia rhetoric. PWR 1, the first-year course from which Boothe Prize nominations are drawn, continues to emphasize various forms of analysis and substantial research-based projects. The essays selected as the Winners and Honorable Mentions for the Boothe Prize represent the best of students’ work in these areas, and it is our pleasure to share them with the larger Stanford community.

Throughout the curriculum, PWR is committed to leading students toward strong performance in all elements of writing, including understanding a writer’s stance, developing a supportable argumentative thesis, deploying cogent proofs, and writing for a range of audiences. Each of these essays demonstrates the way in which PWR courses guide Stanford’s first-year students in presenting their ideas with the intellectual rigor and stylistic force expected of university students.

As Directors of the Program, we have had the privilege of reading all of the essays nominated for the Boothe Prize, and we have been impressed over and over again by how well these beginning university students have met the challenges of first-year writing. We value the intellectual curiosity, freshness of thought and expression, and engagement with the ideas of others represented in the essays published here, and we offer our heartiest congratulations to these writers as well as to their instructors.

—ANDREA A. LUNSFORD
   Director, Program in Writing and Rhetoric

—MARVIN DIOGENES
   Associate Director, Program in Writing and Rhetoric
“The challenges we face combine many of the great challenges that face our global society. We need social stability that is based on socio-economic development. We must nurture tolerance, collective wisdom and democracy. Like all countries, we must provide real personal safety and security against criminality and abuse of human rights.”

Clear echoes of these words by Nelson Mandela to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (29 January 1999) are heard in Joshua Smith’s call for a resolution to Africa’s worst resource wars in his forceful PWR policy paper: “Conflict diamonds are a source of egregious human rights violations.” Notice how Joshua’s carefully justified argument applies its field research interview with Corinna Gilfillan of Global Witness to a demand for immediate action: “The diamond industry simply cannot let this channeling of funds to terrorist groups continue.” This “white paper’s” specific policy recommendations for strengthening what is known as the Kimberley Diamond Certification Process offer a direct and wholly practical plan for halting an illegal and illicit trade that, in the writer’s words, “has decimated the political and economic life [of many African nations].” “Conflict Diamonds” is a result of Joshua’s determined curiosity, persistent intelligence, and cooperative engagement with a bold group of fellow writers in our course, Words, Deeds, and Dreams: The Rhetoric of Human Rights.

—Paul Bator
Conflict Diamonds: Resolving Africa’s Worst Resource Wars

Joshua Smith

Cymbeline: That diamond upon your finger, say
   How came it yours?
Iachimo: Thou'lt torture me to leave unspoken that
   Which, to be spoke, would torture thee.

—William Shakespeare, Cymbeline 5.5.168-171

INTRODUCTION

Angola is the fourth largest producer of diamonds in the world, controlling ten percent of the globe’s production of uncut diamonds by value (Tamm 8), yet the gross domestic product per capita is a measly $974 a year. Life expectancy is not even forty years, and less than forty percent of the population is literate (Dowling). The United Nations Children’s Fund has called Angola “the worst place in the world to be a child” (qtd. in Renner 5). Instead of a blessing, Angola’s plentiful resources, especially diamonds, have been a curse to the nation’s populace. Until 2001, Angolan rebel forces used the extremely valuable diamond mines within their claimed territory to finance their war effort. The existence of these so-called conflict diamonds has decimated the political and economic life in other African nations as well, most prominently Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where, as in Angola, diamonds have caused or helped finance devastatingly bloody civil wars.

The United Nations defines conflict diamonds as “rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments” (“Kimberley Process Requirements”). Conflict dia-
Diamonds represent only about four percent of the world’s diamond trade, but this money goes a long way toward paying for rebel arms and lining leaders’ pockets (Tamm 7). The human costs of rebellions caused and/or prolonged by diamonds are staggering. In Angola, the civil war between the ruling government and rebel forces displaced four million people (one of every three Angolans) and relegated a million to foreign food aid during twenty-six years of civil war. In Sierra Leone, since rebel forces seized control of diamond fields in 1991, 75,000 have died, and a half million have been made refugees, a figure that excludes the over two million people displaced within the country’s borders. In the DRC, two to three million have been killed and at least two million displaced due to civil war stemming back to 1997. In order to curb violent civil strife caused and enabled by illicit diamond trafficking, the international community must prohibit the importation of diamonds sold by rebel forces. Though current measures have recently been put into effect by the UN and by specific countries (including the United States), the procedures dealing with conflict diamonds certainly have room to be improved upon.

BACKGROUND

Civil Wars

The Angolan civil war may be the most clear-cut case of the diamond trade fueling armed conflict. In 1975, after fourteen years of fighting with imperial parent Portugal, Angola declared its independence. Quickly, political power was split, with the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) seizing command, and the Maoist National Union for the Total Independence of Africa (UNITA) becoming a rebel group, disputing the MPLA’s ascendancy (“Angola History”). The Angolan civil war had also become a Cold War battleground, with the Soviet Union and Cuba backing the legitimate MPLA government, and the United States aiding the rebel UNITA forces. The instant wealth diamonds represented in some ways both caused and prolonged the conflict. The war’s fiercest fighting coincided with the time period UNITA was receiving the most money from diamond sales: between 1992 and 1994, 300,000 Angolans were killed, while from 1991 to 1999 the rebels earned three to four billion dollars selling diamonds. Finally, in June of 1998, the UN passed Security Council Resolution 1173, halting trade with UNITA’s diamonds. This resolution represented the first time the world officially recognized the role of diamonds in igniting armed conflict, sending the UNITA war effort into decline (Tamm 7). In February 2002, rebel leader Jonas Savimbi was killed, and a cease-fire followed six weeks later.
(Hodges). The prospects for peace in Angola currently appear brighter than they have in twenty-eight years.

Some of the most insidious human rights violations in the diamond wars have occurred in Sierra Leone, where reports of child soldiers and malicious rapes and abductions have been widespread. In 1985, military dictator Joseph Momoh seized power in an election in which he was the sole candidate. Momoh’s administration suffered from corruption and soon stood on the verge of economic collapse (Davies 2). In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched a full-scale rebellion against Momoh’s government. The RUF had secretly been training in Libya and attacked from Liberia, whose dictator, Charles Taylor, had been an RUF supporter (Tamm 10). Even though the leading party was overthrown in 1992 and again in 1996, the RUF did not cease fighting: “Lacking a clear ideology, the RUF seems to be driven by a desire to gain access to the country’s diamond and mineral wealth” (Radio Netherlands). During the 1990s, the RUF was earning between twenty and seventy million dollars annually in diamond sales, though much of that money went straight to Taylor (Davies 9). In May 2000 a short-lived peace accord ended when rebel forces took five hundred UN peacekeepers hostage, a situation that was only solved with the intervention of the British army. The UN felt obligated to take action, passing Security Council Resolution 1306, which installed an embargo of RUF diamonds until a certification scheme could be established. Unfortunately, the scheme that was set up proved ineffective as diamonds were smuggled through Liberia. Furthermore, just this April, London-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Global Witness released a report entitled “For a Few Dollars More,” detailing how the al Qaeda terrorist group laundered huge sums of money by manipulating weak governmental diamond regulations in Sierra Leone.

Although the war between the RUF and the government was formally declared over in January 2002, a fear that some in the country are still channeling diamonds to terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda and Hezbollah shows the need for a proper solution for the conflict diamond problem.

The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been described as “the widest interstate war in modern African history,” where a seemingly never-ending stream of foreign players have become involved (“Congo Civil War”). In 1997, longtime corrupt and suppressive dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was overthrown by a military coup led by Laurent Kabila, who quickly became the country’s president. By August 1998 Kabila’s own oppressive rule had garnered opposition: Congolese rebel forces, led by the ethnic Tutsis, began attacking Kabila’s forces with aid from Rwanda and Uganda. Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwean forces entered the DRC to fight off the rebels.
and their allies. Since then, the warring parties on both sides have been looting the Congo of its natural resources and have little incentive to end the war. The rebel groups make money and finance war efforts by sending diamonds eastward through Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. The DRC has been the victim of plundering from its allies and even its own army (Tamm 14). Currently, the situation in the DRC is uncertain; Kabila was assassinated by a bodyguard in January 2001 and his son Joseph assumed the presidency. A peace deal was signed by the six warring nations in December 2002, and the foreign armies are presumably on their way out of the Congo. According to the BBC, 2.5 million people have been killed during the conflict, most due to a lack of health care and proper nutrition. Just as in Angola and Sierra Leone, the civil war in the DRC has been unnecessarily prolonged due to the existence of diamonds.

De Beers and NGOs

One company is synonymous with the diamond industry: De Beers. Diamonds were discovered in South Africa in 1866, and by 1869, the rush was on, as fortune seekers from around the globe descended upon the Orange and Vaal Rivers. The most successful of these was infamous imperialist Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes soon consolidated his mine holdings, which included the enormously profitable Kimberley and De Beers mines, establishing De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited in 1888 (De Beers).\(^7\) Thus De Beers began manipulating the law of supply and demand, eventually stockpiling four billion dollars’ worth of diamonds in a London vault in order to keep prices artificially high (Campbell 109).\(^8\) At the height of its power, De Beers controlled about ninety percent of the world’s diamonds.

Using its monopolistic control, De Beers helped provoke civil wars in diamond-producing countries by continuing to purchase all available diamonds, financing rebel war efforts in the process. To continue market dominance, De Beers needed to buy any diamond available from whomever was selling, including the RUF, UNITA, and any of the dozens of rebel groups fighting in the DRC (Campbell 113). There is little wonder why De Beers bought from UNITA with a “no questions asked” policy; dealing in conflict diamonds was immensely profitable: “In 1996 and 1997, Angolan diamonds are thought to have accounted for about one-fifth of De Beers’ business” (Renner 33). In these same years, UNITA controlled about seventy percent of Angola’s diamond production (Campbell 114).

Due to external pressure, De Beers has changed course in recent years, now refusing to deal in conflict diamonds. However, De Beers's shift in policy coincides (not surprisingly) with a larger bottom line. In December 1998,
British human rights watchdog Global Witness released a report entitled “A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies in the Angolan Conflict.” The report accused De Beers of buying diamonds from UNITA to maintain market stability. At this point, De Beers denied the allegations, professing they had acted in compliance with the UN Resolution that prohibited buying diamonds from Angolan rebels (Tamm 23). Despite its immediate denial, De Beers was quickly forced to change its tune. In October 1999, five European NGOs (including Global Witness) launched the “Fatal Transactions Campaign,” which aimed to “alert the public to the diamond trade’s funding of rebel armies across Africa” (“A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies in the Angolan Conflict”). Not coincidentally, De Beers announced an embargo on the purchase of all rough diamonds from Angola just two days after the campaign’s launch. Shortly thereafter, De Beers proclaimed an end to trading with the outside market, instead only selling diamonds gathered in its own mines (Tamm 23). Due to these changes, De Beers can guarantee that all rough diamonds that go through its hands are conflict-free.

Although De Beers seemed to have bent to public pressure to conduct business in a more moral fashion, its motives were far from humanitarian. Instead, the decision to stop dealing in conflict diamonds would be beneficial to the company’s bottom line. De Beers is no longer the monopoly it once was. Over the last two decades, De Beers’s control of the rough-diamond market has steadily dropped from above eighty percent to around sixty percent, owing to new diamond mines owned by outsiders in Canada and Australia (Tamm 4). Realizing it could no longer single-handedly control the worldwide diamond supply, De Beers fundamentally changed its business strategy. Because competitors could now undercut De Beers’s prices, the company decided to stop acting as a “custodian” for the industry, having previously absorbed economic shocks and advertised on behalf of all rough-diamond traders. Instead, in 1999 De Beers launched its “supplier of choice” program; now De Beers would allow the market to act naturally (De Beers). However, under its new policy, De Beers simply replaced the diamonds it would have imported from Angola with diamonds from its own stockpile. To keep demand (and prices) high, De Beers vastly increased its advertising budget. With the American economy booming, De Beers recorded record profits in 1999 and again in 2000 (De Beers). In October 2002, De Beers opened its first retail store in London, making it the only retailer whose diamonds are guaranteed to be conflict-free (“De Beers Store Opening”). Although the conflict diamond scandal seems to have done nothing but help De Beers’s financial status, the company has proven to be a leader in eradicating the flow of conflict diamonds, regardless of its motives.
Global Witness’s 1998 Rough Trade report was merely the first blow to the public image of the diamond business; the worst was still to come. The early months of 2000 saw a plethora of NGO reports documenting several violations of the UN trade embargo of diamonds from Angolan rebels. But what truly galvanized the process was the so-called Fowler Report, the final report of the UN Panel of Experts on Violations of Security Council Sanctions Against UNITA, submitted on March 10, 2000. The nearly two-hundred-page document “implicated two current African presidents as well as the government of Bulgaria and the world’s largest diamond exchange, in Antwerp, Belgium, in the methods that rebels have used to smuggle Angolan diamonds out for sale, enabling them to buy weapons to sustain decades of civil war” (Crossette). Realizing that the conflict-diamond scandal could harm the nation’s diamond industry, South Africa’s Minister of Minerals launched what is now known as the Kimberley Process in May 2000 (Tamm 18). The conference was held in Kimberley, Australia, site of one of De Beers’s first (and most profitable) mines, and the group of representatives from NGOs, the diamond industry, and national governments agreed that an international certification scheme for uncut diamonds would be the most plausible and effective way to halt the flow of conflict diamonds. The logic was simple: if countries were not allowed to import uncertified rough diamonds, African rebel forces would be unable to sell their diamonds, cutting off a major source of funds for financing their wars.

After a series of meetings, enough progress had been made for the UN to take up the issue of a diamond certification scheme. General Assembly Resolution 55/56 of December 1, 2000, sponsored by forty-eight diamond-producing or -importing nations and unanimously adopted, called for “the creation and implementation of a simple and workable international certification scheme for rough diamonds,” a scheme now known as the Kimberley Diamond Certification Scheme (KDCS). The resolution also required the scheme to be “based primarily on national certification schemes,” with internationally required minimum standards for “the aim of securing the widest possible participation.” The resolution requested negotiations with the World Diamond Council (WDC), an oversight committee created by the diamond industry in July 2000, and the formation of an actual Kimberley Process working document by December 2001 (World Diamond Council). However, a final document was not produced until November 2002, and did not come into effect until January 1 of this year. During my May 29 interview with Corinna Gilfillan, a campaigner for Global Witness, Gilfillan
explained the delays, saying the process was so slow because any kind of industry self-regulation would fundamentally transform the entire diamond trade: “I think the whole Kimberley Process scheme is significantly changing the way the diamond industry works and how it’s traditionally operated, so there was a lot of resistance from the industry in making those kinds of changes.”

Despite the agonizingly slow speed of the process, the final Kimberley Process document is definitely helping to solve the conflict-diamond quagmire. In its essence, the KDCS “requires that each shipment of rough diamonds being exported and crossing an international border be transported in a tamper-resistant container and accompanied by a government-validated Kimberley Process Certificate. Each certificate should be resistant to forgery, uniquely numbered, and include data describing the shipment’s content” (World Diamond Council). In complying with Resolution 55/56, the Kimberley Process set up minimum standards for countries to be in compliance with the scheme. The fundamental criteria that must be met include that a governmental authority must be designated to be responsible for the scheme’s implementation, national legislation must be passed that complies with the KDCS, an agreement must be made to not trade rough diamonds with countries not in compliance with the KDCS, and a specimen of a Kimberley Process Certificate must be produced (“Kimberley Process Requirements”). At every border crossing, a new re-export certificate would be produced. Kimberley’s “system of warranties,” a set of assurances between sellers and buyers, would accompany the diamonds until they were cut and polished. Additionally, according to Gilfillan, an Internet database containing diamond trade statistics and headed by the Canadian government is currently under construction. This database will aid law enforcement in catching smugglers, as it will offer a comparison of a country’s imports and exports. Theoretically, the KDCS prevents conflict diamonds from ever crossing international borders, preventing a large flow of funds from entering African rebels’ hands.

However, the KDCS contains several shortcomings that prevent it from entirely eradicating the existence of conflict diamonds. One fundamental fault of the current scheme lies in the fact that many key players in the implementation of the “system of warranties” are not even aware that international diamond trading laws have changed. The education process is far too slow. According to Business Day, as late as last November, “The World Diamond Council, the industry’s trade body, has not made public, even to its own members, details of its self-regulation scheme” (“Jewelers in Darks”). However, the primary flaw in the Kimberley Process is a lack of monitoring; currently,
there is no system assessing how well, if at all, countries are complying with the provisions agreed upon in the KDCS. Said Gilfillan: “Interestingly enough, there [is not] really anyone making sure participants have even [the] minimum requirements.” Not only is there nobody checking to ensure that countries are following KDCS guidelines, but the Kimberley Process does not possess uniform procedures about what to do when a country is suspected of violation. Added Gilfillan: “There is a mechanism for [the UN] to call special review missions. … But we want regular monitoring of all participants’ diamond control systems, not just special review missions for specific countries, because we think for the process to work, every country has got to have an effective system.” Though fifty-eight countries have agreed to the conditions of the Kimberley Process, it offers no provisions for disciplinary action to be undertaken against nations that are not in compliance with the KDCS.¹⁴ Before the Kimberley Process can actually freeze the flow of conflict diamonds, these problems must be addressed.

Conflict Diamonds and the United States

According to CNN.com, sixty-five percent of the world’s diamonds are bought and sold in the United States, translating to four billion dollars a year domestically. To the United States, it quickly became imperative to address the conflict diamond problem in order to protect the incredibly lucrative trade and to fulfill the nation’s perceived moral obligation. Certainly, any kind of American legislation attempting to rid the diamond trade of conflict diamonds would have major ramifications throughout the industry. Working with US-based NGOs, Representative Tony Hall (D-OH) led the congressional fight against conflict diamonds. Attempting to preempt or jump-start the UN’s Kimberley Process, Hall introduced four bills between 1999 and 2001 that would have mandated that all imported diamonds carry a certificate from their country of origin. None of the four ever became law.¹⁵ The legislation’s next movement came earlier this year, as Representative Amo Houghton (R-NY) introduced H.R. 1584 to the House International Relations Committee. The bill, dubbed the Clean Diamond Trade Act, passed the House with only two nays and the Senate by unanimous agreement. President George W. Bush signed the Clean Diamond Trade Act into law on April 25.¹⁶

In essence, the Clean Diamond Trade Act demonstrates compliance with the Kimberley requirement that, to be considered a participant, a country must pass national legislation authorizing the implementation of the scheme. The Act does just that, making a law such that “[t]he President shall prohibit the importation into, or exportation from, the United States of any rough
diamond, from whatever source, that has not been controlled through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.” However, the Act does allow the president to make exceptions to this rule, which was the bill’s provision that delayed it for nearly two years. Instead of the United States automatically placing sanctions on all countries not complying with the KDCS, the president has the authority to choose not to place trade restrictions on any country that “is taking effective steps to implement” the KDCS, or on any occasion when sanctions would conflict with “the national interests of the United States.” The Clean Diamond Trade Act also provides for penalties for violators of the Act, “technical assistance” for nations having trouble implementing the KDCS, the publishing of statistics on imports and exports of rough diamonds, and annual reports “identifying any problems or obstacles encountered in the implementation of this Act” or with the KDCS in general.

Like the Kimberley Process, the well-intentioned United States’s Clean Diamond Trade Act has its limitations. For instance, giving the president the ability to decide to trade rough diamonds with countries that violate the KDCS seems to contradict the spirit of the Kimberley Process, which is to completely illegalize the trading of possible conflict diamonds. Moreover, the Act does not provide the American government with orders to create re-export certificates for rough diamonds, even though this country exports a great deal—200 million dollars’ worth of rough diamonds in 2000 alone (Tamm 30). But the Act’s most grievous omission is the lack of a provision helping to establish a monitoring arm for the Kimberley Process, a seemingly natural step for a nation that controls more than half of the world’s diamond trade and that could gain a fair amount by ensuring that all diamonds being sold within its borders derived from legitimate sources. Global Witness’s Gilfillan added that expanding governmental regulation and monitoring of the diamond industry would be inconsistent with this administration’s ideology: “I think it’s caught up in the broader political climate and agenda of the United States, but it’s also clear that it’s not a major issue for them, and they have not taken proactive leadership on it.”

POLICY PROPOSAL

Proposal

The campaign to eliminate conflict diamonds has made an outstanding level of progress within just the last two years. However, recent successes do not demonstrate a compelling argument to simply be content with the existing schemes and articles of legislation. For a variety of reasons, conflict diamonds
are bad for all involved in the diamond trade: the diamond industry, diamond importing and exporting nations, concerned NGOs, and especially for the countless millions in Africa who have been affected by the illicit diamond trafficking. Conflict diamonds are a source of egregious human rights violations. For this reason, although the existing Kimberley Process is a superb start, it should not stop evolving until the problem of conflict diamonds is eradicated. Therefore, I propose that the KDCS establish a monitoring arm to ensure that participating nations are in fact living up to their promises. Concurrently, the Kimberley Process must standardize participation requirements and create procedures to handle violators and non-compliers.

The Kimberley Process should in no way be replaced; instead, important additions should be made to what seems like a fairly effective international scheme. I believe that the current setup of the industry working with the UN, NGOs, and individual national governments collectively is the best way to impose realistic self-regulation upon the diamond trade. For this reason, I believe this same collection of groups should be the body responsible to set up and administer an oversight committee. This monitoring arm of the Kimberley Process would be responsible for ensuring that complying countries are actually meeting the agreed upon minimum requirements. Each participating country should be forced to send representatives to the monitoring committee every two months to report on the status of implementing the KDCS. If a nation’s representative testifies that compliance has hit a snag due to fiscal limitations, a pool of money from the industry and the other participating nations would be used to help the lagging country. The committee will place time restrictions to comply on a state-by-state basis, and if a country fails to meet them, it will be deemed to be not in compliance with the scheme. To discipline participating countries that do not meet time restrictions, or otherwise are not in accordance with the minimum requirements, the violating nation will pay a very small percentage of the worth of each diamond export to the committee until it is in compliance. In this manner, a country like the United States that does not officially produce re-export certificates will have the motive to do so.

This system would prevent future “special review missions” of the Kimberley Process, like the one currently taking place in the Central African Republic. Special missions would be unnecessary because each nation would need to give bimonthly reports to the monitoring group to be considered in compliance, or risk fines. The monitoring committee would also ensure that non-participating countries are not importing uncertified diamonds by checking the records of diamond-producing nations and making sure no exports go under the table. If a non-participant were caught, it would be reported to the
UN for violating one of several UN resolutions that embargo certain groups’
diamonds. This oversight committee’s job would be expensive, bureaucratic,
and time-consuming. But such a system, setting up disciplinary action
against nations that do not fully comply with the KDCS, is completely nec-
essary for the scheme to have any relevance at all. Corinna Gilfillan reported
that at the last plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process (last month in
Johannesburg) setting up some kind of oversight was the primary objective,
and no agreement was made. I think my system of mandatory reporting, and
fining for non-compliance, could be an acceptable solution.

Justification and Conclusion

Some may argue that between the KDCS coming so far so quickly and the
apparent resolution of civil wars in Angola, Sierra Leone, and, hopefully, the
DRC, there is little reason to continue putting additional time, effort, and
money into fighting conflict diamonds. There are several reasons to contin-
uue the battle against conflict diamonds. Global Witness reports that al Qaeda
holds twenty million dollars in diamonds illegally obtained from Sierra
Leone’s RUF (Mastrosimone). The diamond industry simply cannot let this
channeling of funds to terrorist groups continue. Furthermore, conflict dia-
monds represent only a small fraction of all illegally traded diamonds. As
much as twenty percent of the trade is in illicit trafficking (Tamm 7). A good
certification scheme with proper monitoring could cut this percentage dras-
tically, improving the economies of countries that depend heavily on dia-
monds as a source of income, such as Namibia and Botswana (Campbell
128).

Shady deals and human exploitation have gone hand-in-hand with the
diamond industry ever since the gems were discovered en masse in South
Africa in 1866. Although the conflict diamond problem has improved dra-
matically, even just in the last two years, one conflict diamond is too many.
My proposed oversight committee, properly implemented, would help to
eliminate completely the existence of conflict diamonds, shortening and even
preventing civil wars in diamond-producing nations. I wish those involved in
the implementation of the Kimberley Process well; they have a tough job
ahead of them. ♦
NOTES

1 All figures of the horrendous human costs of these three civil wars are as reported by Renner.
2 The United States’ prolonged presence in Angola even provoked one human rights group to state, “The US is heavily responsible for the death and suffering in Angola.”
3 The casualties figure is from Tony Hodges at Radio Netherlands; the money figure is from Drillbits & Tailings.
4 For the full text of this resolution, see <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1998/scres98.htm>.
5 For the full text of this resolution, see <http://www.un.int/usa/sres1306.htm>.
6 For the full text of this report, see <http://www.globalwitness.org/reports/show.php/en.00041.html>.
7 Rhodes soon formed a syndicate with ten of the largest South African diamond merchants, offering them a percentage of the diamonds in De Beers’s mines in return for information concerning the world diamond market (Tamm 3).
8 In 1994, the US Justice Department charged De Beers with price fixing in violation of antitrust laws. However, because De Beers is not located in the United States, its officers could not be subpoenaed. Because of the charges, no more than two De Beers officers can be in the US at the same time, owing to a loophole in antitrust laws that states that one can be subpoenaed only when conducting ongoing business, which is defined by having three officers in the country at one time (Campbell 117).
9 For the full text of this report, go to <http://www.globalwitness.org/reports/download.php/00046.doc>.
10 According to DiamondBlog.com, De Beers plans to open a second store on Fifth Avenue in New York by Christmas 2004. The company’s claim to sell only conflict-free diamonds of course discounts the diamonds that had been stockpiled, whose origins are undocumented.
12 This solution was much more practical than proposed alternatives such as placing a unique mark on every rough diamond with a laser or creating a database that stored the exact chemical composition of each individual stone (Campbell 131).
14 This number counts the European Union as a single nation. For a complete list of these countries, see <http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/news/info1.asp?id=26>.
15 The fourth of these bills was H.R. 2722 in August 2001, introduced after the passage of Resolution 55/56. This version passed the House by an overwhelming vote of 408 to 6, but stalled in the Senate owing to questions about how to properly place sanctions on non-complying nations in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks (Tamm).
16 For the complete text of the Clean Diamond Trade Act, see <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c108:5:/temp/-c108MfBJG\h::>.
WORKS CITED


Gilfillan, Corinna. Telephone interview. 23 May 2003.


SPRING 2003 HONORABLE MENTION

Jennifer Cribbs

INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

Jenny wrote the following essay for my PWR course, Apocalypse, Twilight, and Silence: The Rhetoric of the End. Suicide, she told me, was what she thought of as the ultimate apocalypse, the point at which an individual had been—grimly—successfully persuaded of the end. She therefore wanted to consider suicide as an artistic act, the ultimate act of personal expression—a speech act, if you will. Her paper began broadly, and developed through a series of often frustrated and difficult conversations with me about how to talk about something that was delicate, completely mysterious, and sometimes taboo. Out of these conversations came a more feminist perspective on suicide; Jenny became suspicious of the idea of suicide as art, and, as she wanted to consider Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, she began to wonder if there wasn’t something terribly linked to their womanness in their suicides. In her paper, she discovers that self-annihilation and artistic purpose are sometimes completely at odds in Plath’s and Sexton’s work, that their status as “suicides” masks their urgent politics and feminism. Jenny traces their oblique contributions to the women’s movement, maps the feminist discourse and imagery in their poetry, and concludes that these two poets must be rescued from their status as self-destroyers and madwomen. She then looks at a brief reception history of these two poets’ work and demonstrates that their reception has been inextricably and detrimentally tied to their suicides: reviewers cannot mention their art without mentioning their deaths, which Jenny cogently argues is telling it slant, and only seeing part of the project of these two complicated, maverick, and strong women. Although the voice in this paper is lucid, professional, and scholarly, there is something deeply personal about the essay which renders it all the more compelling—this is the work of a young female scholar echoing Adrienne Rich’s powerful wish that society recognize there is more than death at the end of a woman’s life.

—Kara Wittman
Sylvia Plath awoke early on the morning of February 11, 1963. She was in the habit of rising at four o’clock in the morning and quietly settling herself in front of the typewriter, where she would write until her children came downstairs, but this particular morning was not a morning for habit and routine—she had other plans. In the kitchen, Plath poured two glasses of milk for her children, then crept upstairs to their room and placed the milk and some bread on their bedside tables (Alvarez 37). Back in the kitchen, Plath sealed off the room as best she could by placing towels under the door and window. She wrote a brief note with her doctor’s phone number, swallowed most of her remaining sleeping pills, and knelt on the kitchen floor with her head in the oven and the gas turned on (Wagner-Martin 243). Around nine o’clock, a new au pair arrived but was unable to get into the house or rouse any of the neighbors. Nearly two hours later, some men arrived to do maintenance work on the building, and, alarmed by the smell of gas, they helped her force the door open. The girl ran to the kitchen, only to find Plath lying on the kitchen floor, already dead (Alvarez 37-38).

Eleven years later, the morning of October 4, 1974, dawned a warm Indian summer day in Weston, Massachusetts. On this particular morning, Anne Sexton stayed in bed as long as possible, until her friend Louise Conant arrived for breakfast and coffee. After breakfast, Sexton drove into Cambridge to meet with her psychiatrist and then her friend and fellow-poet Maxine Kumin. Over lunch, the two poets discussed Sexton’s recent poem “The Green Room” and the forthcoming publication of her latest collection *The Awful Rowing toward God*. When she arrived back at home that after-
noon, Sexton drank a few glasses of vodka, then began searching for her mother’s old fur coat in the closet. Wearing the coat, Sexton took another glass of vodka into the garage, where she sealed all the doors and sat in her old Cougar with the radio on and the engine running. The coroner assigned to the case ruled that the death was a suicide due to carbon monoxide poisoning (Middlebrook 395–397).

These two dramatic deaths have become legendary because they have changed the way critics interpret Plath’s and Sexton’s work and, together with John Berryman’s suicide, they had a profound impact on the relatively new genre of confessional poetry. The critic M. L. Rosenthal was among the first to use the label “confessional poetry” in the modern sense, in reference to Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies*, a collection of poems fully of references to mental illness, a theme that became characteristic of the confessional genre (Phillips 1). In his analysis entitled *The Confessional Poets*, Robert Phillips asserts that “[a]ll confessional art […] is a means of killing the beasts which are within us, those dreadful dragons of dreams and experiences that must be hunted down, cornered, and exposed in order to be destroyed” (2). Much of Plath’s and Sexton’s poetry fits within the confessional tradition of “killing the beasts within,” since both poets wrote extensively about their depressions, their neuroses, and their long-term fascination with death, particularly self-inflicted death. However, in a broader sense, confessional poetry describes any writing that focuses on intimate personal experience. Both Plath and Sexton describe the experience of being women in intimate detail, making the themes of motherhood and womanhood another dimension of the confessional mode in their poetry. However, Plath’s and Sexton’s attention to themes of womanhood transcends questions of genre and literary categorization by contributing to and being influenced by changing gender roles and feminist activism during the 1960s.

The women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s was partly a continuation of the earlier struggle for women’s rights exemplified by the women’s suffrage movement, and partly a reaction to the dominant male leadership in most liberal activist groups like the Black Panthers and the anti-draft movements (Albert and Albert 47). In 1968, the women’s liberation movement began to advocate gender equality within activist groups and within the larger society (Albert and Albert 47). The movement increased awareness of female sexuality and began to question standards of female beauty and the difference between jobs deemed appropriate for women versus those considered appropriate for men (Albert and Albert 48). The more moderate women’s movement continued the goals of the women’s liberation movement by promoting feminist scholarship, working to legalize abortion, and endors-
The women’s movement also drew attention to linguistic differences that reflect gender inequality, for example the use of “men” to refer to people in general. This linguistic insensitivity to gender even among social activists led many radical feminists to conclude that “the language of liberation was spoken on behalf of everyone who was oppressed—but not for women” (Albert and Albert 48). Some feminists remedied one such linguistic inequality by adopting the title Ms., as opposed to Miss or Mrs., because the traditional terms indicate a change in a woman’s marital status while the masculine title Mr. does not make a similar distinction. Influenced by this trend, Anne Sexton began calling herself Ms. Dog, a name that suggests power through the feminist title and the fact that “Dog” is a palindrome of God (Kumin xxx). Maxine Kumin writes that Sexton was becoming “increasingly aware of the Women’s Movement” and in using Ms. Dog “there was a wonderful impudence in naming herself a kind of liberated female deity” (xxx). Such minor changes in language demonstrate how words can influence self-concept and modes of thinking in ways that complement a political movement.

Women writers also embraced language as a means of liberation in a more comprehensive way: Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* helped establish basic feminist beliefs that laid the foundation for women’s organizations fighting for equality and basic rights. In addition to providing an intellectual framework for feminist thought, these texts helped inspire and unify women in their political objectives. In this respect, women’s bookstores served as centers for feminist thought and provided a forum for exchanging ideas about women’s issues (Freedman 305-306). Even apolitical women’s literature and poetry played an important role in the history of feminist thought, because it helped develop a language for the expression of women’s experiences and thereby increased public awareness of the issues raised by women’s writing.

Neither Plath nor Sexton formally identified with the women’s movement, but both poets addressed many feminist themes simply by writing extensively about being women. At the time, most female poets accepted the notion that to write well and be recognized as a writer required adopting standard poetic forms and acceptable themes that had already been determined by their male predecessors. By making women’s issues acceptable within the context of mainstream literature, Diane Middlebrook argues, Plath’s and Sexton’s writing questioned the role of the poet as “the masculine chief of state in charge of dispensing universal spiritual truths” that apply to men and women alike (qtd. in Kumin xxxiii). Instead of trying to adopt the tone of dispenser of “universal spiritual truths,” Plath and Sexton represent a dis-
tinctly feminine voice in a male-dominated field. They adopted and expanded the language of feminism to allow for fuller expression of women’s experiences, and, by making these experiences acceptable themes within mainstream literature, they contributed to the goals of the women’s movement. However, Plath’s and Sexton’s suicides inspired the creation of a posthumous legend that unduly influenced critical interpretations of their work and ultimately undermined their constructive contributions to the feminist cause.

Understanding Plath’s and Sexton’s poetry requires deemphasizing legends constructed after their deaths and returning to the writing itself. In many of her poems, Sexton challenges the abstract style and predominantly male perspective in traditional poetry by directly describing the female body. In “Ghosts,” Sexton writes, “some ghosts are women, neither abstract nor pale” (lines 1–2). Although ghosts are typically portrayed as disembodied phantoms, Sexton gives her ghosts distinctly female bodies, as evidenced by “their breasts as limp as killed fish,” a phrase that provides physical description yet avoids portraying the breast as part of an idealized representation of the female body (3). In an even bolder reclamation of the body, she uses the womb as the central image of “In Celebration of My Uterus.” In the first stanza, Sexton’s persona addresses her uterus directly: “they wanted to cut you out / but they will not” (3–4). Sexton’s use of enjambment creates tension between the medical establishment and the poem’s female persona. The emphatic “they will not” asserts a woman’s sense of control over her own body and challenges the authority of the (presumably male) doctors who recommend a hysterectomy. Sexton further develops the tension between these two opposing forces with the lines: “they said you were immeasurably empty / but you are not” (5–6). The structure of these lines parallels the dichotomy between medical knowledge, which diagnoses the uterus as unhealthy and useless, and self knowledge, which asserts that the uterus is neither torn nor “empty” (182). In the lines “they said you were sick unto dying / but they were wrong,” Sexton first questions the doctors’ diagnosis, then more directly undermines their authority by asserting “they were wrong” (7–8). The poem goes on to become a “celebration of the woman I am / and of the soul of the woman I am,” a celebration that helps create a feminist identity, an identity that unites “many women [who] are singing together” in “Arizona,” “Russia,” “Egypt,” “Thailand,” and across the world (12–13, 27, 32–34, 37). This new female identity, represented by the image of women’s voices coming together and the resistance to the authority of the male-dominated medical institution, reflects the feminist objectives of women’s empowerment and organization of resistance into a unified voice. Sexton’s method of describing women’s bodies as part of the female identity led writer and critic Muriel
Rukeyser to conclude that “In Celebration of My Uterus” is “one of the few poems in which a woman [has become] the center [of the poem] after many years of silence and taboo” (qtd. in Kumin xxi).

Breaking cultural taboos and years of silence drew some praise like Rukeyser’s review, but it also inspired negative reactions from critics because many of Sexton’s poems about women’s bodies and women’s lives question the entrenched patriarchy of the literary establishment and the extent to which a poetic tradition based on abstract concepts and predominantly male voices can speak for women. Many critics considered this break with tradition an example of poor literary taste. In a *New York Times* book review of Sexton’s *All My Pretty Ones*, James Dickey wrote, “It would be hard to find a writer who dwells more insistently on the pathetic and disgusting aspects of bodily experience” (qtd. in Kumin xx). In her later collection *Live or Die*, Sexton again uses bodily experience as the central image in poems like “Menstruation at Forty.” Sexton describes menstruation as “two days gone in blood” and uses the image to address the feeling of emptiness that comes from losing the blood and uterine lining that had the potential to create a new life. This emphasis on bodily experience apparently disgusted critic Louis Simpson as well, prompting him to write in a review for *Harper’s* that “Menstruation at Forty” was “the straw that broke this camel’s back” (qtd. in Kumin xix-xx). Such vehement reactions against Sexton’s poetry show that she broke away from literary conventions and addressed what people at the time considered controversial and taboo subjects.

Although generally less explicit in her description of women’s bodies, Sylvia Plath also contributed to the break with male-dominated literary tradition by focusing on women’s experiences. The theme of motherhood permeates much of Plath’s work; for example, the title “Morning Song” refers to a child’s cry. She writes, “One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow heavy and floral / In my Victorian nightgown. / Your mouth opens clean as a cat’s” (14–16). Plath describes the intimate connection between mother and infant by focusing on the experience of nursing a child, its open mouth “clean as a cat’s,” waiting for its mother. Plath’s realistic description of the exhausted “cow heavy” mother avoids casting the poem’s persona as an idealized archetypal mother. Much of her poetry centers on the everyday experience of caring for her children and watching them play. In “Balloons,” Plath describes these “Globes of thin air, red, green, / Delighting / the heart” from the point of view of a child who “seem[s] to see / A funny pink world he might eat on the other side” but ends up with “A red / Shred in his little fist” after biting the balloon’s thin skin (15–16, 24–25, 30–31). Plath elevates these simple children’s playthings to the status of poetry by focusing on the child’s per-
ception of another world, or globe, and the small apocalyptic end of that “pink world.” These ordinary moments of nursing and caring for a child describe motherhood in a personal and intimate way that departs from traditional literary and artistic representations of mothers and children. Plath’s poetic descriptions of women’s everyday experiences affirm the importance of women’s lives and give them a place within the poetic tradition alongside the epic battles, love sonnets, and philosophical ruminations of the male-oriented poetic canon.

In other poems, Plath’s writing takes on a more overtly feminist tone when she expresses anger and resentment of traditional gender roles within a patriarchal society. For example, “Lesbos” takes place in the kitchen, but a kitchen unlike the warm, comfortable, aromatic kitchens kept by stereotypical 1950s housewives. Instead, this kitchen becomes a place of pain and suffering caused by endless work and “[t]he fluorescent light wincing on and off like a terrible migraine” (30). Plath describes this sense of hostility as “Viciousness in the kitchen!” (1). Even “[t]he potatoes hiss,” contributing to the feeling of anger in the poem, anger caused in part by resentment of the notion that a woman’s place is in the home, particularly in the kitchen (2). By the end of the poem the kitchen contains “[t]he smog of cooking, the smog of hell,” suggesting that the domestic routine has become oppressive for a woman who is forced to be a housewife and caretaker of others without concern for her own well-being, aspirations, and talents (35). “The Applicant” expresses similar resentment of a woman’s place in a patriarchal society. Plath sarcastically describes the process of marriage and courtship as an application process beginning with an appraisal of the prospective wife’s body: “Do you wear / A glass eye, false teeth or a crutch, / A brace or a hook, / Rubber breasts or a rubber crotch” (2-5). This crude appraisal of the woman’s physical endowments makes her seem like an object or an animal being sold at auction. Plath reinforces this dehumanization with the refrain “Will you marry it?,” implying that the potential wife is not a woman (her), but rather an object (it) (15, 23, 41; emphasis mine). Through both poetic descriptions of women’s daily experiences and caustic criticism of gender roles within a male-dominated society, Plath, like Sexton, helped lay a foundation for the feminist thought that informed the women’s movement.

Despite Plath’s and Sexton’s significant literary contributions to the women’s movement, the mainstream media and many literary critics ignored their influence on the language and ideas of feminism partly because both poets committed suicide. Media coverage of the suicides promoted the image of Plath and Sexton as suicidal artists, an image that has grown into a legend and influenced literary interpretations of their work to the point of over-
shadowing other themes. Consequently, Sexton’s and Plath’s suicides, and the public reaction to their deaths, undermined their contributions to the feminist cause, because critics and readers tend to focus on suicide and madness in both poets’ work while ignoring their writing on being women.

After Sylvia Plath’s suicide in February of 1963, media portrayals and literary criticism began to construct an image of Plath as a creative yet unstable artist. In his 1966 introduction to *Ariel*, Robert Lowell describes Plath as “hardly a person at all, or a woman, certainly not another ‘poetess,’ but one of those super-real hypnotic, great classical heroines” (vii). Lowell elevates Plath to the status of “heroine” but at the same time denies her identity as a woman and minimizes the importance of the feminist themes that she addresses in her poetry. By denying Plath’s other identities as a woman, a wife, and a mother, Lowell contributes to the “myth of the poet as a sacrificial victim, offering herself up for the sake of her art, having been dragged by the Muses to that final altar through every kind of distress” (Alvarez 40). The perpetuation of this myth casts Plath as a fictional character whose role is that of the victim destined to die. Alvarez adds, “in these terms, her suicide becomes the whole point of her story, the act which validates her poems, gives them their interest and proves her seriousness” (40). George Stade’s comments in his introduction to *A Closer Look at Ariel* also reflect the idea that suicide is the sole purpose of Plath’s poetry. He writes:

> Our knowledge of her suicide comments on the poetry as we read it. The image of the poet that rises out of the poetry […] wears the aspect of her fate. Our knowledge of her suicide not only clarifies what she said and what she meant—it also certifies that she meant what she said. (Stade 3)

This common interpretation suggests that the suicide makes Plath’s work more legitimate and truthful. A. Alvarez, a poetry critic and friend of Plath’s, disagrees, asserting that “the suicide adds nothing at all to the poetry” (40). Alvarez adopts this point of view in part because he believes that Plath’s suicide was a mistake, a suicide attempt from which she expected to be rescued (if the au pair had been able to enter the flat at nine o’clock when she arrived, she might have been able to call the doctor in time since Plath left his number next to the stove) (Alvarez 38). In light of this interpretation of Plath’s suicide as an accident, Alvarez writes, “The pity is not that there is a myth of Sylvia Plath, but that the myth is not simply that of an enormously gifted poet whose death came carelessly, by mistake and too soon” (40).

After Anne Sexton’s suicide on October 4, 1974, media coverage of her death set the tone for her poetic legacy. The first article printed in the *New York Times* on the subject of Sexton’s death appeared on October 6 in the obituary section of the newspaper. A short supplement to this initial article
appeared in the same section on October 9 under the heading “Anne Sexton Ruled Suicide.” The placement of both articles in the obituary section and the focus on her suicide with little mention of her writing implied that it was Sexton’s death that made her noteworthy, not her poetry, and thus began the trend of considering her role as a suicide victim more important than her role as a constructive artist. The first article, entitled “Anne Sexton Dies; Pulitzer Poet, 45,” reports that “Anne Sexton fashioned her art out of anguish, breakdown, and a preoccupation with death.” In describing Sexton’s poetry, this reporter identifies mental illness and suicidal thoughts as the defining characteristics of Sexton’s poetry, ignoring the characteristic theme of womanhood. In the same article, the reporter adds that Sexton’s poetry “was ranked alongside that of Mr. Lowell and Sylvia Plath, the poet who died by suicide in 1963 […].” The reporter also chooses to define Plath by the fact that she committed suicide, even eleven years after her death.

Later that month, Anne Sexton’s suicide remained her defining feature. In an October 27 article entitled “Remembering Anne Sexton,” Sexton’s friend Erica Jong identifies suicide as the characteristic theme in Sexton’s poetry when she writes that “she dealt with suicide and death in all her books.” This emphasis ignores the themes of womanhood also prevalent in her work, an omission that becomes even clearer when Jong expresses her opinion that Sexton’s poems “will be understood in time—not as ‘women’s poetry’ or ‘confessional poetry’—but as myths that expand the human consciousness.” In this tribute to Sexton, Jong suggests that Sexton’s poetry transcends genres of poetry and contributes to human knowledge and consciousness, but by praising Sexton in this way, Jong separates Sexton’s work from the genre and themes of women’s poetry. Her implication that Sexton’s consciousness-expanding poetry is not women’s poetry reflects the traditional belief that meaningful poetry is universal and androgynous, thus denying the importance of uniquely female experiences in great poetry. Towards the end of her article, Jong writes, “I hate to add her to that list [of authors who committed suicide], but I think she belonged there and she knew it.” By referring to the idea of “belonging” on a list of suicide victims, Jong suggests that Sexton was destined to commit suicide, implying that she had little choice about her own death. The idea of being a destined suicide victim establishes a posthumous persona for Sexton that focuses on the tragic aspects of her life and work, especially illness and suicide. Articles in mainstream media that define Sexton as a suicide victim contribute to the image of Sexton as an unstable suicidal poet, an image that does not mesh easily with the image of Sexton as an influential and constructive feminist writer.

 Literary criticism of Sexton’s work frequently emphasizes themes of sui-
cide and mental illness over feminist themes. In a *New York Times* book review of Anne Sexton’s first book of poetry, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, Thomas Lask wrote that “its hub has a natural, built-in interest: a mental breakdown, pictured with a pitiless eye and clairvoyant sharpness.” Lask identifies mental breakdown, not the more universal experience of being a woman, as the “natural interest” in these poems. Lask’s review and others that came out shortly after the publication of Sexton’s first collection established a precedent of literary criticism focused on Sexton’s suicidal poetry. Diana Hume George, an eminent critic of Sexton’s work, continues the trend of emphasizing the suicidal nature of Sexton’s poetry in an analysis of *Letters to Dr. Y*. In this series of poems dealing with the patient-therapist relationship, George suggests that “the recurring theme of the speaker-patient’s sessions with the analyst is suicide” (31). Reviews and analyses that portray illness and suicidal thoughts as the central theme of Sexton’s poetry tend to make her poems read like extended ruminations on death.

This emphasis on suicide as the primary subject of Sexton’s poetry fails to recognize that suicide often works as a literary device for examining other issues, including the affirmation of a woman’s power over her own body and psyche. Although she acknowledges that *Letters to Dr. Y* constitutes “a body of poetry on suicide that is unique in modern American verse,” Diana Hume George’s interpretation suggests that suicide may be a means for examining other subjects, including feminism and protest (31). George’s analysis focuses on “the connection of the death wish to a specifically feminine desire for power and control; and deeper still, an ironic relationship of the death wish to a protest against human mortality” (32). In this view, suicide becomes a way of protesting the human condition, and more specifically the female condition. George writes that “the voices of ‘June 6, 1967’ present a clearly gendered imaging of death” (35). The male voices represented by the sword and the whip contrast with the feminine images of leaves and fertility embodied by the green girls who advocate suicide (35). Sexton further explained these two kinds of death in a letter to her friend Anne Wilder: “When […] death takes you and puts you through the wringer it’s a man. But when you kill yourself, it’s a woman” (qtd. in George 35). Sexton associates slow painful death with a male figure and quick, self-controlled death with a female figure. She sets up a choice between allowing death to squeeze life out of her or taking control over her own destiny. Presented in this context, “suicide becomes a way of claiming power when she feels powerless,” meaning that, in an odd way, Sexton uses suicide as a symbol for female liberation and control over one’s own life (George 35).

Sexton partially resolves this problematic representation of suicide
through her focus on healing in the Dr. Y poems. Sexton’s style brings techniques like free association from therapy into poetry, demonstrating a “concrete interpenetration of poetry and psychoanalytic method” (31). The attention to themes of therapy and healing lead George to conclude that “Sexton certainly intended a progress from sickness toward cure” (32). While many of Sexton’s poems, like the Dr. Y series, deal with suicide as the central theme, the suicidal impulses may represent other concepts like the balance of power between the two genders and the psychoanalytic process and eventual cure.

Sylvia Plath also used suicide as a device for addressing other issues. In *The Savage God*, Alvarez suggests that Plath considered suicide “an act she felt she had a right to as a grown woman and a free agent,” an act that could “demonstrate her omnipotence and invulnerability” (20, 32). This interpretation suggests that Plath, like Sexton, associated suicide with freedom and autonomy, particularly autonomy for women. She writes in “Edge,” “The woman is perfected. Her dead / body wears the smile of accomplishment” (84). Although the relationship between female perfection and suicide seems to suggest an idealized predestined suicide, Alvarez rejects the image of Plath as a destined suicide victim by arguing that “the myth of Sylvia as a passive victim is a total perversion of the woman she was […] it misses the courage with which she was able to turn disaster into art” (40). In “Lady Lazarus,” the poem’s persona commits suicide, but the image of resurrection opposes the image of destruction. In this case, Plath writes about suicide “as something survived, even surpassed” (Alvarez 31). Alvarez suggests that writing about her self-destructive impulses may have helped Plath survive “because she knew she was salvaging something rather marvelous” from her sufferings (40).

In other poems, Plath uses suicide to address the challenges of women’s lives in a more specific way. In “Cut,” she writes, “What a thrill— / My thumb instead of an onion. / The top quite gone / except for a sort of a hinge / Of skin” (13). The poem later refers to suicide—as evidenced by Plath’s reference to a “Kamikaze man” and the persona’s assertion: “I am ill. / I have taken a pill to kill”—but Plath also addresses the feminist theme of questioning gender roles (14, 13). The poem’s persona is so bored and unsatisfied with the monotony of working in the kitchen and chopping onions that even the painful experience of slicing off the top of her thumb produces a thrill. The excitement of the cut critiques the traditional division of labor and delegation of the woman to the role of homemaker, by revealing the housewife’s boredom and resentment that can lead to self-harm and even suicide.

Although suicidal rhetoric may serve as a literary device for expressing anger and frustration about women’s social roles, society does not consider suicide itself a feminist act but rather an act of insanity and violence.
Consequently, the close relationship between suicidal imagery and feminist themes in Plath’s and Sexton’s work poses a problem for feminists like Adrienne Rich and Denise Levertov, who recognize the power of Plath’s and Sexton’s writing but are concerned about implying that creativity, suicide, and feminism are closely related. In an essay written shortly after Anne Sexton’s suicide, Rich notes that Sexton was not a “self-defined feminist,” but some of her writing was “ahead of the rebirth of the feminist movement” (121). Although she acknowledges Sexton’s feminist themes, Rich praises Sexton’s work only cautiously because she worries that the “identification which a suicide always arouses” could encourage other women to copy Sexton’s suicide (121). In an essay also written a few weeks after Sexton’s suicide, Denise Levertov expresses similar concern “that Anne Sexton’s tragedy will not be without influence in the tragedies of other lives” (80). She explains this point by referring to Sylvia Plath’s death eleven years before:

I have heard many stories of attempted—and sometimes successful—suicides by young students who loved the poetry of Plath and who supposed that somehow, in order to become poets themselves, they had to act out in their own lives the events of hers. I don’t want to see a new epidemic of the same syndrome occurring as a response to Anne Sexton’s death. (80)

In considering Plath’s and Sexton’s deaths, Levertov and Rich worry that the suicides of two of the most influential female poets of the era set a precedent of suicide as the only option for women who do not conform to societal expectations of what they can do with their lives. Although this may sound like martyrdom to feminist principles, suicide cannot further the feminist agenda because, in addition to causing women’s deaths, most people would interpret the act as senseless, self-inflicted violence against women rather than a constructive political statement.

Because of this problematic relationship between feminism and suicide, Plath and Sexton’s legacy as suicidal artists undermines the effect of their poetry on feminist thought by making it difficult for feminists to claim their work as a foundation for women’s expression. Rich handles the issue by firmly asserting that “we have had enough suicidal women poets, enough suicidal women, enough self-destructiveness as the sole form of violence permitted to women” (122). By taking a clear stance against suicide and rejecting the belief that suicide and feminism are related, Rich frees herself to describe Sexton’s work as a guide that “tells us what we have to fight [against], in ourselves and in the images patriarchy has held up to us […,] a guide […] from which we learn what women have lived and what we must refuse to live any longer” (123). Rich claims Plath’s and Sexton’s poetry as part of a feminist tradition only after minimizing the importance of their deaths and distancing feminist
movements from the idea of suicide.

The myth of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton as suicidal poets affects interpretation of their work in ways that extend beyond the recognition of feminist themes in their work. The tragic legend of Plath and Sexton creates an equally problematic relationship between creativity and suicidal ideation. Although readers tend to associate intensely emotional and even suicidal states with creativity, Denise Levertov writes that “self-destructiveness is a handicap to the life of art” (81). She demands that readers recognize that “Anne Sexton was an artist even though she had to struggle so hard against her desire of death,” not because she had to fight against suicidal impulses (86). Yet mass media and historical records show an unusually large number of suicides among artists, writers, and other highly creative individuals. Professor of psychiatry Kay Jamison has conducted historical and statistical research that suggests a “compelling association […] between the artistic and the manic-depressive [temperaments]” (Touched with Fire 5). This implies a similar association between suicide and creativity since “90 to 95 percent of people who committed suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric illness, often manic-depression” (Jamison, Night Falls Fast 100). However, Jamison supports Levertov’s view by noting that the two temperaments overlap but do not coincide completely and by emphasizing the “need for discipline, control, and highly reasoned thought” in order for creativity to occur (6). In interpreting the work of any artist or writer who committed suicide, we must distinguish between the creative work and the suicide, remembering that suicide affects public perception of the author, but does not change what s/he intended to write in a previous work.

The effect of Anne Sexton’s and Sylvia Plath’s suicides on the interpretation of their work is part of the larger debate about the extent to which we, as readers, should rely on biographical information to interpret a writer’s work. This question becomes particularly relevant when considering the work of the confessional poets, who wrote so extensively about their personal lives. Biographical information and popular myths about Plath’s and Sexton’s suicides influence the interpretation of their poetry to the point of detracting from other themes in their work and making their poetry read like an extended series of suicide notes. However, examination of the poems themselves reveals feminist themes expressed both forcefully and subtly through the presence of a distinct female voice, descriptions of women’s bodies, and attention to women’s experiences. Plath’s and Sexton’s poetry is not directly political, but it complemented the goals of the women’s movement by giving women a place within the poetic tradition and by contributing to a foundation of feminist thought and expression. In examining the relation-
relationship between women's poetry and politics, Maxine Kumin writes that “before there was a Women's Movement, the underground river was already flowing, carrying such diverse cargoes as the poems of Bogan, Levertov, Rukeyser, Swenson, Plath, Rich, and Sexton” (xxxiii). This underground river was a steady stream of language that recognized women's experiences and helped inspire other women to write or to organize and demand change. Plath's and Sexton's place within the context of this “underground” current of feminism also influenced their own thinking and writing; consequently, the way they died should not overshadow the equally, or perhaps more, important context of feminist thought that informed their lives.

WORKS CITED


When Kee expressed an interest in exploring the history of Singapore and Malaysia, I could not help much beyond asking a few curious questions and waving my hand toward the Hoover Archives in hope that he would find an appropriate gold mine. When he returned with reports of the communist pamphlets he had discovered, I was skeptical as to whether these really provided adequate material for analysis, particularly given that the communist movement had ultimately failed. Whenever I voiced my doubts, he calmly persisted in explaining that yes, he truly believed the topic was relevant, and thought that there was sufficient material to explore. I did not realize how sophisticated his analysis would be, however, until I actually saw his draft, and understood that this is not simply the analysis of one small, failed movement, but that it raises broader questions of historiography: as Kee explains, when history is written by the victors, we lose perspective on the sometimes surprising or even overwhelming successes of those who may have won several “rhetorical” battles, even though they ultimately lost the war. By examining closely how the rhetoric of the Malayan communists, who were dismissed by history as simpleminded, actually demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of audience, Kee resurrects their successes and reminds us how sensitivity to rhetorical situations is a force to be reckoned with—in this instance, by one of the most powerful militaries history has known.

—Melissa Blum
Exploring the “Communist” in the Communist Insurrection in Malaya

Rui Xiong Kee

My uncle is a jovial company executive, a loving family man, a loyal Singaporean. He is sixty years old and quintessentially avuncular. Yet forty years ago, he was a Communist, back in the days when Communism was synonymous with government subversion. Just as his gentle demeanor belies his colorful past, so too the peace that Singapore and Malaysia enjoy today gives no clue to the violent chapters of their history.1 One such chapter was the years between 1948 and 1960, known as the Malayan Emergency, when the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) sought to overthrow the British colonial government through a guerrilla war. How did Malaya, an erstwhile “contented paradise,” become embroiled in a bloody battle between the Communists and the government (Barber 14)? How did a quiet, politically inactive people—people much like my uncle—get drawn into belligerent Communism?

Books on the Emergency answer that circumstances were the reason for the people supporting Communism. The public was unhappy with the colonial government and was thus ready to revolt. However, discontent is one thing, and armed insurrection is quite another. Could it be that situational factors were the only reason for the malevolent twist in the character of this country, its people, and indeed, my uncle? There seemed to be something missing in the line of reasoning found in these books.

This particular inadequacy in the analysis of these books reflects their bias: they feature heavy emphasis on and praise for the British. Focus is placed on the government’s counter-insurgency efforts, including kudos for successful propaganda measures to win the “hearts and minds” of the people (Short 416). Conversely, there is a lack of emphasis on and a negative appraisal of the MCP. Not only is less time devoted to addressing how the MCP managed to ignite the rebellion, but its propaganda is also dismissed as inef-
fectual. Viewed from this British-influenced perspective, the MCP could not have played a large part in building support for the insurrection. This role is thus handed to circumstances instead.

To gain a holistic understanding of how the MCP’s uprising began, the uprising must be viewed from the Communist perspective as well. True enough, the examination of primary sources of MCP propaganda that is presented below unearthed evidence that, contrary to what the abovementioned books opine, the sources of Communist support were not simply circumstance but also persuasion. Communist propaganda’s merits have been overlooked and underestimated, and its role in garnering support for the MCP and maintaining internal morale was in fact a significant one. Through its simple tone and its ability to target precisely what appealed most to its audience, MCP propaganda proved to be an essential ingredient for Communist support. These insights from the Communist perspective expand my understanding of my uncle’s past. They also have implications for Singapore’s and Malaysia’s pasts, and their futures as well. More universally, they serve as a reminder to us of the need to view history from all angles.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

Before examining the propaganda of the MCP, we first have to understand the setting within which it existed—the Malayan Emergency. The twelve-year-long guerrilla war was launched by the MCP in the wee hours of June 16, 1948, with the planned assassination of three British plantation managers in different locations across Malaya. Outraged by the inability of the British government to prevent such wanton killing, the Straits Times of the following day contained an editorial headlined “Govern or Get Out” (qtd. in Stubbs 67). This sparked an instant response from the government, which declared a State of Emergency, granting it powers to, for instance, search and arrest without warrant. This was a declaration of war against the Communists.

The MCP found initial success in the early years of the Emergency. Their aim was the installation of a Communist government in Malaya, which they hoped to achieve in two ways. The first method was to create sufficient menace to discredit the British government while hoping to inspire a mass uprising with these displays of power (Clutterbuck 170). To this end, progress was marked by the increase in frequency of Communist mischief (disrupting plantations’ operations, ambushing policemen) from about one thousand incidents in 1948 to six thousand in 1951 (Hack 224). The other method was more direct: trying to amass area under Communist control. In
this respect they experienced less success, as they were outnumbered by
British policemen and troops by a two-to-one ratio and required the cover of
the jungles to preserve their numbers. Nevertheless, they elicited a sufficient
mix of fear and respect from the people near the jungle regions to exert lim-
ited control over them (Gwee 40).

The MCP had two main branches. The first was its army, comprised of
five thousand men encamped in the Malayan jungles. These fighters
employed guerrilla tactics, striking and melting back into the jungles, and
were the direct actuators of insurgency activity (Barber 31). The second was
known as the Min Yuen or the “Mass Movement,” consisting of normal cit-
izens who would back up the army by providing food, money, and informa-
tion (Barber 33). Both groups drew their support predominantly from the
Chinese population, particularly Chinese villagers living near the edges of
jungles within which the MCP’s various military units were based. The MCP
received almost no support from the Malays and Indians because it was never
able to breach the racial barrier built up by its having roots in the Communist
Party in China.

The MCP’s initial success reflected the effectiveness of its elusive army
element. However, the foundation for such activities was always the supplies
provided by the Min Yuen. Therefore, it was no surprise that the subsequent
decline of the MCP from 1951 onwards was in tandem with waning support
from the Min Yuen. The fear generated by its terrorist attacks had pressured
villagers into sustaining the MCP in the short term but lost them support in
the long term (O’Ballance 113). This meant the cutoff of food sources vital
to the MCP’s campaign, and it was most keenly felt after 1951, when the
Briggs Plan was instituted. This plan resettled villagers under threat of MCP
coercion in newly set up villages protected by policemen, severing contact
between the MCP and its supply sources. The MCP never adapted success-
fully to this setback. Despite a change in directive to treat villagers with
respect and to attack only military targets, the MCP never recovered the loy-
alty of the villagers who still remained (Brimmell 23). This was primarily
because its new directive was largely ignored. In the words of a prominent
MCP member following his surrender, the MCP persisted in “doing all kinds
of things to make the people become our enemies” (Ramakrishna 52). Thus,
the Communist insurrection fell into decline after the implementation of the

The history of the Emergency has often been evaluated from the point
of view of the counter-insurgency effort, making heroes of the government
officials who were involved (Stenson 31). While it is well and good to under-
stand the right strategy of counter-insurgency, it is perhaps unsurprising that
the British ultimately prevailed, given the resources they had at hand. What is more surprising, and requires as much analysis, is how the Communists managed to generate support for the war. Yet there seems to be comparatively less said regarding this. This might well be due to a lack of researchers “capable of critical analysis of both Chinese and British sources,” resulting in a disproportionate focus on issues addressed by British documents (Stenson 31). It is this imbalance that my examination of MCP propaganda hopes to address.

THE ALLEGATION: CIRCUMSTANCES DREW PEOPLE TO COMMUNISM

Nevertheless, the origins of Communist support have been analyzed to a certain extent in various sources, and the validity of their views on this issue must also be evaluated. Their explanation is that the conditions which faced the people of Malaya, in particular the rural Chinese from whom the MCP drew the most support, led them to become Communists. One such circumstance was that the police had gained a reputation for cruelty that alienated the public and brought it closer to the side of the Communists (Stubbs 72). The Communists also benefited from the fact that the people felt disassociated from the government and lacked personal contact with its representatives (Stubbs 77). This made it easier to convince them to adopt an anti-governmental stance. Finally, the importance of family and friendship ties to the Chinese meant that the Communists could gain support from personal connections with the larger Chinese community, which supported the individuals, as opposed to the Communist Party (Stubbs 90-91). Underlying these explanations of MCP support, which emphasized the conditions favoring the MCP, was the implication that the MCP did nothing on its part to gain this support.

Books arguing that circumstances were the only factor behind the MCP’s support buttress this thesis by portraying MCP propaganda as ineffectual and thus incapable of contributing to the building up of this support. According to Ramakrishna, an indication of the MCP propaganda machine’s shortcomings was its failure to provide a political education to the masses in order to win their support (32). The Communist leaders were also dismissed as “lacking brains” by C. C. Too, a propaganda expert employed by the British government, insinuating that they could not produce convincing propaganda (Ramakrishna 32).
IN DEFENSE OF THE EFFICACY OF MCP PROPAGANDA

There are, however, grounds from which to argue against these criticisms of MCP propaganda, as well as against the theory that the MCP’s initial support was entirely born of circumstance.

First, it can be argued that while it is true that there were certain external factors leading the rural Chinese population to have pro-Communist feelings, it was clear that an additional push would be needed to convert these feelings into the tangible acts of supporting the MCP or joining its army. The British scornfully described the Chinese as sitting on the fence, yet this meant that even though the Chinese were not actively helping the British, neither were they automatically Communist supporters. The majority of Chinese were intent on “keeping far away from both sides,” more concerned about self-preservation than throwing their lot in behind the Communists even if they were disgruntled with the government (Barber 67). Thus, the MCP could not have simply been gifted with its membership by fortuitous circumstances. Instead, it still had to work, through propaganda, to convince the population to back them. The charge that conditions were favorable to MCP support, thus, does not negate the value of MCP propaganda.

Furthermore, the theory that circumstances led to MCP support does not explain how the MCP managed to maintain its numbers during the course of the Emergency. In total, the MCP lost 6,710 members in the twelve years of the Emergency. As reports of these losses reached the ears of the people and party, clearly people were no longer going to be easily drawn into Communist support. It was then that the role propaganda played, in continuing to attract members and prevent desertion, came to the fore.

The “dim-witted” Communists were also to have the last laugh in response to C. C. Too’s disdainful comments, as the unsophisticated yet highly personal and accessible nature of Communist propaganda was to be one of its main assets. How this and other positive features of MCP propaganda were effectively employed, we shall investigate below.

COUNTERCLAIMS OF THE USEFULNESS OF PROPAGANDA

Having pointed out the flaws in the “thesis of circumstances,” a new thesis, that propaganda was in fact an effective tool, must be advanced and proved. This can be approached from two angles. One way is to begin by pointing out that the criticisms of MCP propaganda have focused on it as a tool to gain external support but have overlooked the importance of propaganda in
building up internal morale. The claim that “it was of negligible value” can already be undermined by highlighting that despite its relative ineffectiveness externally, propaganda was nevertheless a crucial instrument for internal purposes (McHugh 26). However, we can also argue from a second perspective that, upon closer examination, MCP propaganda was in fact effective externally, in courting the support of the people.

Clearly, then, the functions of MCP propaganda were dual: first, it served an external function to reach out to the general population to recruit new members for the Min Yuen as well as its army; second, it served an internal function to maintain morale within the party. Certain features of MCP propaganda lent themselves to the advancement of both these causes. The most basic of these is simply the fact that propaganda was produced. The MCP’s “very great output of competent […] newssheets in all local languages” indicated its strength to both people and party (McHugh 26). The deliveries of the biweekly newsletters signaled that the Communist cause was still alive and well, inspiring confidence. “Shock Troops Distributed Pamphlets in Schools” proclaimed one headline, broadcasting it as an achievement.

The highly accessible style of the newsletters also appealed to the masses, as well as to party members. They were written, plainly and simply, in the vernacular and in a matter-of-fact tone, showing that the MCP was connected to the people. Each article in the newsletter also had the author’s name by the side, with some articles clearly written from an ordinary party member’s context. For instance, the author of the piece “The Livelihood of Fellow-Trishaw-Riders Is Facing a Crisis” identified himself as a trishaw rider when he addressed himself to “fellow trishaw riders.” This identification of the author as a plebeian made it easier for the public and the party to relate to the opinions, as they were seen as the personal standpoint of someone like them, not heavy-handed party propaganda. It is easy to imagine that trishaw riders and the general public alike would be more moved by the cries of “British imperialist” from the author as a humble trishaw rider than by the same words coming from the mouths of Communist Party leaders.

Looking at the external role individually, the overarching policy in reaching out to the people was first to fan the flames of anti-British sentiment and subsequently to humanize the MCP to draw the public into support. Toward the first objective, a significant portion of MCP propaganda was devoted to demonizing the British government or highlighting the brutality of its police force. For instance, the “News Brevities” section of the Battlefront newsletter reported alleged police abuse—“British bandits [referring to soldiers] raped a 50 year old Malay woman”—on the front page and later “regular troops of the British imperialists […] raped [a 12-year-old Chinese girl]” on the fol-
lowing page, repeating the message and making sure to cover all ages and races. Further, in an issue of Freedom News, the cruelty of the British was condemned by the “people of Yong Peng” (a district in Malaya) who were quoted as saying, “the rule of these inhuman beasts will surely end soon” (“People”). The stream of negative reports on the British, coming from the mouths of the public, created a picture of widespread suffering. Thus MCP propaganda was vital to turn silent, private resentment into collective outrage towards the government.

On the other hand, Communist propaganda portrayed the MCP as the perfect foil to British cruelty. In carrying sections of the nature of “From Our Readers” in Freedom News, the MCP appeared to be providing a listening ear to the people, publishing letters (purportedly) from the public airing grievances against unjust treatment by the British. This served not only to discredit the government but also to depict the MCP as a voice for the people. The idea that the MCP was linked to the common man and fought for his welfare was further propagated by adopting a personal tone in the newsletters. These addressed readers directly—we hear “you”—and identified the British as the enemy of “the people” (“People”), while the MCP army was “our defense corps” (“News Brevities”). Furthermore, the MCP used propaganda to soften its image and endear itself to the people. Following an ambush on British forces in which civilians were killed, the War Information newsletter on November 25, 1950, expressed regret for the “most unfortunate incident” (“Positive Activities”).

The hold of MCP propaganda over the Chinese schools best epitomized its efforts in gaining public support. Using the undercurrent of resentment towards British employers, who almost exclusively employed students from schools where English was the medium of education, the MCP recruited the students of Chinese schools to their cause by playing up their discontent (Clutterbuck 76). Students’ News was the Communist newsletter targeted specifically at school-going youth. The subject matter of this newsletter was school-centered, and more juvenile in tone. For instance, the October 28, 1950, edition of Students’ News reported with glee the fact that a “running dog”—that is, an anti-Communist student—“lost his school bag” (“Sorrows”). The somewhat puerile tone actually made it more accessible to the students and clearly demonstrated to them that it was students who were producing these newsletters. By conspicuously allowing fellow students to write the articles (a fact made even clearer by the publishing of the author’s name beside the headline), the MCP was sending a clear signal that the students’ concerns were the MCP’s concerns and that the MCP empowered students to change their circumstances for the better. Soon, virtually the entire
student bodies of all the major Chinese schools were uniformly, and vehe-
mently, pro-Communist.

The net effect of externally directed propaganda was to vilify and thus
“push” the people away from the British, while humanizing and thus
“pulling” people to support the MCP. Negative reports on the British often
ran side by side with glowing reports on the MCP. For instance, next to the
report on the British soldier’s rape of a Malay woman in Battlefront was a
report on the refusal of an MCP member to accept contributions from a rub-
ber tapper who was seriously ill, demonstrating the MCP’s compassion
(“News Brevities”). Such direct visual contrasts encapsulated the main exter-
nal thrust of MCP propaganda (see fig. 1). The latent discontent towards the
government and the moderate pro-Communist goodwill that were the result
of circumstance required exactly such propagandist efforts in order to be con-
verted into full-fledged support.

Nevertheless, the use of propaganda to garner support from the masses
cannot be considered an unqualified success. The terrorist activities of the
Communists resulted in physical as well as economic losses for the people.

Fig. 1. This page features a negative report on the British (left, top), “12 British
bandits raped a 50 year old Malay woman,” next to positive report on the
Communists (right box, headline underlined), “A Little Story with Great Signifi-
cance.” The latter report talks about a party member’s refusal to take a contribution
from a man who was ill, thus showing the party’s concern for the man’s health.
Hoover Institution Archives.
Thus, MCP propaganda was crippled by the difficulty of reconciling these damages with the claim that the MCP was working for the people (McHugh 26). What can be said, though, is that Communist propaganda was necessary for the increase and preservation of what support they had. It offered the necessary transition from favorable circumstances to concrete support and was vital to soften the blows to the popularity of the MCP arising from its terrorist activity.

Communist propaganda served a function in developing public support, refuting the notion that only the conditions of the time were responsible for this support. The other angle from which to prove the worth of MCP propaganda is to see how it contributed to the internal strength of the party, demonstrated by the loyalty that allowed the MCP to keep its five-thousand-strong army together. In the same way that it managed to identify the needs of the people and fulfill them, MCP propaganda was targeted precisely at what appealed the most to its members.

Many members had previously experienced feelings of powerlessness and frustration. As ordinary citizens, they faced the British policy that decreed that “hardship will be caused to innocent people who do not feel that they have a duty to distinguish themselves from the guilty” (Gurney 9). The reality was that all Chinese were suspected Communists by default and were treated accordingly—they could no sooner avoid such blanket ill-treatment than change their racial identity.

Now, however, as MCP members, they were made to feel empowered. Each member was christened into the party with the words, “[T]oday you receive the extremely glorious title: a Communist member, a Bolshevik warrior” (Gwee 32). Having felt ill-treated and insignificant to the government, their pride was restored to them by the MCP, which thus won their loyalty. They also had opportunities for personal glory, as all MCP raids were reported with much gusto in various newsletters, such as War Information. These newsletters milked each attack for what it was worth, using dynamic descriptions such as “[smashing] through” enemy defenses, making heroes of its members (“Tenth Regiment”). Such reports created the impression that the MCP was moving from success to success and bolstered the self-image of its members. It was this dual delusion of power that managed to keep its members enraptured.

Propaganda also fulfilled a more fundamental role of communication. With pockets of MCP forces dispersed throughout the jungles of Malaya, the dissemination of newsletters was one of the only forms of communication between various groups. Not only could the party line be transmitted through them, but also it was important for the various groups to realize that
even as they were alone in their own region, there was still a collective force backing them up. Thus, the War Information newsletter, for instance, was painstakingly divided into various sections, reporting progress in every division of the MCP including, among others, divisions in “West Pahang, North Johore and Perak”—representing various corners of Malaya (“War Information”).

Another role that propaganda played was to provide a political education to the MCP members. Tracts such as “Democracy within the Party” (explaining the privileges and authority each member had) and “Clarification of Doubts Arising out of Shaken Confidence” reminded MCP members of the cause for which they were fighting. They highlighted the essential promise of the Communist theory—that members would enjoy a better life than they did under the British once the Communists were in power (Ramakrishna 30).

Could the MCP have maintained the loyalty and morale of its members without these visions of a better future, as well as glory and self-worth in the present? The truth is that it was probably crucial to the MCP’s survival that

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Fig. 2. This sample newsletter encapsulates the effective features of Communist propaganda: Written in the vernacular, the front page (left), under the heading “Social Theory” (she lun), is devoted to Communist ideology targeted at lifting party members’ spirits; the second page (right), under the heading “Information/Communication” (tong xun), is devoted to news and communication to keep the various parts of the party linked. Source: Freedom News 1 July 1950: 1–2. Malayan Communist Party. Hoover Institution Archives.
such propaganda devices existed. The MCP was lacking in food and medical supplies—broken legs were simply covered in a plaster of mud and leaves—as it had to hide in the jungles away from detection. Within this harsh environment, and watching fellow comrades get injured or killed in clashes with the police, the MCP members had to have the promises brought by propaganda to hold onto.

Taken together, the two functions of MCP propaganda build a strong case for its importance and effectiveness in garnering support for the MCP. Fundamentally, the ability just to produce propaganda was positive advertising in itself, while the highly personal and simple tone of the newsletters helped them connect with both the public and party members. Above all, in reaching out to the public and maintaining internal morale, the propaganda machine was able to effectively identify what the needs of each audience were and engineer itself precisely to meet those needs. Every newsletter was in itself a powerful statement, each containing several effective elements (see fig. 2). Given these capabilities and contributions of MCP propaganda, it was not unreasonable for a Freedom News editorial to proclaim that propaganda was an “important [weapon] in the war on national liberation” (“Editorial”).

**CONCLUSION**

Why, then, has the role played by Communist propaganda hitherto been played down at best and ignored at worst? The reason for this is a gap in the collective thinking that occurs on two levels. On the micro level, it can be said that most books on the Emergency have not considered the value of propaganda vis-à-vis its ability to maintain intra-party morale and keep members from falling by the wayside. More broadly, their attention has been concentrated on extracting the lessons to be learnt about counter-insurgency from the governmental point of view.

However, the lessons to be drawn from the Communist point of view are significant as well. Close examination has shown that Communist propaganda, in its simple and personal tone, as well as its ability to identify and target the concerns of the people and party members, had in fact made itself crucial to the push for external as well as internal support. This lesson has relevance not only to solving the mystery of my uncle’s or Malaya’s Communist past (my uncle was a student in a Chinese school during the Communists’ heyday). It also has implications for the very same counter-insurgency efforts on which the books on the Emergency have sought to shed light. Government measures cannot work simply from top down but also have to work from bot-
tom up. In other words, government propaganda could take a leaf or two out of the Communist book in terms of relating to the people as well as to its own ground troops. It should also seek to stem the tide of such deceptively simple yet successful propaganda efforts.

Taking a step back, it would be interesting to consider other historical accounts that might contain imbalances that would benefit from a similar investigation of alternative angles. Thankfully, in the case of the Malayan Emergency, the future of a balanced approach to research—one that considers both the government and Communist angles—appears to be bright. Recent publications such as an article by Hack in 1999 and Ramakrishna’s book in 2002 have already begun to pay much more attention to the Communist point of view than previous ones. It can thus be hoped that further focus on the MCP will be forthcoming, and with it additional insights into preventing a recurrence of such uncharacteristically dark events in Singapore and Malaysia. Only then will the peaceful citizenry of both countries—good-natured ex-Communists included—be able to put those sad memories far behind them. ♦

NOTES
1 Malaysia and Singapore were governed by the British, their colonial rulers, as one administrative unit, Malaya, until their independence in 1963 and 1965 respectively.
2 The main English-language newspaper in Malaya, the Straits Times, stayed moderate and neutral during the Communist emergency.
3 A trishaw is a cart made for passenger transport, while the trishaw rider is the person who pulls the cart. Trishaw riders belonged to the lower social classes.

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AUTUMN 2003 HONORABLE MENTION

Jasmine Hanifi

INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

Jasmine wrote her essay “Belonging to America: Rhetoric of the Second Generation” in response to the initial assignment for my course, Rhetorics of Peace, War, and Revolution: Writing Gender, Race, and Nation. I had asked students to research and write about archival or other primary documents. Following an orientation tour of the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Jasmine located and decided to write about a short, unpublished narrative by Paul Itaya, a Japanese-American internee who documented his days at the Poston Relocation Center in the early 1940s. In her drafts, Jasmine worked through progressive stages of personal response, rhetorical analysis, historical and cultural contextualization, and evaluation. The final essay beautifully weaves together these elements so that what had been distinct stages of the drafting process come together as a seamless whole.

The distinctive personal voice brings the essay to life. Wistful and speculative, Jasmine captures the complexity of Itaya’s—and, ultimately, her own—relationship to what she calls “warring heritages.” The phrase captures the inner conflict between old and new cultures that many second-generation Americans face, even as it points to the ways that these internal struggles are exacerbated in wartime contexts, when particular immigrant communities may come to be perceived as America’s “enemies.” Drawing on her own experiences as the child of Afghan immigrants, Jasmine’s essay makes compelling appeals to emotion without lapsing into sentimentality. From the opening paragraph, which pans outward from a concretely imagined description of Itaya’s trek to the perspectives of various observers, Jasmine’s reading of Itaya’s narrative is sympathetic and sophisticated. Her empathy for Itaya’s plight provides her own readers with a model for responding to the complex cultural situations of second-generation Americans, especially in the aftermath of 9/11. Jasmine’s essay stands as a testament to Paul Itaya—and to all second-generation Americans who have experienced discrimination even as they have sought to prove their loyalty to their families’ adopted homeland.

—Lisa Haefele
Belonging to America: Rhetoric of the Second Generation

Jasmine Hanifi

A man trudges through a barren desert, head lowered, narrow eyes narrowed further still in contemplation. To the US, he is a Jap: the enemy, an instrument of treachery confined to an internment camp by law. To his fellow inmates, he is a Nisei: wholly Americanized, part of an assimilated and ambivalent second generation. To his older relatives, he is a failure: a man who has forsaken the land of his fathers and, subsequently, his honor. To me, he is Paul Itaya, one of many creative, conflicted Japanese Americans who were consigned by executive order to relocation camps in 1942. Itaya’s story “I Live in a Camp,” written in the 1940s, profoundly affected me. Like the eloquent detainee, I have grappled with conflicting cultural ideals and loyalties. The child of Afghan immigrants, I have borne, to a very small degree, the burdens Itaya described in “I Live in a Camp”: an unrequited love for the US, a need for acceptance as an equal citizen, and an awareness of the racist rhetoric and attitudes that can savagely slash at foreigners’ dreams.

I cannot be sure that the overwhelming affection Itaya professed to feel for the land of his birth was genuine; his motives in writing “I Live in a Camp” may have been varied. I do know that innumerable second-generation Americans, myself included, have shared the curious thoughts Itaya expressed in regard to warring heritages. Today, Itaya’s story speaks poignantly to US citizens who have ethnic roots in the Middle East and surrounding countries: people who face discrimination for the color of their skin and the length of their beards, who are closely watched, frequently threatened, and triple-checked during luggage inspections in airports. The rhetoric of “I Live in a Camp” struggles to counter an overpowering bias against one ethnic group and may apply to populations in similar situations as long as war and prejudice exist.

To perceive the undercurrents of Itaya’s words, one must fathom his cir-
cumstances in the early 1940s. Just two months after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which gave the US military the authority to designate areas from which “any or all persons” could be excluded. All people of Japanese ancestry—some 110,000 men, women, and children—were subject to the order (Yu). Civilian Exclusion Orders, regional variants of the original Executive Order, appeared in Western towns and cities shortly afterward. Japanese Americans, already ostracized or harassed by the whites in their communities, surveyed the Civilian Exclusion Order posters in disbelief. The government allowed landed businessmen, physicians, and educators, among others, only a few days in which to relinquish their homes and other possessions. Along with Japanese aliens, Issei and Nisei—members of the first and second Japanese-American generations, respectively—and even US citizens with slight quantities of Japanese blood were herded into trains that steamed to stark relocation camps in the desert.

Readers of Paul Itaya’s story can surmise that he boarded one of these crowded trains in late May 1942, pursuant to Civilian Exclusion Order No. 83 (Itaya 2). Itaya’s train unloaded its human cargo at Poston Relocation Camp in southwest Arizona, where temperatures routinely tested the body’s tolerance. Previously uninhabited, arid Poston boasted a population of 17,814 before the end of World War II (Yu). With the exception of the Exclusion Order, Itaya does not communicate the details of his pre-relocation camp existence. His writing reveals that he was probably an educated man; in any case, his powers of description were formidable. “I Live in a Camp” both depicts Itaya’s situation and expresses his misgivings toward America mildly. Imprisoned in the desert, the author attempts to convey the loyalty Nisei bear the US even under duress.

“I Live in a Camp” is, at surface value, a narrative about the one-day winter vacation Itaya and his friends were permitted to take from Poston. They had hiked to the sand plateaus surrounding the mountains near the camp, and discovered childlike joy in scurrying and sliding through the sand. Itaya draws a moving parallel between the mountains and the camp guards, and perhaps American suspicion in general: “behind us loomed the steel-gray mountains, so massive and majestic in their silence, towering and watching over us like sentinels” (1). Even the sierra seemed unwilling to allow the detainees a day of unclouded enjoyment.

Itaya refers to the Japanese Americans’ new environment as “god-forsaken” (1), and mentions the flagging spirit of the detainees. He spends far fewer words disparaging the Nisei situation, however, than he spends trying to alter the American attitude toward himself and his kind. In some instances he
Jasmine Hanifi

seems to beg for acceptance rather than assert his citizen’s right to liberty. One could claim that “I Live in a Camp” is a plea rather than a story, intended to appeal to an intensely prejudiced population. The narrative’s conclusion supports this contention. Toward the end of his walk in the desert, when he can no longer suppress his bitterness, Itaya surveys an American flag that is presumably the property of Poston waving in the breeze. The vision of the flag triggers a profusion of sentiment over “my America, the land of opportunity” (3). Itaya then prays to become a better citizen, imparting Christianity to an ethnic group many white Americans considered godless. Few readers could fail to notice that his invocation is highly uncharacteristic of a wronged man.

Perhaps Itaya’s exaggerated pledges of affection to the US stemmed from the vain hope that his story would be published. I would not be surprised to learn, though, that Itaya loved the country of his birth enough to forgive the misdirected rage and prejudice of its citizens. Many Americans would not be able to endure unjust imprisonment, but Itaya was no WASP; he was the child of immigrants. Since birth, he had been “steeped in American culture and tradition” (Itaya 1). Owing to the anti-immigration legislation of the early twentieth century, particularly the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1908 and the 1924 Immigration Exclusion Act, he had probably never seen Japan (Yu). He and his Nisei counterparts bore American names, spoke with American twangs, and ate American food. Their love of the US was born of necessity, for the nation was their only home. Caught between an utterly alien old world and a hostile new world, Japanese Americans almost invariably chose the latter. Their struggle for acceptance was especially difficult in early- to mid-twentieth-century America. Children of Western European immigrants could assimilate rapidly; their faces were not distinguishable in a crowd. For this reason, German Americans faced a relatively small backlash during World War II. The faces of Japanese descendants, on the other hand, were instantly recognizable. By nature set apart, Nisei clung to their country tenaciously.

Unfortunately, the second-generation rhetoric they used to affirm their citizens’ rights could not compete with the anti-Japanese invective that issued from the mouths of public speakers across the nation. Reporters, cartoonists, and government officials united to educate the American public on the evils of association with the Land of the Rising Sun. Post–Pearl Harbor, the media was quick to label people of Japanese descent as covetous, “treacherous” outsiders who had “infiltrated” a land of freedom (United States 1). In a 1943 speech to Congress, Representative Henry M. Jackson contended that Japanese Americans were essentially saboteurs who had spent decades obtaining an economic and military stranglehold on the US (2). Jackson, who
would later become an eminent Democratic statesman, was lobbying for the creation of a special committee within the House of Representatives to investigate Japanese activities in the United States.

When I searched for similarities between the government rhetoric of my time and that of Itaya’s, I found ample material in the text of the USA Patriot Act, which Congress passed in October 2001. The act vastly expanded federal officials’ authority to obtain records of people not suspected of criminal activities. Section 215 of the legislation permits the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take personal belongings, including “books, records, documents and other items” from the home of any US resident without probable cause (USA). This section also mandates the cooperation of any person, organization, or institution—libraries, hospitals, and charities included—in compromising the privacy of Americans. Though the act presumably focused on members of terrorist groups, Arab-Americans became its more immediate targets. Like Executive Order 9066, the Patriot Act is deliberately inclusive. Just as the US military could expel “any and all persons” from certain areas in the 1940s (United States 1), the FBI can blatantly violate the privacy of any and all Americans at present. During World War II, “any and all persons” meant those who looked Japanese; now, the phrase refers to those who look like they might be involved in terrorist activities. The Patriot Act entraps Saudis, Iranians, Uzbeks, and multitudes of others as figuratively as Roosevelt’s executive order confined Japanese Americans physically.

In circumstances reminiscent of those of the Nisei, the second generations facing discrimination today have exhibited similarly fervent patriotism and a willingness to die for the US, a homeland that does not seem to want them. My cousins, most of whom were determined to join the Armed Forces in the wake of September 11, were all to some degree harassed in their American schools for their Arabic looks. Aware of prejudiced legislation and the undercurrent of discrimination against Americans of Middle Eastern descent, my parents still insist that the United States is the greatest nation on earth. Indeed, my brother and I have become so accustomed to my parents’ indoctrination that we express our enthusiasm for the US as a matter of course. “America is the best place,” I remember commenting in the same week that a Sikh had been murdered at an Arizona gas station for resembling a terrorist. “I’m so lucky to be here.” I genuinely do feel that I am fortunate to have partaken of the American experience, but I also recognize, as Itaya did, that my experience has been imperfect.

I grew up in a predominantly white community; as identifiable among my peers as a Japanese American would be, I was often assigned the role of the “other.” Adults and children alike criticized my cultural values. My
friends assured me I would meet with a grisly fate for not attending a Christian church. An elementary school teacher once ordered me to wait in the back of the line for the water fountain, rationalizing, “Your people”—those of darker skin—“need less water, because they are accustomed to hot climates.” In high school I encountered students who believed I had terrorist connections and subscribed to fundamentalist Islam. I should not have accepted these things quietly, but I did. At times in my life I too have been desperate to assimilate. I never faced outright expulsion from my community, as Itaya did, but I believe I would share his sentiments were I presented with a Civilian Exclusion Order. In such a case I would consider the actions of my government unjust, but I would still love the United States. America is the only home I know. My heart thrills to the opening chords of the national anthem; my eyes, like those of the Nisei man trudging back to Poston, delight in the Stars and Stripes. Itaya felt he belonged in the United States, though the nation cruelly rejected him and his kind. His words, ignored in the 1940s, might serve as a warning to the US today. When America denies her adopted children their rights, she bears a shameful stain for the rest of history. ◆

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The greatest challenge of writing about globalization is finding a way to manage a topic that is always in danger of becoming either uncontrollably broad or else too narrowly focused. In his essay, “Harry Potter and the Battle of the International Copyright Law,” Andrew strikes the perfect balance. He situates the very broad and relevant discussion of copyright within an entertaining and accessible set of concrete examples drawn from popular culture, namely the story of how the beloved Harry Potter has been at the center of lawsuits brought by J.K. Rowling and Time Warner against several authors for copyright infringement. He is neither too attentive to the entertainment value of these “faux Potters,” as he calls them, nor to the potentially dry discussion of law. Rather, he deftly moves between the two, and uses the Potter reference as a springboard into a clear and illuminating discussion of legalese.

Andy’s research for the project was ambitious, particularly considering that he’d written not on copyright law, but on the debate over headscarves in France for his other writing assignments. Nonetheless, he managed to pull together an impressive array of both primary and secondary sources in a short time, and, as the essay shows, he incorporates them very effectively into his argument. In addition, he also sought out interviews from legal experts and representatives of Time Warner, something that went above and beyond what one might expect in a freshman writing course.

In the end, he argues very convincingly that TRIPS—the current WTO framework for copyright law—tips the balance too heavily in favor of copyright holders at the expense of non-copyright holders. The danger of this precedent, as he points out, is that local forms of knowledge and storytelling are in danger of being marginalized in the face of global mass culture.

—Tomas Matza
The series of *Harry Potter* novels is a worldwide success. J.K. Rowling’s novels of magic adventures and coming of age have sold over 250 million copies in 55 languages (Watson and Kellner). What most readers do not realize is that Harry Potter thrives through a complicated set of international legal structures designed to protect intellectual property rights, unfairly so according to some experts. The story of *Harry Potter*’s unparalleled success demonstrates the faults of this new international framework.

When *Harry Potter* arrived on the world market, it was quickly followed by foreign-made *Harry Potter* look-alikes. These copies or adaptations sought to capitalize on the original novel’s success, but they also added local traditions and customs to the all-white British novel. In response, J.K. Rowling exercised her international copyrights to systematically shut down these unauthorized *Harrys*.

Only in the past decade has it become possible to effectively assert copyrights on an international scale. This change is due to a new trade agreement called TRIPS, mandated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which imposes binding legal standards for intellectual property legislation in countries across the globe. Unfortunately, agreements such as these treat intellectual property simply as a bargaining chip in global efforts to reduce tariffs and maximize free trade. They sometimes overlook commonly held values concerning intellectual property. For example, copyrights were originally designed to be temporary and very limited in scope, with explicit rights granted to non-copyright holders. The current status quo vests too much power in individual copyright holders. Worse, this non-uniform system can now be enforced on a global scale. In the end, this new framework impedes local creativity from adopting international characters and ideas. Regardless of whether Rowling was justified in pursuing the faux Potters, her legal
actions demonstrate a threat to local traditions inherent in today’s international legal system.

POTTER’S MAGIC

Harry Potter was not always the focus of international law. The unassuming Harry starts out in Rowling’s first novel as a ten-year-old outcast at school. His classmates tease him, his brother pesters him, and his parents force him to live in a closet under the staircase. When Potter suddenly learns that he is in fact a famous wizard, capable of all sorts of magic and mischief, he heads to Hogwarts School of Wizardry, where he fights evil with fellow classmates and captivates readers with his adventures.

The success of Harry Potter the novel came from equally humble beginnings. J.K. Rowling was a single mother on welfare when she was inspired to write the Potter novels on a train ride from Manchester to King’s Cross (McAllistor 67; “Harry Potter Books from Bloomsbury”). She published her first Potter novel, Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone (a.k.a. Sorcerer’s Stone in the US) in 1997. It was received with worldwide acclaim, and when she released her second novel it instantly hit number one on bestseller lists in the US and Britain. Time Warner purchased film rights to Rowling’s first two novels for a seven-figure sum. Rowling wrote three more Potters, and a sixth is just around the corner. As of the printing of her fifth book, Rowling had amassed an estimated $450 million, making her richer than the Queen of England by some $50 million (McAllistor 67). In 2004, J.K. Rowling made the cover of Forbes Magazine’s “Billionaire List.” With just over a billion dollars, she is now the wealthiest woman in Britain and the richest author of all time (Kellner 125; Watson and Kellner). The entire Potter franchise, including novels, toys from Mattel, video games from Electronic Arts, and the two Time Warner films, have netted over two billion British pounds (BBC News; Watson and Kellner).

Part of Potter’s success appears to derive from its universal appeal. While waiting in line on opening day to purchase the fifth Potter book, fourteen-year-old Zhao Nan of Beijing told an Associated Press reporter, “The [Harry Potter] story is exciting no matter where you come from” (Anthony). By far the largest testament to Potter’s cultural influence is the widespread creation of locally adapted faux Potter novels.
In the wake of *Harry Potter’s* widespread success, a number of copycat novels have sprung up. First came the Chinese novel *Harry Potter and the Leopard-Walk-Up-to-Dragon* in 2001, followed in quick succession by *Harry Potter and the Golden Turtle* and *Harry Potter and the Crystal Vase*. All of these novels were falsely attributed to Rowling (Pomfret A20). In Russia, Dmitry Yemets wrote *Tanya Grotter and the Magic Double Bass* followed by three sequels, which cumulatively sold over 500,000 copies in six months (Jury 13; Kisileva). In the first novel, the main character is a girl with glasses and a mole named Tanya Grotter who flies a large double bass and also goes to a boarding school for learning magic. Authors Ivan Mytko and Andrei Zhalevsky joined in with their Russian novel *Porri Grotter and the Stone Philosopher* (O’Flynn).

News of these novels’ success was not received kindly back in Britain. Rowling responded to these upstarts with a vigorous legal campaign. Backed by lawyers from Time Warner, she sought to shut down the publishers of these books, which she claimed infringed upon her intellectual property rights. Rowling’s legal team made considerable progress towards thwarting the faux *Potters*. Her first success came on October 29, 2002, when the Bashu Publishing House agreed to pay a local fine of $2,500 and immediately cease publication of the *Leopard-Walk-Up-to-Dragon* series (Pomfret A20). Rowling won her most decisive legal victory in April 2003, when a court in Amsterdam agreed to block the publication of 7,000 copies of Yemets’ *Tanya Grotter*, claiming that the novels were an “infringement of Rowling’s copyrights” (BBC News). Her success in these legal battles rested entirely upon local copyright legislation in these foreign countries. It is this dependence upon local legislation that originally prompted efforts to standardized copyrights on a global scale. As we will see, these efforts leave much to be desired.

**FROM LOCAL COPYRIGHTS TO PROTECTING FREE TRADE**

Local government provides the most basic level of intellectual property rights. In the United States, the Constitution explicitly makes provisions for intellectual property rights: “The Congress shall have the power … to promote the Progress for Science and useful Arts, by securing for a limited Times [sic] to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries” (US Const., art 1, sec. 8). The founding fathers intended to create an environment whereby artists and scientists could flourish without
worry of their work being immediately stolen. This is the foundation of all forms of intellectual property rights in the US, the most significant of which are comprised of patents and copyrights. Patents protect ideas, systems, concepts, and inventions, while copyrights protect specifically the expression of an idea in some artistic medium, such as books, films, or plays (Watal 207). Trademarks offer another, slightly different, form of legal protection. These are geared towards businesses and corporations and aim to secure names, logos, and labels for use only on their own products (Watal 1). For example, only Nike is allowed to sell T-shirts with swooshes on them. So for a novel, trademark law would regulate only the novel's covers, while copyright law would regulate everything in between.

Copyrights are much less powerful than often perceived. Copyrights protect only an author's creative expression, not his or her ideas (Watal 214). In other words, only the author's specific arrangement of words, musical notes, shapes, etc. is protected against unauthorized copying (WIPO 44). Furthermore, a copyright does not grant any monopoly over commercially viable ideas (Watal 207). Neither slogans nor titles are protected by copyrights (Wincor 10). Many are surprised to learn that copyrights require no formal registration. Although documenting the date of creation may be helpful in case of a legal battle, copyrights are automatically conferred to an author upon creation of a work (Wincor 10). This is the basic system of copyrights within the United States, but it is not necessarily the same in the rest of the world.

For much of history, copyright standards varied from country to country. For example, US and British copyright law included the concept of fair use, or as the British call it fair dealing, which allowed others to use copyrighted material for academic and certain other non-commercial uses (Wincor 11). Other nations had no concept of fair use. The length of copyright protection was and still is non-uniform. The US grants a copyright for the lifetime of an author plus fifty years, whereas Germany grants life plus seventy years (Wincor 10). Furthermore, for much of history there has been no uniform system for recognizing foreign copyrights.

Nations, particularly developing ones, have often relaxed or simply ignored foreign copyrights. Tim Wu, an international law professor at the University of Virginia, points out that the US refused to acknowledge foreign copyrights during its early years (Wu). At the time, the US had no literary industry of its own, and imported mostly British works without paying licensing fees. Conversely, more developed countries have worked hard to see that their own copyrights are upheld in foreign nations. In the late nineteenth century, nations began forming bilateral copyright treaties to uphold each
other’s intellectual property rights (Wincor 12). This had the effect of opening up new markets for both parties. The bottom line is that as early as a century ago, copyrights were already being treated in terms of the economics of markets and trade agreements.

Bilateral treaties were cumbersome because a country needed a separate treaty with every other country with which it did business. Instead, countries began to form multilateral copyright agreements. The first such agreement was the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property of 1883; however, the most important treaty was the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works created three years later in 1886, and revised through 1971 (Watal 15). Berne mandates that member countries maintain a set of minimum standards regarding intellectual property legislation. Each country must enact legislation to protect all other countries’ copyrights, for example (Berne, art. 5, sec. 1). These countries must maintain laws granting exclusive rights to copyright holders for a minimum of the life of the author plus fifty years (Berne, art. 7, sec. 1). The Berne convention still plays a major role today. In 1994, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, soon to become the WTO) adopted the “Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights,” or TRIPS, which strictly enforces the first twenty articles of the Berne Convention (Watal 4; Arup 185; TRIPS, art. 9, sec. 1).

ONE TREATY TO RULE THEM ALL

TRIPS represents the most comprehensive effort to date to standardize copyright law across national boundaries. First, TRIPS is mandatory for all 146 member countries of the WTO and can be enforced through the WTO’s dispute mechanisms (Watal 4). This is significant because, unlike the original Berne Convention, membership in the WTO has become a near-necessity for any modern nation. TRIPS dramatically increases minimum standards for intellectual property right legislation in as many as seven areas: copyright and related rights, trademarks, geographical indications, industrial designs, patents, integrated circuits, and undisclosed information (Watal 3). In this new era of internationally regulated intellectual property rights, virtually all countries are bound to abide by the same minimum standards. Unfortunately, TRIPS only unifies the minimum standard.

Rowling reaped the benefits of this new landscape because TRIPS mandates uniformity for only the laws that work in Rowling’s favor. The aforementioned Chinese novels committed blatant fraud and a clear violation of
trademark law as prescribed by TRIPS because they were falsely attributed to Rowling (Wu, personal communication). Her case against Dmitri Yemet’s Tanya Grotter was more complicated. Grotter was not a trademark violation, did not claim Rowling’s authorship, and avoided any direct mention of Harry Potter. At best, this was a copyright issue. Rowling sued the Russian Eksmo Company in a court in the Netherlands claiming violation of Dutch copyright law and infringement on one of the thirty-five formal copyrights she had filed with the Library of Congress (LOC). In an article in Slate, Tim Wu shows that, as members of the WTO, the Dutch are required to maintain legislation in accordance with Article 12 of the Berne Treaty. This article grants authors “the exclusive right of authorizing adaptations, arrangements and other alterations of their work” (Berne art. 12). Wu claims that this phrase has been interpreted to ban what he dubs “secondary authorship” (Slate; Wu, personal communication). Tanya Grotter is an instance of secondary authorship because, according to Wu, it borrows ideas but no actual content from Harry Potter. However, in a strict sense Article 12 does not appear to ban Grotter at all, since Grotter is neither an adaptation, a translation, an arrangement, nor an alteration. Those terms all imply using the original text. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a branch of the United Nations, an “adaptation” results from moving a work from one medium to another, as when a film is made from a novel (WIPO 47). This all suggests that Rowling chose to file suit in the Netherlands because its laws exceed the minimum standards required by the TRIPS treaty. Indeed, TRIPS explicitly grants countries the right to make copyrights as powerful as they would like, and it appears that the Netherlands did just that. So while TRIPS purports to bring uniformity to international copyright law, in this case it specifically sanctions large discrepancies among countries.

TRIPS AN UNBALANCE

The first criticism of TRIPS is that it is a burden on member countries, especially developing nations. TRIPS forces member countries to enact legislation that grants minimum rights to copyright holders, regardless of the cost to the country (Watal 5). This may be a burden to developing countries, but more significant on a global scale is the degree to which TRIPS explicitly opens the door for countries to vest greater power in copyrights without limit. Article 19 of the Berne Convention, enforced by TRIPS, states: “The provisions of this Convention shall not preclude the making of a claim to the benefit of any greater protection which may be granted by legislation in a country of
the Union” (Berne art. 19). Translated into simple English, nothing in the treaty should ever deter a member country from vesting more power in copyright patents or trademark holders. In his article in Slate, Wu speaks critically of TRIPS as providing a minimum but no maximum. This is not only confusing because different countries can continue to maintain drastically different standards, it also sets the stage for powerful copyright holders to abuse the rights of non-copyright holders.

In US copyright law, there is an explicit declaration of rights for both copyright holders and non-copyright holders. Under Article 1 of the Constitution, Copyright holders are granted rights to exclusive control of their intellectual property, but after some period of time those rights are explicitly granted to non-copyright holders. The US goes one step further with the concept of fair use (United States Copyright Act, 17 USC 107) and provides that each non-copyright holder has the right to duplicate copyrighted material for certain activities, such as scholarly pursuits, VCR backups of TV recordings (United States Supreme Court, 464, US 417 1984), or parodies that significantly transform or add to the work (Stanford University, Ch. 9, sec. C). Under TRIPS, however, there is no such balance. In fact, Article 19 removes any cap on the rights of copyright holders. TRIPS raises the level of protection for copyright holders around the globe but does nothing to protect those copyrights from infringing upon others.

A cap on the rights of copyright holders is absolutely necessary, both to insure uniformity and to protect precedents from being set too far in favor of copyright holders. Even if it runs against a country’s best interest, non-copyright holders should have some rights to copyrighted material, whether it is after a certain length of time or for certain specific uses. The idea is good enough for the US Constitution; it should be good enough for TRIPS.

FROM PLAYBOY TO POTTER

TRIPS also poses a serious threat to local cultures. In her article, Extraterritoriality and Multiterritoriality in Copyright Infringement, Columbia law professor Jane C. Ginsburg writes about how the current judicial system faces a new “Age of Globalism” (Ginsburg 599). Although she does not specifically address TRIPS, she does discuss international copyright cases that historically have pushed the envelope regarding international copyright law. Ginsburg presents a case study about trademark infringement; however, she points out that it may as well have been copyright infringement (Ginsburg 589). Furthermore, like the Harry Potter case, it is another instance of cul-
ture clash. She writes of an Italian publishing company owned by Enrico Tatillio that published an Italian magazine, *Playmen*, with content similar to the American magazine *Playboy*. *Playmen* only differs from *Playboy* in that it is written in Italian, features articles on Italian culture and images of Italian women, and was geared towards an Italian public. In 1981, *Playboy* sued the rogue *Playmen* in a number of countries within Europe, including Italy, to block its publication. *Playboy* won its case in several courts, but not within Italy. At that time, the Italian courts had laws in place which favored local content.

In this case, local governments were able to maintain laws that successfully protected local content. If *Playmen vs. Playboy* were to be tried today, TRIPS would require legislation that would almost certainly put *Playmen* out of business. *Potter* and *Playboy* taken together demonstrate the potential consequences of TRIPS’ half-baked standards, which uniformly deprive countries of a local voice without granting them uniform rights.

The imbalance inherent in TRIPS is caused by its emphasis on free trade at the expense of other considerations. Businesses benefit from strong and restrictive copyright laws without limits. But as in many other areas regarding the expansion of markets, free trade comes at the cost of tradition and national heritage. For instance, Yemets views himself as an expert in Russian folklore and argues that Tanya Grotter is “a sort of Russian answer to Harry Potter” (Guttman A11). Viewed in this way, his novel adds a local voice to a wildly popular foreign trend. *Playmen* is likewise a local voice in response to another wildly popular foreign trend, namely American pornography. Taken in this context, the struggle between Tanya and Harry can be viewed as that of local voice fighting to adapt and counteract the large and powerful influence of Western culture.

**COPYRIGHTS AND COPY CULTURES**

Faced with the influx of foreign cultures and traditions, local groups are often forced to adapt and adopt what they can, making these new themes work within existing cultural frameworks. Local adaptations to homogenizing forces are one of the few ways for local traditions to prosper. *Tanya Grotter* was a success because it brought this local perspective to its readers. As nine-year-old Sasha told one reporter, “Tanya Grotter is a thousand times better than Harry Potter. Not only a thousand times, but a billion times because everything is so much more Russian” (“Harry Potter Creator Threatens to Sue Russian Publisher for Plagiarism”).


Author George Ritzer coined the term McDonaldization to describe a growing trend towards Western consumerism (Ritzer 1). The *Harry Potter* franchise of books, films, and toys exhibits many of the characteristics that Ritzer identifies as traits of McDonaldization, namely marketing efficiency, identification with Western culture, and predictability. Like the fast-food giant, *Harry Potter* is a ubiquitous, immensely popular product universally identified with Western culture that carries with it Western social norms, which, in turn, have social implications. *Harry Potter*, like McDonald’s, is also predictable. Regardless of which *Potter* book you chose, which country you are in, or through which medium you choose to experience Harry Potter (book, film, toy, or video game), you can always expect the same G-rated, wholesome entertainment with an added twist of good triumphing over evil. On the other hand, just as McDonald’s is perceived as a threat to local culinary tradition, so too must Potter be perceived as a threat to other local children’s tales.

When McDonald’s enters a new country, however, there is often an exchange that takes place. McDonald’s obviously must translate its menus and make its stores readable and accessible to a new audience. More importantly, local restaurants and cultures often adopt some aspects of McDonald’s while still retaining traditional elements. In Moscow, there is a new fast-food chain in the McDonald’s style that serves blini and salo—traditional lumps of pork fat and vodka. This is not unlike *Playmen’s* use of Italian culture or Tanya Grotter’s use of traditional Russian culture. To extend the metaphor, TRIPS rolls out the welcome mat for McDonald’s while prohibiting local restaurants from adapting the fast-food style. Giving additional legal advantages to already powerful multinational enterprises simply does not seem fair.

**CONCLUSION**

The case for balance in international copyright law goes beyond just *Harry Potter*; local traditions need protection, too. Tanya Grotter abides by a strict interpretation of both TRIPS and Berne. The Dutch court that ruled in favor of Rowling went above and beyond what TRIPS required. The Netherlands should not be allowed to arbitrarily vest power in copyrights unchecked. It is up to the WTO to implement an upper limit on copyright protection. Without it, the pendulum of power swings too far in favor of the copyright holder at the expense of free expression and local traditions. At the very least, TRIPS needs to protect the rights of non-copyright holders to utilize common themes and trends infiltrating outward from the West. Implementing
the United States’ or the British concept of fair use and fair dealing at the international level would be a good place to start. To protect local traditions and provide a voice to all, even TRIPS could benefit from a little Harry Potter wizardry. ♦

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WIPO. “Intellectual Property Reading Material.” *WIPO 476(E).*


INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

In my class Writing with a Sense of Urgency: The Rhetoric of the Manifesto, I asked each student to select a manifesto—from any context: politics, philosophy, the arts—to serve as a focus for essays written throughout the term. Hammad Ahmed chose the Ostend Manifesto, a congressional appeal from 1854 soliciting the US to purchase Cuba from Spain, and his procedure for developing his ideas about this text was an ideal realization of the goals of this course. From closely reading the manifesto and analyzing its rhetorical mechanisms to contextualizing the manifesto in light of historically contiguous intellectual mores to ultimately producing the essay before you, Hammad traced a significant line of change, an entire curriculum that emerged from his own very genuine curiosity and eclectic interests.

Apropos to Hammad’s investigations, perhaps the most succinct way to describe his treatment of the Ostend Manifesto is metaphoric: the text served as a lens of sorts through which various rays of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought would pass. Initially held as a magnifying glass, the Ostend Manifesto brought into focus the curious and often overlooked language of science employed in matters of international relations; the more intensely Hammad scrutinized this text, the more it took the form of a prism, refracting the ray of annexationist justification into a panorama of ideas, including Romanticism, Christian theology, Darwinian theory, even eighteenth-century entomology. The argument of “Grafting Cuba onto the American Body Politic: The Intersection of Natural Science and Foreign Policy in the Annexationist Era”—that US political hegemony in the nineteenth century was morally rationalized by a propagandist’s measure of scientific discourse—is as prescient as it is historical. If you have ever questioned why we discuss contemporary politics with terms like “healthy economy,” “axis of evil,” “terrorist cells,” or “asymmetrical warfare,” you may find the answer in the pages that follow.

—David Colón
Grafting Cuba onto the American Body Politic: The Intersection of Natural Science and Foreign Policy in the Annexationist Era

Hammad Ahmed

The mid-nineteenth century in American history has been studied by historians not only to investigate the Civil War, but also to examine the powerful ethos of imperialism and global conquest that began to take form in foreign policy. During the years from 1800 to 1860, the Union, growing geographically and in population, was faced with the prospect of incorporating new territory and future denizens smoothly. Many politicians and thinkers felt the need to expand the border of the country further and further, to encompass a larger demographic and geographic chunk of the world within the United States. At the same time, increased scientific inquiry into the natural world had given rise to theories of nature and biology that challenged and shaped social thought. The antebellum period also was witness to a growing sectionalism in American politics and government, with the opposite poles of North and South split over many issues beyond slavery. With Latin America in close proximity and entrenched in a preexisting system of slavery, issues concerning the purchase, annexation, or conquest of these areas were naturally the source of much debate and discussion. A question that is not often asked is whether the trends in natural science and the debate over expansionism were coincidental, parallel, or perhaps even directly related. The dates of certain key publications are an example of the temporal proximity of the two phenomena. In 1854, the Ostend Manifesto, the culmination of years of annexationist intent toward Cuba, was drafted and presented to the American government. Five years later, in 1859, Darwin’s The Origin of Species, the result of a decades-long search for a natural mechanism of progress and transformation, was published in Britain. This, it appears, was
more than mere coincidence. An analysis of primary documents from this
time period suggests that the debate over annexationism mirrored the debate
over mechanisms of the natural world. The interplay between social thought
and life sciences in the United States of the mid-nineteenth century resulted
in a discourse of self-proclaimed religious and natural superiority. Due to the
power of this discourse in political rhetoric, justification for and arguments
against the annexation of Cuba relied in large part on biological metaphor.
To an appreciable and regrettable extent, pre-Darwinian theories of natural
science shaped the ideological basis of foreign policy in antebellum America.

SCIENCE AND ITS UNDERESTIMATED IMPORTANCE
IN ANTEBELLUM SOCIETY

The notion that science played an appreciable role in American society at the
beginning of the eighteenth century was not heavily accepted, especially due
to the impact of Alexis de Tocqueville’s insistence on the “American indiffer-
ence to pure sciences” (Kohlstedt 445). Ideas of American reliance on com-
mon sense and distrust of scientific theory in the early nineteenth century
often clouded a fuller understanding of the interplay between science and
society at the time. If biology were to influence the politics of expansionism,
however, it would be necessary that science have an impact on imperialist ide-
ology, worldview, and philosophy. More active research into this period, espe-
cially from the 1970s, shows that newer models of the interplay are more
accurate than the traditional “expert-amateur” dichotomy that posits the sepa-
rateness of the scientific and public spheres. From this research, it appears
that “[t]he public became involved with scientific activity in a number of
ways and can rarely be described as indifferent to science or as inevitably
 naïve about the ambiguous potential of scientific and technological change”
(Kohlstedt 447). This is corroborated by statistics and files taken from gov-
ernmental agencies assigned to support and document research. For example,
“support for the Charles Wilkes Exploring Expedition in the late 1830s is
only one indicator of successful scientific (and commercial) lobbying for pub-
lic support of research, in this case the geophysical and natural sciences”
(Kohlstedt 450). Even this early, citizens and politicians both recognized the
social utility of the natural sciences, and were willing to allocate money to
sponsor such causes. What makes these statistics even more difficult is the
amount of scientific sponsorship that remained undocumented. According to
Kohlstedt, there was a notable trend of ambiguous recordkeeping. She cites
that a certain researcher, Dupree, “went on to investigate financial support in
his *Science in the Federal Government* and demonstrated that substantial money was available to certain departments and bureaus although rarely identified specifically as ‘support for science’” (Kohlstedt 445). Undocumented funds introduce a definitive wrinkle into the fabric of information that we have concerning scientific inquiry in this time period, but it is safe to assume that federal funding was significant for this branch of science and that this reflected a social recognition of its legitimacy and worth.

Kohlstedt further argues that the underestimation of antebellum society’s recognition of science is simply a result of a modern bias. “Our own contemporary concern about the apparent conflict between science and society has tended to obscure the liaisons that were provided by periodicals, public lectures, and amateur societies. Close scrutiny … indicates that the public was not as naïve nor the scientists as self-serving as previously contended” (Kohlstedt 453). Science was evidently interconnected with the public at large and cannot be dismissed as the circumscribed efforts of an elitist few.

But where do the life sciences fit into this picture? It is conceivable that this discipline was given disproportionately low support in comparison to the sciences in general. Peter J. Bowler’s lectures, *Biology and Social Thought from 1850 to 1914*, answer this question in part. He explains that even before Darwin, naturalists were postulating and publishing mechanisms of growth and teleological development. Bowler describes that “[i]n his *Philosophie Zoölogique* of 1809, Lamarck suggested that a progressive transforming force drove successive generations of living things steadily further up the scale of organization” (Bowler 9). His argument is that these theories had an impact on thought not merely constrained to the scientific world. With regard to the transformative hypothesis, he argues,

Despite much initial opposition, these ideas forced both scientists and non-scientists to rethink their attitude toward transformism. The critical question was *continuity*: radicals and conservatives were both beginning to think in terms of patterns unfolding by natural causes in the course of geological time, but where the radicals wanted a model of continuous development to support their calls for social reform, conservatives opted for theories with distinct cycles of development so that the cause of change remained unrelated to everyday activities. (Bowler 11)

This idea is of crucial importance in the context of the annexationist rhetoric to be analyzed. Bowler’s claim is first that the emerging papers and work concerning natural development resonated with non-scientists, which agrees with the arguments made by Kohlstedt. Furthermore, Bowler illustrates that a single theory can be manipulated to serve the political and social agendas of certain groups, in this case liberals and conservatives. That these groups
recognize their vested interest in biological theory is significant, but that they use this theory to support their more or less opposed worldviews is a clear indication that biology itself is not enough to cause directed social movements; society must be willing and ready.

**POLITICAL ORGANICISM AND THE ENTRANCE OF BIOLOGY INTO SOCIAL DISCOURSE**

America was indeed receptive to the ideas that the life sciences were promoting. In fact, rhetoric of the Romantic era, especially in response to historical events, generally followed a trend of moving away from the mechanical images of the Enlightenment worldview and toward an organic metaphor of history and the unfolding of God's scheme (Conser 115). An established strain of organic metaphor was latent as early as 1789, when Joseph A. Huntington wrote a discourse relating the state of the thirteen colonies to that of a body. Very similar to the kind of rhetoric to be analyzed in expansionist documents, Huntington's text posits that “[a]s the health of the body natural depends upon the proper functions, union, and harmony of the parts, so does that of the body politic” (13). The existence of an explicit analogy between the collective government and a living body in this document decides that America was no exception to the rule of organicism in the Romantic view of history.

Still, organic metaphor in the Romantic era is not the same as its counterpart in the annexationist, antebellum era. Huntington's rhetoric, for example, has an overtly religious slant not so easily apparent in the discourse of superiority of the 1850s. He fervently writes, “God has formed and arranged the whole in his own wisdom and goodness, and all is right, perfectly right; and well might the Creator say of his as it came out of his own hand, All is very good” (Huntington 6). In addition, the metaphor drawn in the 1789 text restricts itself to a metaphorical discussion of federal and state governments in relation to a neutral body, while annexationist rhetoric also incorporates land and people, gender and race. The point is that there was a paradigm shift within this particular type of rhetoric and its use in politics from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries; Romanticism like Huntington's was, in this sense, a conducive incubator for the introduction of the logic and rhetoric of natural science into social thought.

Walter Conser’s analysis of the antebellum scholar Philip Schaff (fig. 1) is an example of how the utility of organicism changed in this time. “In language that drew on its roots in European romanticism Schaff depicted
human history as a ‘living organism’ and ‘as the struggle of centuries to actualize in full the deep meanings of life’” (Conser 114). This is not surprising. What is worth noting is that “Schaff’s principle of historical development recognized a hierarchical ordering of societies and groups, one that not only distinguished differences but also normatively ranked them” (Conser 115). His schema easily allows for his own society to occupy the topmost niche. The statement is inflected with self-proclaimed superiority, and illustrates the transformation of organicism from Huntington’s time. One might wonder if this is merely an atypical example, not representative of the mainstream. Though some have argued that his type of organicism faded out, it appears that Schaff’s thesis was neither evanescent nor atypical.

Many scholars have assumed that organicism lost its appeal, novelty, and utility with the end of the Romantic period. According to Theodore Bozeman, scholars appear to have lost interest in organicism after the “romantic” gave way to the industrial and imperialist. He contends that “[s]eldom noticed by historians are the frequency and enthusiasm of southern recourse to explicitly organic images for the expression of social and political ideas” (565). Of course, his research focuses primarily on the southern states of the Union, which were, as previously mentioned, sociologically dissociable from their northern neighbors. Though not representative of the entire United States, the South was the largest supporter of annexationism, which means that it is a region of special interest to this thesis. Bozeman cites specific examples of these bodily metaphors; for example,

Thornwell … could describe the “healthy” social process as “like the vigor of a healthful body, in which all the limbs and organs perform their appropriate functions. …” Similarly, a basic image of society in the writings of Virginia radical George Fitzhugh was the “human hive.” “Society,” he insisted, “is a work of nature and grows. Men are social like bees.” (565)

His work clearly establishes the importance of organicism in southern rhetoric, but more importantly gives this tradition an interesting and illuminating
basis. Despite other claims that Romanticism was the primary source of organicism, he contends that “[n]ineteenth-century organicism, which became prominent long before Darwin, represented a continuation of the Enlightenment stress upon the ‘natural’; whatever was ‘natural’ was ‘right’” (566). Since the Enlightenment promoted scientific inquiry and rationality in opposition to Romantic irrationality, Bozeman implies that the particular strain of rhetoric extant in the antebellum South was concerned more with reason and the logic of morality than with aestheticism and religious faith.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

This is not to say that God did not play a role in the antebellum worldview. On the contrary, it was precisely the interplay and tension between the divine world and the natural world which ultimately resulted in the discourse of superiority of the time. William Longton’s theory that, at this time, “Theology, social thought, and scientific interpretation all drew upon each other for sustenance and direction” (Longton 118) echoes other scholars’ ideas that the “Science vs. God” dichotomy created ripples in the surface of social thought. Still, Longton’s argument is nuanced, in that he does not necessarily pit these constructs against each other antagonistically, but rather in a sympathetic way: “That nineteenth century writers placed such great importance on the harmonization of theology, science, and social theories suggests that it was their harmonization rather than any one of them alone that was crucial to the satisfaction of ideological needs” (118). In other words, divinity and science led to a sociological synergy. This means that the aforementioned increase in funding for natural scientific research, in combination with the preexisting metaphor of history and governments as organic, resulted in a cycle of self-aggrandizing thought characteristic of the time.

Specifically, a discourse of self-proclaimed natural superiority emerged from the fusion of the sciences and theology. This seems to have been the easiest and most convenient direction for thinkers to venture. Joseph LeConte, a prominent naturalist of the mid-nineteenth century in America and the focus of Bozeman’s study, was one of the many academicians exemplifying this logic. “LeConte expressed the comforting result: ‘Geology most distinctly declares the superior dignity of our Time-world, and of our race’” (Bozeman 570). Such an explicit sentiment citing a proof of superiority in geology is only the tip of the iceberg; many of the models of superiority were highly elaborate.

A common element to almost all theories of natural superiority was the
belief in a teleological principle of biological development. In the case of antebellum South Carolina, this was a twofold hypothesis. “First it was affirmed that events in the organic world described a course under God’s control and that some final end awaited all life” (Longton 124). In this sense, a divine will was purposefully guiding the slow changes and transformations that had given fish gills and Africans dark skin and knotted hair. “The second proposition was that living beings possessed certain essentially changeless characters which gave them their definition” (Longton 124). This premise allowed for generalizations across species or across races.

Within this intellectual context, many analogies and connections from the natural world to the social world were possible. Scientists drew a fascinating relationship between the total history of the world and an individual life history: “The nature of this relationship was that the ontogenetic development of any individual representative of a given vertebrate species was determined by the phylogenetic history of vertebrates” (Longton 124). In the same way that primitive ancestors of a given life form slowly gave rise to modern flora and fauna, a single creature’s life would mirror, in a greatly accelerated way, that transformation. This theory stemmed from many natural observations, especially that fetuses all started from an ambiguous cell mass and slowly differentiated and transformed into a specialized organism (fig. 2).

Even children’s books contained lessons concerning the natural world, expounding upon theories of teleological development. For instance, “McGuffey’s Fifth Reader,” which first appeared in 1844, contains many articles with a religious emphasis. … There was one lesson on ‘the scale of animal existence,’ which indicates the concept of the ‘scale of being’ was carried over into the teaching of young people” (Smallwood and Coon 227). If children's
minds were absorbing scientific theories of transformative superiority, the adult mind was likely steeped in them.

THE SYMBOLIC BASIS OF CUBAN ANNEXATION

These scientific theories and their social resonance are closely related to the United States’ relations with Cuba in the years leading up to the drafting of the Ostend Manifesto. The annexation of the island became an increasingly important issue as the nation slowly approached its Civil War. This was not a coincidence. Support for annexation was undoubtedly a function of the disagreement over slavery between the North and South (Cuba’s was an economy heavily dependent on the slave trade) and was in many ways a sectional conflict. Nevertheless, to say that sectionalism was the sole factor in the debate is a grave oversimplification. The slave states were decidedly split over the issue, as were the Northern states.

Josef Opatrny traces the annexationism issue on both the Southern and Northern fronts, arguing that economics was a major component of the disagreement. His theory that revenues from “tobacco, meat, sugar, and flour” (Opatrny 27) incited the greatest support for expansionism is corroborated by congressional debates. Congressmen like Southern representatives W.W. Boyce and E.W. Chastain, two strongly opinionated orators, cited statistics and tariff rates in their speeches to promote their ideas (see Cong. Globe, 15 Jan. 1855, 91–94 and 192–195, respectively). Though both promoted slavery, they were in disagreement over the economic advantage of the annexation. While citing the same tariff statistics and using the same economic principles, either side was arriving at varying conclusions as to the actual benefit of bringing Cuba into the Union. Southerners saw that their control of the sugar market would increase if they annexed the tropical island, but they also recognized that the price of sugar would drop. In this way, the economic advantage was ambiguous and could not have constituted a central aspect of the argument. The slave argument was also secondary to the totality of the question, because some felt that Cuba was on the verge of undergoing a slave revolt, and that annexing it would not necessarily be an expansion of slave territory (Urban 40).

Even though the significantly abolitionist North would have wanted to prevent the admittance of further slave territory to the Union, statistics cited in the same congressional debates reveal that some Northerners saw an economic advantage to be gained in the annexation. Northern shipping interests saw the high Spanish tariffs as an obstacle to their profit-earning ventures,
and many consumers felt that the price of Southern sugar and cotton was too high (Opatrny 114). Thus both the North and the South were home to opposing viewpoints.

The fact that the splits not only occurred along sectional lines but also within the national sections underscores the idea that the North and South, and the annexationist and anti-annexationist camps, agreed on many key principles: they all shared a similar view on military strategy, agreeing that Cuba was a weakness to Spain as a maritime colony, the United States had need of a naval base, and the African race ought not to seize control of the island. In addition, most were averse to the idea of Britain or France annexing Cuba (as expressed in both the Ostend Manifesto and Boyce’s counterargument).

The issue was apparently functioning on a different plane than that of mere sectionalism and economics. There was a symbolic value to the act of annexation, and a philosophical dimension that was not often explicitly addressed in congressional debate halls. Orators like Boyce and President Franklin Pierce constructed a vision of the American nation, and their knowledge of and position on natural science informed their constructions. It is valid to say that constructions of the nation as body had previously been used to achieve political aims. Huntington had, for example, implied in his 1789 discourse that the political body would not agree well with additions when he wrote, “[W]e should shudder at the thought of any alteration in the number [of our appendages], we justly account a great loss, and to have one superadded would be altogether disagreeable to us” (7). He uses the metaphor of the body politic as a natural body in this case to argue that annexations to a nation are as disagreeable as annexations to a human body. The annexationists and anti-annexationists of the 1850s must have recognized the convenience of the organic metaphor as not only a clever rhetorical strategy but as a means of appealing to the emerging ideology of superiority dictated by scientific theories. Playing upon the trends in social thought, politicians and politically active individuals began to incorporate aspects of natural science into their arguments.

TRACES OF NATURAL SCIENCE IN ANNEXATIONIST RHETORIC AND POLICY

Primary source documents prove to be the best source material in demonstrating the relationship between foreign policy and natural science. Specifically within the written and spoken rhetoric in this time, there is a
great deal of organicism and biological metaphor. Articles and letters published in antebellum newspapers give particular insight into the biological discourse researched by Bozeman, Longton, and others. A certain opinion expressed in the *New York Times* of October 21, 1851, proclaims “that to the Great Democracy, keen of eye, strong of hand, firm of will, resolute of purpose, ready to seize and liable to defend, belong the gifts that Providence reserves not for decrepit and debauched tyrannies” (n. 32). Clearly an argument for annexation, this letter’s verbiage is particularly interesting. The “Great Democracy” of America is metaphorically a very healthy, fit body with eyes, hand, and a will. Spain, on the other hand, is not only decrepit but debauched! This language invokes age and morality, elements uncharacteristic of Romantic-era organicism. To justify the seizure of Cuba, the author implies that Spain is incapable of managing the colony because it is elderly and weak; a more developed, naturally superior America has the right to take Cuba for its own since Providence has guided the progress of its chosen nation. Although this argument does not directly utilize the biological ethos, it does illustrate that the organicism of antebellum rhetoric was a conduit for natural science to enter politics, especially as the issue rose to greater national importance; as such, the preexisting organicism was convenient for annexationists and anti-annexationists alike.

One of the great symbolic questions appears to have been that of America’s national age, and its state of development. Representative W.W. Boyce of South Carolina argued in Congress that “[o]ur commerce has never been disturbed from Cuba; and if we have never been disturbed in the infancy of our power, what have we to fear in its maturity?” (*Cong. Globe*, 15 Jan. 1855, 91, emphasis mine). While he argues that America has crossed the threshold of economic vulnerability, his statement also implies that Uncle Sam ought not to engage in behavior typical of younger and more easily governable nations. Boyce warns that annexing Cuba will weaken America, for enemy countries strike not in the “heart” but in the “extremities.” That America has finally become “compact, solid, massy” means that no one can “wound her severely” (*Cong. Globe*, 15 Jan. 1855, 91). The implication is that the American body is on the verge of becoming unwieldy and must halt growth. On the other hand, the *Ostend Manifesto* uses the same analogy to argue the opposite point of view: “[Cuba] belongs naturally to that great family of States of which the Union is the providential nursery” (*Ostend* n.pag.). For the writers of the *Ostend Manifesto*, America is a nation still burgeoning, still able to accommodate expansion and national development. In the two sides of this analogy, we hear an echo of Bowler’s idea that radicals and conservatives debated over the continuity of natural development. For Boyce, the
cycle theory of growth likely informed his view that unchecked growth would lead to decay and natural decline. Pierce and the authors of the *Ostend Manifesto*, in turn, implicitly utilize the continual development model to argue that America, perpetually an undeveloped infant, can continue to grow.

**FEMINIZATION AND EROTICISM**

The question of how developed America was as a national body is only one of many biologically informed arguments in the imperialist discourse. Sometimes, the arguments for the seizure of Cuba are disturbing to a modern audience. For example,

> Occasionally southerners got so carried away by their own rhetoric about Cuba that their prose became erotic: “[Cuba] admires Uncle Sam, and he loves her. Who shall forbid the bans? Matches are made in heaven, and why not this? Who can object if he throws his arms around the Queen of the Antilles, as she sits, like Cleopatra’s burning throne, upon the silver waves, breathing her spicy, tropic breath, and pouting her rosy, sugared lips? Who can object? None. She is of age—take her, Uncle Sam!” (May 7)

One understands immediately that the metaphor of states as individual with personalities and biological qualities was more than mere phraseology and wordplay. There is a certain threshold between artfully convincing rhetoric and ideological discourse, and eroticism in the annexationist argument crosses that threshold. This example, taken from an antebellum issue of the *Louisville Courier*, contains much biological baggage. There is the idea that America is a dominant male with a right to court and claim his bride; also, we see that Cuba is yearning for Uncle Sam’s love—that is, his domination—and this is related to the biological advancements in female anatomy, as documented by Carolyn Sorisio. Specifically, due to the 1843 discovery of spontaneous ovulation, scientists compared women to animals in estrus (Sorisio 31). This evidence of increased female fertility resonated with male members of society so that “[p]roponents of racial Anglo-Saxonism had a ‘boundless faith in the reproductive capacity of the white American people’ and connected ‘commercial penetration and population growth’ to America’s future global domination” (Sorisio 30). Cuba, as the feminine beauty of the Antilles, represented to some politicians the future of the state in her potential of economic “penetrability” (a likely sexual metaphor) and fertility.

The feminizing of Cuba appears in multiple contexts. The *Ostend Manifesto* uses diction that implies the femininity and weakness of other countries. It warns that governing Cuba is “paralyzing her [Spain’s] energies”
and that failure to comply with the terms of the manifesto could “give birth” to complications. This attribution of physical infirmity in relation to womanhood stemmed from craniometry (fig. 3) and other “pseudosciences” which posited that women were naturally weaker than men (Sorisio 35).

Furthermore, the authors subtly eroticize their relationship with the island nation when they describe that past “intercourse” with Cuba necessitates a “consummation” in which America will “embrace” Cuba within its boundaries. In this case, some saw Cuba as the scientific female, perpetually fertile and vital. Clearly, the biological symbolism of annexation was not shallow.

INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-GOVERNANCE AS BIOLOGICAL MARKERS

Though the preceding arguments clamored for hasty acquisition, some citizens proposed an alternative version of annexationism. In their opinion, Cuba would be worthy to enter the Union if the country were able to secure independence from Spain. An editorial in the *New York Times* of 1851 argues that Cuba ought to free herself of the tyranny of Spanish oppression and thus demonstrate her candidacy for entry. The manifesto explains, “We are rich enough, strong enough without her. After she has thrown off the yoke of Spain, we shall annex her” (n. 17). This position that a nation must be independent in order to join the United States mirrors certain arguments inherent to the life sciences, and the question of how to determine how alive something is. According to Longton, “The single most telling test, applicable to groups and individuals alike, involved the entity’s capacity to govern itself, to sustain liberty” (132). This logic asserts that Cuba, to join the organic system that was America, had to demonstrate vitality, both symbolically and literally, by declaring independence from a mother country.

If independence was such a crucial factor in determining the “aliveness” of entities, it is no wonder that Cuba received such morbid publicity in the
organicist discourse. The manifesto of the Lone Star Junta, published in the New York Times in 1852, states that “[w]hile she remained uncultivated, depopulated, and poor, she suffered all that it is possible to for men to suffer, from ignorance and misery. By-and-by she reached a certain state of civilization and aggrandizement, by which she learned her rights and her strength, and aspired to Independence” (n. 340). The authors of this manifesto characterize Cuba as lacking vitality due to her dependence. When analyzed in the context of Longton’s statement that, in antebellum thought, “Civilized societies were ordinarily understood to depend on primitive antecedents, as of course men could not exist without first having been children” (Longton 128), this manifesto’s language illuminates the transformist idea that countries, like people, evolved and “grew up” ("aggrandizement") and experienced a need for independence. Once Cuba became sufficiently mature, the United States would be justified in taking “her,” just as was evident in the erotic rhetoric of the *Louisville Courier*.

A speech that combines many of the idiosyncrasies of this annexationist rhetoric is Elijah Chastain’s congressional address of 1854. Toward the end of his speech, the Georgian declares,

> England knows what nature, and nature’s God has done for that western Eden. Rich in all the varied productions which spring forth spontaneously from her soil—salubrious in climate—exhaustless in her natural resources—she needs but the influence of American institutions … to raise her to a condition that would challenge the admiration of the world. Under her present rotten and despotic system of Government—her industry paralyzed—her spirit galled and broken—her sons enslaved, and her soil neglected, it is almost incredible that she could retain even a breath of commercial vitality. (*Cong. Globe*, 15 Jan. 1855, 195)

Like the members of the Lone Star Junta, Chastain constructs a Cuba with little “vitality” and “spirit” as a consequence of dependence on Spain. His words also claim that America can help Cuba in “her” development and aggrandizement, and raise “her” to a superior state of being, much as a parent or teacher would raise a child. The mention of “nature and nature’s God” is also significant; it is a rhetorical marker that places Chastain’s speech within the discourse of biology and theology.

**THE TRANSITIVITY OF NATURAL LAW, HUMAN LAW, AND NATIONAL LAW**

These constructions of nations as living entities meant that natural laws could be applied to them. In fact, it was a rather common technique in the
foreign policy of mid-nineteenth century America to make logical appeals to natural and universal “laws.” The extent to which these laws were a result of advancements in life sciences is difficult to tell, but it seems important that politicians should model the government on observations of the natural world. Senator O.R. Singleton’s speech reflects this trend; he observes, “It seems to be one of the immutable laws of nature, that when we have lost the respect of our peers, we soon forfeit our own self-esteem, and are hurrying on to a state of degradation and dependence, to end in imbecility and slavery” (Cong. Globe, 14 Jun. 1854, 933). To a modern audience, it seems quite extreme to suggest that imbecility and slavery are the necessary result of a nation’s losing its international esteem. By drawing a relationship between “dependence” and “degradation,” he seems to be resorting to the same principle that others used, namely the biological idea underlined by Longton that higher life forms were more capable of independent action. His recourse to the “immutable laws of nature” in his speech contextualizes his ideas in the biological rhetoric. The Ostend Manifesto is no exception to this pattern of logical appeal. One of the basic ideas in the document is that “[s]elf-preservation is the first law of nature, with States as well as with individuals” (Ostend n.pag.). Indeed, self-preservation was one of the many mechanisms under study in the natural sciences, as evidenced by the fact that Darwin’s theory of natural selection operates mainly on the self-preservation principle. Following the logic that natural law is God’s law, and that the dynamics of nature operated on a competitive system of instinctual preservation, politicians saw no reason why this logic could not be applied to the political body. As well, this statement in the Ostend Manifesto claims that the same laws that apply to individual humans in society can be applied to nations as a whole. This transitivity of human law and national law was equally important to naturalist Joseph LeConte. That society operated according to the mechanisms of individual human nature and morality was not mere philosophical conjecture in his case—LeConte held the idea on the level of scientific law (Bozeman 579). Other policymakers in the American government referred to this principle in their speeches. Singleton’s speech continues, “I have found no better standard by which to measure national wrongs, that that which I have suggested, and which I have adopted for the government of my own actions” (Cong. Globe, 14 Jun. 1854, 933). Using the same scale of judgment as would be used to judge a person is an implicit analogy between the state’s position and the individual’s position in society, and Singleton identifies himself as a LeContian thinker in this case.

The Ostend Manifesto makes a comparable claim. To justify annexation, the authors write, “By every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in
wresting it from Spain if we possess the power, and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home” (Ostend n.pag.). Of course, this statement victimizes America and legitimizes the imperialist seizure by which it is so tempted. Still, a recourse to the self-preservation principle as applied to national action echoes the thought of LeConte and other natural scientists who were publishing their ideas prior to this.

On the opposite extreme was political cartoonist Nathan Currier. His cartoon entitled The Ostend Doctrine (fig. 4) curtly demonstrates why the laws that govern individual action in the natural, competitive world should not be expanded to the social world. He also demonstrates that the politicians are not even following their own analogy; if indeed they applied their own personal codes of morality to the seizure of Cuba they would be no more than common brigands, represented by the crowd accosting the aristocratic figure (a caricature of Franklin Pierce).

Despite Currier’s visual protest, the swelling tide of political law mirroring biological law continued to soak into foreign policy and annexationism. In the words of Bowler, “By the 1850s a new initiative on the subject of trans-

Fig. 4: Political Cartoon from 1854. Currier, Nathan. The “Ostend Doctrine.” Library of Congress Prints and Photographs online. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a11678>.
formism would be welcomed by those who believed that God governed the world by law rather than by miracle” (12). To discover the divine laws, one would have to uncover natural laws. Applying these to politics was merely the next logical step in creating a “superior” America.

A PRELUDE TO DARWIN

The utility of science did not end with the end of Cuban annexationism, as evidenced by the firm hold on society that eugenics and social Darwinism had after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859. American society, it seems, was particularly receptive to these ideas, because “Darwin provided an initiative to a public that had already been conditioned to think of evolution as the unfolding of a purposeful trend toward a morally significant goal” (Bowler 12). Scientific theories cannot function unless society is ready to accept them, and in this case Darwin was able to publish his hypotheses at a very propitious moment.

His evolutionary arguments were introduced in an era when biology was growing as a scientific field, with the theories of Lamarck, Gray, Buffon, Agassiz, and others making waves in the scientific pool. A steady teleological development and purposeful transformism toward a higher state of being characterized the scientific outlook of these antebellum thinkers. While people were incorporating these ideas with those of Christian religion to arrive at a worldview in which America and the Anglo-Saxons were naturally superior, the question of Cuban annexation was under debate in the government. Though superficially a question about sectionalism and economics, the annexation was largely a philosophical and symbolic issue. Rhetoric and logic from primary sources including congressional speeches, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, and the *Ostend Manifesto* itself reveal that, ultimately, the issue was informed by the aforementioned trends in social thoughts vis-à-vis natural science and theology. Thus, even before Darwin, the imperialist ethos encouraged by biological thought led to further biological developments, thereby completing the cycle of politics and science.

This is an important point for politicians, scientists, and the general public. Though some envision scientific inquiry as detached from social events and cultural phenomena, this research emphasizes the continuity of science and society. Furthermore, it describes a mechanism by which the life sciences in particular have been able to influence legislation and foreign policy in an era that many consider a tragic chapter in the annals in American history. Understanding how the public perception of science has resulted in
regrettably, international incidents reminds us that science can be a legislative tool, one not to be used lightly.

**Works Cited**


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ESSAYS FROM
Introduction
to the Humanities
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Boothe Prize Winners &
Honorable Mentions
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE HUMANITIES is the most recent in a long history of programs aimed at introducing Stanford first-year students to the humanities. The ongoing presence of these programs in the first-year curriculum—from Western Civilization to Western Culture to Cultures, Ideas, and Values, and now to IHUM—suggests the long-standing commitment on the part of the University to introducing its newest students to the central role of the humanities in their college educations. The humanities—encompassing the written word, architecture, music, image, and gesture (for starters!)—are in many ways at the heart of the University. And at the heart of humanities courses, no matter in what era they are offered, are written expression, analysis, argumentation, and appreciation.

As Directors of the Introduction to the Humanities Program and as readers of the papers nominated by IHUM courses for Boothe Prizes, we congratulate, with great pleasure, the winners for 2003–2004—and the writers of the papers that came oh-so-close. We know that other readers, which this publication makes possible, will agree that these papers, authored by students at the beginning of their academic careers at Stanford, exemplify humanities writing at its best: this is work that is insightful and deft, fresh and nuanced—both instructive and pleasurable to read.

In IHUM courses, students learn through lectures, given by some of the best scholar-teachers on Stanford’s faculty, and small-group discussion, led by skilled and accomplished postdoctoral Fellows in the Humanities. These Fellows are responsible for many aspects of the student experience in IHUM courses; one of their most important tasks is to guide students in their writing. We are very pleased therefore to congratulate both the students whose writing is honored here and their IHUM Fellows, who worked hard to foster, promote, and enhance the skills these essays reflect.

—Orrin (Rob) Robinson
    Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program

—Cheri Ross
    Associate Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program
Steph Abegg offers an insightful examination of social control at Rome in her paper “Rome: The City of Gods.” Steph argues that, by allowing the assimilation of certain foreign deities into the fabric of Roman life, the Roman state provided the large and diverse population of Rome with emotional and spiritual outlets not achieved by the more staid state religion. This assimilation in turn bolstered the well-being of the state, creating a sense of belonging and identity in the people that contributed to the stability of the state. This paper was extensively researched, with an impressive array of ancient and modern source material. More importantly, Steph has shown a sophistication in her synthesis and analysis of historical material beyond that of a first-year student. She has the intellect and persistence (and, let’s face it, plain nosiness about her world) that indicate a deep love of learning, all of which will take her far on her chosen path.

—Cindy Nimchuk
By the beginning of the second century BCE, Rome had succeeded in subjecting almost the whole inhabited world to her rule—from authority over her neighbors in Italy to direct or indirect control over the seas, lands, and peoples from Spain in the west to Asia in the east. This was a tremendous achievement, yet one that created an enormous problem: the difficulty of controlling such a diverse population of peoples, who had unique histories, languages, customs, economies, political systems, and ideologies. How did Rome overcome such an obstacle? I propose that one of the most significant factors of Rome’s successful domination, from the Republic to the Empire, was her toleration, assimilation, and adoption of foreign religious cults. In so doing, Rome created a religious potpourri that, compared to her earlier obscure state religion, was much more understandable and rewarding, more personal and familiar to the diverse populace. This became a cohesive force that contributed to the social control, and thus to the endurance of the Roman state, by providing native Romans and assimilated foreigners alike with a new way to deal with the uncertain and violent times of Roman expansion, and giving them a fresh awareness of religious identity and religious freedom.

Prior to the sixth century BCE—when the Roman practice of adopting foreign religious cults became prevalent—the state religion was predominant at Rome. This early religion (before the formation of the Capitoline Triad of the Republic) was largely agricultural, with local powers or spirits, numina, in control of various activities of daily life and the forces of nature. The agricultural basis is evident in the ancient inscription *Expiation of a Town in Umbria*. This text details a certain early Roman religious ritual in which one had to “observe favorable owls, favorable crows, a male woodpecker on the right hand, a female woodpecker on the right hand, birds on the right, voices of birds on the right, sent by the gods” (VI. A). Agriculturally based cultic
practices such as this, however, by the time the Roman Republic formed in 509 BCE, were merely systems of religious observances so old that their original meaning was long forgotten. And the faceless and impersonal gods of this early traditional Roman religion, along with the lack of myth, theology, statues of the gods, or temples, did little more to enlighten the people. Thus, it is not surprising that as early Rome developed into an increasingly cosmopolitan capital of Italy, the overall religious atmosphere began to evolve to suit the Roman world better.

The religious metamorphosis of Rome was greatly influenced by foreign cults, increasingly accessible through the growing network of Roman roads, trade routes, and sea lanes, coupled with the state’s unceasing shuttling back and forth of merchants, slaves, and soldiers. Rome—particularly during the Republic—was quite open to the foreign cults she encountered. She exhibited not only tolerance and respect, but a readiness to borrow and adapt foreign gods and goddesses. This tendency is well-illustrated in the fifth-century CE *Saturnalia Conversations*, in which Latin philosopher Macrobius tells of the practice of *evocation*, inviting a protective deity (in this case a deity from Carthage) to desert the foreign state and come to Rome, where the deity would be honored and celebrated with monuments and games.

It was this welcoming attitude that led to much foreign religious influence in the Roman state, beginning primarily with the influence of the Greeks and Etruscans, who were two of Rome’s most prominent neighbors. From the sixth century BCE Rome absorbed many Greek or Greco-Etruscan gods, adopting Apollo as a symbol of virtue and austerity, and assimilating Zeus to Jupiter, Hera to Juno, and Athena to Minerva. Unlike a majority of the imported cults, which simply coexisted with the state religion, the triad of Jupiter-Juno-Minerva actually became the focus of a new Roman state religion. This triad, although soon to become a dull relative to the “popular” eastern cults that would sweep into Rome, was the first step in the religious metamorphosis of the Roman state. It was not long before the eastern religions of Cybele, Mithras, Isis, and Serapis, as well as countless other foreign cults, gained firm footholds in Italy. Clearly, Rome—and thus the state under its control—was undergoing a major religious change. Its plethora of coexisting religious cults soon became so numerous that fifth-century CE theologian St. Augustine, when looking back on the pre-Christian empire, was overwhelmed with the number of gods in Rome: even the Romans’ “great volumes [could] scarce include them all.”

It is important to note, however, that Rome did not blindly adopt all foreign religious cults, but rather showed thoughtful selectivity, a great benefit to the stability of the new religious mélange and its ability to coexist with the
mores of the Roman state religion. Rome exhibited little tolerance towards religious practices that it considered to be politically subversive: human sacrifices, divination, or those that promoted insurrection and immorality. For example, Livy reports that Rome rejected the cult of Bacchus, the god of wine, because it promoted drunken orgies and gave women more freedom to prostitute themselves by allowing them to be out late at night (XXXIX: viii-xix). By selectively rejecting such cults, Rome was able to maintain some authority over religion. All in all, this selective, yet extensive, yielding to the influence of foreign cults enabled Rome to create for itself the most applicable and beneficial religious atmosphere, one that would enlighten the people without lessening the control of the Roman state.

The ultimate result of Rome's attitude towards foreign cults was a shift from the early impersonal and impotent agriculturally based state religion to a more personal, emotionally appealing, richer system of religious beliefs and practices that promoted unity and positive values. Unlike the traditional faceless gods of Rome, new foreign deities were embodied and human-like; and unlike the simple, old-fashioned rites of before, the new rituals—a key part of the cults—were more flamboyant and appealing to the changing Roman society. Additionally, the many new temples that soon speckled the towns in Italy provided common places to worship, something the people had not had before. Thus, it is not surprising that the new religious atmosphere of the Roman state, with its uplifting practices and embodied gods, was on the whole a welcomed change, embraced by the common people and, at the very least, tolerated by the Roman elite. Some of the Roman elite even preferred the new cults to the old: by the time of the Principate, the Flavians firmly embraced the Egyptian goddess Isis, and a later emperor, Commodus, incorporated Serapis (an Egyptian god) into the official prayers of the new year. It seems that only a small minority—Pliny the Younger, for example, who was infuriated with Domitian's use of an Egyptian chapel for his devotions—exhibited contempt towards the new religious practices, and any repression was scattered and short-lived. Overall, the new and enlightening religious atmosphere in Rome was a widely accepted change, a product of long-term peaceful and passive penetration rather than coercion.

Now that I have outlined the course of the religious transformation of Rome, I will briefly narrow my focus to two of the more popular foreign cults: the Persian cult of Mithras and the Egyptian cult of Isis. Both were well integrated into the Roman state by the late Republic, and demonstrate the specific benefits provided by the foreign religious cults. One important quality, for instance, was their great personal appeal to the individual. The victorious warrior-god Mithras appealed primarily to soldiers. Like the soldiers, he
protected his people. He was often depicted as decked in battle gear and slaying a great bull; this imagery clearly reveals the cult’s ideology of masculinity and warfare, directed specifically at one sector of the population, the soldiers. Similarly, what Mithras provided for soldiers, Isis provided for women. Women could identify with Isis, an Egyptian Mother Goddess who characterized the ideal wife and mother. Her worship offered women a feminine religious aspect, something that the traditional, overwhelmingly masculine Roman religion had not provided. Hence, with the appearance of cults such as Mithras and Isis, the religious atmosphere of the Roman state was becoming one with which people, regardless of status, could intimately identify.

Mithras and Isis also demonstrate how the new and more personal foreign cults were able to provide a “feel-good” religion with eternal rewards for all of the people. Mithras—like many other foreign deities, including Bellona Victrix, Jupiter Victor, and Victory herself—was associated with victory, a perfect vehicle for helping the people gain confidence in the Roman state. Furthermore, such emotional appeal was augmented by the many festivals, processions, and celebrations which were so key to the foreign cults. The festivals of Isis, for example, were quite enlivening; Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* provides a colorful illustration of one festival of Isis, in which the people (and animals) dressed up in various costumes in honor of the goddess:

This consisted of men finely got up, each according to his fancy: one was girt with a sword-belt and represented a soldier; […] while another, dressed in gilded slippers and a silk gown, wearing expensive ornaments and a wig, swung his hips as he walked in imitation of a woman. […] There was also an ass with a pair of wings fastened to him walking along with a lame old man, recognizable as Pegasus and Bellerophon respectively, a comic duo. (11:8)

This was an opportunity for people to be whomever they wanted—magistrates, soldiers, philosophers, mythical characters—regardless of their status in society. Such “popular sports and diversions” thus allowed escape into a world of hopes and visions (*Golden Ass* 11:9), much needed in what was doubtless a very insecure and stressful time to live. And because of the active participation of the people, these new rituals were a useful tool for augmenting social unity. Certainly these were tremendous improvements from the traditional Roman religion, in which one was a mere silent spectator while the experts conducted the traditional rites.

Equally important to the foreign cults was the concept of salvation, the hopeful promise of personal redemption and joyous afterlife in union with the gods. This too had never been assured by the traditional Roman religion, with its vague and variable ideas of an afterlife, ideas that were understood
just as little as the abstract *numina* who were believed to control the forces of nature. The new foreign cults in Rome provided much more concrete and hopeful visions of the afterlife. In the cult of Mithras, people believed that when they died their souls would be freed and allowed to rise to the realm of the stars. This was an afterlife completely separated from the worries of the world. And those who worshiped Isis looked forward to spending eternity in the underworld ruled by Osiris. Fixed beliefs like these offered hope for the present life and the next. Such personal and social benefits—benefits that could be enjoyed by natives and foreigners, citizens and non-citizens, elite and non-elite alike—allowed Rome’s smooth assimilation of the foreign cults. Hence, foreign cults, of which Mithras and Isis are representatives, united the people in worship and offered revelation, redemption, and deeper religious experience, ultimately becoming a “good sedative for the masses” during the uncertain and violent times of Roman expansion.

Clearly, specific qualities of these foreign religious cults—individual appeal, exciting festivals, and personal salvation—satisfied the emotional and religious needs of the people, and were thus important in supporting the stability of the Roman state. Nonetheless, the most significant stabilizing factor of the presence of foreign cults in Rome was their familiarity to foreigners. This was of utmost importance to the state’s success, for as Rome and its empire expanded, both territorially and commercially, the state encompassed more and more foreigners (Greeks, Etruscans, Egyptians, Sabines, Faliscans, Latins, and others) and the religious scene undoubtedly became one of different cults, creeds, and philosophies. Clearly, these people needed to be appeased, unified, and allowed to retain a sense of identity if Rome were to maintain domination. Rome’s toleration and adoption of foreign cults did just that, allowing various religious cults to coexist as well as to span social rank, geography, and local traditions. In this way, foreigners throughout the empire could find freedom from Roman domination in their ability to practice a familiar religion without fear of persecution. This formed a cohesive force among foreigners. As modern historian George La Piana describes,

> […] the various foreign races which had a large representation in Rome formed at times special groups bound together by their common origin from the same province or from the same city, by their common traditions, and yet more by their peculiar religious cults of national deities. (my emphasis)

Foreign cults provided a focal point for a feeling of unity and belonging among the diverse peoples of the state. Notably, this sense of belonging was only furthered by Rome’s role as an important religious center, as well as by the open worship of foreign gods by some of the emperors; together, these provided a connection between foreign peoples and the center of the state.
Because of such practices, the empire did not become a “chessboard” of disconnected foreign religious groups. Instead, the state was united to the point that, by the time of the late Principate, people from Rome to the frontiers celebrated many of the same rituals and festivals. There is no doubt that religion united the empire and mediated Roman social control. The Greek historian Polybius (second century BCE) realized this, noting that “the most distinctive excellence of the Roman state [...] [was] its attitude to the gods; [...] [this] holds the Roman state together” (VI: lvi).

If it had not been for its adoption of foreign cults, Rome, from the Roman Republic to the Empire, probably would not have been so successful. A stricter, exclusively Roman traditional religion could have led to excessive fanaticism or, more likely, massive long-term revolts, perhaps by unsatisfied Romans just as much as by dominated foreigners. Such revolts for religious freedom have happened many times throughout history in other large states. For example, the Maccabean Revolt of 168–135 BCE was a bloody struggle for Jewish independence caused by Seleucid king Antiochus IV’s desire to completely eliminate the worship of Yahweh. But this sort of long-term revolt was not common in the Roman state, despite the sometimes brutal treatment of conquered peoples; in fact, the first two and a half centuries of the Principate were so stable that the period has earned the title of Pax Romana (Roman Peace). The only significant religious uprising that did occur—the Jewish War of the early Principate (66–70 CE)—was by people who, although given relative religious freedom, refused to include themselves in the plethora of Roman religious practices. Notably, it was not those stabilized by the mélange of foreign cults who showed much unrest. The foreign cults in the Roman state not only provided the needed freedom in the form of religious preference, but also supplied freedom by offering means to escape into a kingdom not of this world.

The ancient Romans likely realized such benefits of religious tolerance. Thus, the dominating presence of foreign cults in the Roman state was probably, at least in part, the result of a conscious step to augment social control. Perhaps the Romans were influenced by philosophers such as Critias, a fifth-century BCE Athenian political leader who, in his satyr play Sisyphus, describes religion as a man-made creation devised to “extinguish lawlessness with [religious] laws.” This is strikingly similar to Karl Marx’s view of religion as “the opium for the people.” Clearly, Critias (and Marx) did not distinguish between religion and politics. And neither did Rome, as had been shown many times throughout its history. Thus, it is highly probable that the motive behind Rome’s adoption of foreign cults—a policy that paralleled its early adoption of turning recent foes into allies and citizens (Livy VIII: xi,
—was mainly political. After all, political power was the key source of social power of the Roman Republic. Rome did not want its future empire to follow the Greek pattern of a country divided into a “chessboard” of petty states.

Rome’s solution—the potpourri of foreign religions—conducted its purpose well, appeasing and unifying the state and preventing rebellion. Furthermore, religious tolerance also became what was likely a significant factor in rallying the support of dominated nations, yet another political motivation, as foreign support was especially valuable in the era of Roman expansion: Greeks aided the Romans in naval warfare (Livy XXIII: v), the Etruscans taught the Romans useful engineering techniques, and other allies helped the war effort through supplying taxes and troops (Polyb. VI: lii). Such “efficient exploitation of the resources of the allies” was an important political factor of successful Roman conquest. Thus, whether or not Rome’s decision to tolerate and adopt foreign religious cults was primarily a calculated political decision, it directly and indirectly helped the state to maintain stability and even to expand.

A few specific examples will illustrate not only the political usefulness of the foreign religious cults, but also how the cults formed an invaluable tool that, if not present, might have resulted in a completely different—perhaps even unsuccessful—Roman state. When the Carthaginian general Hannibal tried to gain foreign support for a rebellion against Rome in the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE), he was largely unsuccessful since Italy remained predominantly loyal to Rome (XXII: lxii). Instead of yielding to Hannibal, the peoples turned to the foreign cults to help themselves cope with this national emergency. Livy tells us:

> The longer the [Second Punic] war dragged on and the ups and downs of the conflict changed the hearts of men as much as it did their fortunes, various superstitious cults, mainly of foreign origin, swept into the city to such a degree that either the gods or men were suddenly changed. (XXV: i)

In this case, the foreign cults were unquestionably key in holding the Roman state together, as without them Hannibal might have triumphed. Similarly, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (a first-century BCE Greek historian) testifies to the stabilizing effect of the foreign cults in Book IV of Roman Antiquities; Dionysius notes that the Roman priests would consult the Greek Sibylline Books in times of unrest, often resulting in the importation of new gods or practices. Because of the sense of comfort and security offered by this practice, the books became key to Rome’s sense of well-being: “[T]here is no possession of the Romans, sacred or profane, which they guard so carefully as they do the Sibylline oracles.” Dionysius’s account, as well as Livy’s com-
mentary on the Second Punic War above, exemplify the perceived inadequacy of the old, traditional Roman religion, and the substitution of new foreign cults in its place. Such actions, often political, became a type of weapon against enemies like Hannibal: belief in the support of a god—better yet, one of the enemy’s gods—would have given the people of the Roman state more confidence, and perhaps even greater success in warfare. This would have been an invaluable asset to an expansionist military state like Rome. On the whole, Rome’s willing religious transformation was a transformation that would shape the history of the Roman state.

Rome certainly owes much of her legacy to her decision to tolerate and adopt foreign religious cults. Throughout the Republic and Principate, the stability of her empire seems to have paralleled her increasing plethora of foreign gods. The enlightening religious potpourri not only granted a sense of belonging to the foreigners dominated by the Roman state, but also gave the people, regardless of origin or status, a sense of comfort and religious identity. Furthermore, because the foreign cults were apart from the (notably obscure) state religion, they were able to provide a separation between the people and the Roman imperialist regimes—a division between the populace and the constant warfare and revolt, the social stratification and elite strife, the heavy taxation and forced submission. This was perhaps Rome’s greatest achievement. The widening gulf between religion and state became a significant factor in upholding the great Mediterranean-wide Roman Empire. However, this separation would not last for long. Rome’s religious tolerance and desire for enlightenment eventually occasioned Constantine’s Edict of Milan in 313 CE, and before long Christianity was the official religion of Rome, resealing the gap between popular religion and state.48 This, for better or for worse, also ended the era of tolerance. No longer could people find a flexible and familiar religious outlet separate from the problems of the state. Ironically, what had begun as a practice that yielded individual identity and religious freedom now brought about bondage and inflexibility. What had initially stabilized the state now became one of the factors in loosening the cohesive threads of the empire, and within a century Rome and her empire had collapsed.

NOTES


5 “Expiation of a Town in Umbria,” trans. Franz Bücheler, *Umbrica*, 1883, printed in Grant (1957) 4–8. Other texts that show the agricultural basis of the early religion include Cato’s *On Agriculture* and Ovid’s *Fasti*. However, “Expiation” is perhaps more telling because, unlike Cato’s and Ovid’s accounts, it is an uninterpreted firsthand record. Excerpts of Cato’s and Ovid’s texts can be found in Grant (1957) 3–50.

6 Grant (1957) xiii.

7 Grant (1957) xiii.

8 Rome showed general tolerance towards foreign religions throughout the Republic and Principate, but overall Rome adopted and assimilated the most foreign cults during the Republic. During the Principate, with the advent of the cult of the emperor, some foreign religions were not as well received as they might have been earlier. For instance, Augustus openly opposed the Egyptian cult of Isis, and later emperors such as Nero and Decius moved against Christianity. Such occasional repression, though, was selective and short-lived, and a general air of religious tolerance persisted. See Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) 164–177.


10 Adkins and Adkins (1994) 257.

11 This triad of gods (Jupiter-Juno-Minerva) became known as the Capitoline Triad (named after the new Temple of Jupiter on Capitoline Hill in Rome, the focus of the new cult); this triad formed the heart of the new state religion of the Roman Republic in 509 BCE. The Capitoline Triad paralleled the early Greek and Etruscan triads of, respectively, Zeus-Hera-Athena and Tinia-Uni-Menerfa. Rome’s Minerva, for example, was based heavily on the early Etruscan goddess Menerfa, who was equated with the Greek goddess Athena. See Lionel Casson, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1975) 79. The Temple of Jupiter on Capitoline Hill (dedicated in 509 BCE) is also important to mention here, as this temple not only became the focus of the new state religion, but—like the Triad—it shows marked Greek and Etruscan influence: the temple had a general Etruscan enclosure and ornamentation and, on its periphery, characteristic Greek pillars. This was briefly discussed in Cindy Nimchuk’s Ancient Empires IHUM section on April 11, 2003; see also Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 113.


Grant (1957) xiii. The first of these temples was the Temple of Jupiter on Capitoline Hill in Rome. This is important since the construction of the Temple of Jupiter coincided not only with the onset of a new state religion, but also with the onset of the Roman Republic—signifying the beginning of a new era as well as the beginning of a religious transformation. Although this new state religion of the Capitoline Triad soon became faceless and impotent relative to the incoming “popular” eastern cults, it marked the beginning of a foreign-influenced religious metamorphosis in Rome. See also Jennifer Trimble, Religious Pluralism, Handout, Ancient Empires 031B, Stanford University, 15 May 2003.


Pliny, Pan. 49. The general acceptance of the new religious mélange is shown in that not only did the Flavians and Commodus embrace Egyptian gods, but many ancient Roman authors also extolled the changing religious practices (for examples, see Polybius, VI, lvi. and Livy, XXV, i.). For further commentary, see Garnsey and Saller (1987) 168–173.

Casson (1975) 87.

Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 50.


One might argue that this statement does not apply to all periods of Roman history covered by this paper. For instance, one might think that the time of the Pax Romana was quite a peaceful time in which to live. However, even during the Pax Romana, there inevitably existed strife and uncertainty. Life in general was not easy in the Roman empire. See Footnote 40 for more detail.


In the early Roman religion, the numina were faceless and impersonal, and not well understood by the people. As a result of the abstract and unbodied nature of the gods, little was mentioned or understood about the afterlife. There was little consistency concerning what would happen to the body, where one would go, what were the qualifications, and what would be the role of the gods. Most religious practices instead focused on daily, agricultural activities. Only the new foreign “salvation” cults offered tangible, complete, and guaranteed visions of the afterlife. See Green (1938) 333.


Isis provides a good example of the smooth adoption of foreign cults into Rome. (For pictures of the Egyptian and Roman statues of Isis that I am about to compare, see, respectively, James B Prichard, ed., The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University, 1958) Fig. 146; and Trimble, Religious Pluralism, PowerPoint, Ancient Empires, Stanford University, 15 May 2003. By comparing a sixth-century BCE Egyptian statue of Isis with a first-century BCE Roman statue of Isis, we can clearly see how the goddess’ image had become Romanized, even though her role as an ideal wife and mother remained unchanged. The Egyptian statue of Isis depicts her with typical Egyptian facial features and wearing an amulet and a crown of cow-horns around a sun disk; she stands proudly on a stage of hieroglyphs, protecting her brother/husband Osiris.
with her wings. This displays only a faint resemblance to its Roman counterpart half a mil-

lennium later. In the Roman statue, the Egyptian amulet and crown have been replaced

with a knot (representing eternal life) and a Roman toga, and Isis’ facial features and hair-

style are clearly Roman. Even so, aspects of her Egyptian origin remain: Isis maintains her

identity as a Mother Goddess, and she holds a sistrum, an Egyptian musical instrument

thought to attract the attention of the gods. Using Isis as a model, we can assume much

about the Roman treatment of foreign cults: the foreign cults were smoothly assimilated,

largely because of their enlightening practices and beliefs; the appealing features of the cults

were maintained; and often a more Romanized identity was given to the cults. In effect, the

partial Romanization of a foreign cult allowed foreigners to maintain their worship of famil-

iar deities and, at the same time, make them feel more a part of the Roman state.

31 Green (1938) 335.

32 The coexistence of the various cults is well exemplified in the eastern frontier town of Dura

Europos which, by the third century CE, had a remarkable mix of temples—Mithras, Bal,


35 This is exemplified by the frontier town of Dura Europes, whose military archive from the

third century CE includes a papyrus calendar of festivals that shows the same dates, rituals,


36 1 and 2 Maccabees, Michael D. Coogan et al., eds., Apocrypha, The New Oxford Annotated


37 The primary source for the Jewish War is the Jewish aristocrat Josephus. For further com-


largely true since overall the Roman Republic and Principate were quite stable and success-

ful (after all, the Principate earned the title Pax Romana). But, inevitably for an empire of

this size, there were times of strife even during these peaceful periods; these rebellions,

though, were scattered and relatively minor revolts, and not for religious reasons (besides

the Jewish War and the ongoing trouble in Judea). Two revolts during the Republic were

the slave revolts of the second and first centuries BCE (reactions to harsh conditions and

treatment) and the Social War of 91–89 BCE (a short revolt over rights such as citizenship).

Neither revolt created long-term damage for the Republic. During the generally peaceful

Principate, one significant rebellion (besides the Jewish War) was the British revolt of 61 CE

led by Boudicca; this rebellion was short-lived, and was not a rebellion for religious free-

dom, but a rebellion caused by the ill treatment of the British by the Roman settlers and

rulers. All of these revolts, and others that likely occurred, probably could have been pre-

vented had the Roman administration treated the people with more respect. Certainly none

of these rebellions were as long or as bloody as the Maccabean Revolt, and for an empire

the size of the Roman Empire, the paucity of major revolts is quite amazing. For brief infor-

mation on the above revolts, see Jennifer Trimble, Accommodation and Resistance, Handout, Ancient Empires, Stanford University, 6 May 2003; and Mark Graham, Wealth, Land, and Slavery, Handout, Ancient Empires, Stanford University, 17 April 2003.

Also, it is important to note that towards the end of the Principate (27 BCE–235 CE),
when the Roman Empire exited its *Pax Romana* and began to experience an onset of poor emperors, anarchy, civil war, invasions, and inflation, the general populace still did not conduct any major revolts. This can be seen as indicating the social stability of the empire as a whole (which this paper argues to be largely a result of Rome’s religious tolerance). It is possible that the people began to turn to worship of their gods to help themselves deal with the increased uncertainty of the times. After the tumultuous third century, the Roman Empire did recover, but it never fully regained its previous status (even though social control seemed to remain efficient). See Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 121–141.


40 Hints of the political nature of religion emerged throughout the existence of the Roman state: Rome’s state religion was supervised by the political authorities; priesthoods were held by the same men who held political office; magistrates in Rome began their year of office with sacrifices in front of the Temple of Jupiter; senate meetings were sometimes held inside temples; formation of the Republic was marked by the establishment of a new state religion; and the first emperor of the Principate, Augustus, cloaked his rule in religious ideology. (Augustus stressed his own piety by erecting statues of himself sacrificing to the gods; he associated himself with Jupiter, Apollo, and Mars Ultor; he restored old temples; and he encouraged participation in religious rituals.) See Garnsey and Saller (1987) 163; and Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 56–57, 83.

41 During the Republic, Roman justifications and motivations were chiefly political, with military and religious support. By the time of the Principate, political power was still key, but military power moved to the forefront in importance. See Jennifer Trimble, The Old Order Collapses, Handout, Ancient Empires, Stanford University, 22 April 2003.

42 Green (1938) 48.


44 With this statement, Cornell did not make a direct connection between politics and the assistance of allies, nor a connection with religion, as I have. Nevertheless, I believe that this “exploitation” of the allies provided a possible rationale for the necessity of religion in uniting the people of the early Roman state.

45 Only after the disastrous Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE did the system of alliances start to show weakness, when some Italians in the south—Livy names the Atellani, the Calatini, and the Hirpini—started to join Hannibal. Even so, most of Italy remained loyal to Rome, showing the strength of the alliance system. Rome was able to maintain support for 15 more years of fighting until the eventual Roman victory in 202 and treaty in 201 BCE. See Livy XXII, lxi.

46 One such foreign “superstitious cult” that swept into Rome (in 204 BCE) was the cult of Cybele from Pessinus. Previously in his *History*, Livy mentions that the motivation for adopting Cybele had been some oracular verses that announced that if Cybele were present, any foreign foe in Italy could be driven out and conquered. See Livy XXIX, x.

47 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* II, trans. Earnest Cary (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1939) IV, lxi. These Sibylline Books were actually used to give the oracle that brought Cybele to Rome in 204 BCE (see previous footnote).

48 Constantine’s Edict of Milan extended official tolerance towards Christianity. By 380 CE,
Emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity the state religion of Rome, and made all pagan religions illegal. See Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 182–183. This concept of the degree of separation between religion and the state seems to be a reflection of the stability of the Roman empire: the greater the separation, the greater the stability. Rome’s tolerance of the foreign religions was thus beneficial to the state because it created such a separation. But Christianity brought popular religion and state back together; following my hypothesis, this became a major factor in the decline of the empire. Note that it could have been a number of “intolerant” religions—such as Buddhism or Islam—that could have done this. This concept deserves much more discussion than I have given it, but it gives the reader something to consider, posing an interesting consequence of Rome’s religious practices from the Republic to the Empire. It also makes an interesting point that can be applied to civilizations of today: What has been the effect of the relationship between Islam and the state in Iraq? What would happen to the stability of the United States if the separation between religion and state were closed; if Christianity, for instance, became a government-sponsored religion? [For more on the role (or lack of role) of Christianity in the fall of Rome (in 410 CE), see Augustine’s *City of God* and Drinkwater and Drummond (1993) 182–183.]

### Works Cited


SPRING 2003 HONORABLE MENTION

Gloria H. Nguyen

INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

Gloria H. Nguyen’s essay, “In Search of the Perfect Love,” captures subtleties in the fragments of the Roman lyric poet Catullus and renders them in an original interpretation both of the nature of friendship and the pleasures of contemplating its elusiveness. Resting on a keen analysis of references to male friendship or its absence, Gloria’s interpretation draws together the apparent distinctions between the poems of praise and invective and between men and women in those poems. Through Gloria’s arrangement of textual evidence, we see that Catullus defined perfect friendship as a complete union with the other, a union continually presented as unattainable in life. Gloria underscores this elusiveness in the poetry so that we understand Catullan friendship as an ideal whose pleasures are gained through contemplation rather than interaction. Real interactions are best represented, then, by the invective that dominates all references to women who, because of the limitations imposed by their social roles, are the best symbol and incarnation of barriers to friendship. The one woman who is spared, Lesbia, cloaked with that same anticipation of spiritual union, is then the best emblem of both the pain of impossible love and its own keen pleasures.

—Renee Courey
Catullus, a Roman lyric poet who lived from 84 to 54 BC, often drew upon both the themes of love and abuse (invective) in order to express in his poetry the many personal complex relationships that he had in his life. Although very little is actually known about Catullus, it is clear from his verse that one of his most prominent loves was a woman he calls Lesbia who, according to Catullus, was not simply an outstanding woman among women; she belonged to a different class from all other women, and she was its only member. The specific character of Lesbia’s unique excellence is illustrated in many of Catullus’s love poems, but it is interesting to note that these poems differ drastically from the Catullan poems that are to and about women other than Lesbia. These, unlike the flowery Lesbia poems, are usually full of nothing other than contempt for, and criticism of, the female gender. Perhaps this generally negative portrayal of Roman women can be explained in terms of male and female gender, and the types of relationships that Catullus sought to maintain with each one. While the men of Catullus’s poems are measured by the standard of perfect friendship and each is characterized by the degree to which he approaches that standard, the women in his poems are measured by the standard of Lesbia and characterized, as a group, by the inapplicability of that standard to them. In other words, Lesbia is an ideal based on male-male relationships that is restrained by actual gender roles of actual women.

The desire to possess the whole life of his friends in his relationships with them is a recurrent theme in Catullus’s male friendship poems. A good example of the peculiar joys and tensions of Catullan friendship can be found in those poems dealing with Veranius and Fabullus, who seem to be very intimate friends of the poet. Poem 9, which describes the occasion of Veranius’s return from Spain, portrays the pleasure of anticipating pleasure. In the drama, Catullus, upon learning that Veranius has returned from his travels, imagines the meeting he will have with his friend. Though the poem is
addressed to Veranius, Catullus measures in himself his own projected pleasure at the kind of reunion he imagines. Veranius is first addressed as “of all my friends / the foremost by three hundred miles” (lines 1–2), and this address is then followed by a rhetorical question not, as might be expected, to the effect that Veranius is restored to Catullus, but rather that he is restored to his familial home: “Have you come home to your household Gods / And like-minded brothers and old mother?” (3–4). Initially this vision of Veranius at home, before Catullus himself has entered the scene, brings him the intense joy suggested by the question with its immediate response, “You have? O happy news for me!” (5). It is this picture of Veranius at home, without any thought yet of the poet’s own entrance onto the scene, that Catullus calls blessed news for himself. In lines six to nine, Catullus finally visualizes his own meeting with his friend, how he will see him, hear him, and kiss him. Catullus’s closing exclamation over his happiness, “of all the happier people / who’s happier or more glad than I?” (10–11) is similar to lines one and two, for he singles himself out among all happy men just as Veranius has been singled out among all of Catullus’s friends. Catullus’s happiness here is in the anticipation of future pleasure, but even more so it is in the present pleasure of anticipating an imaginary scene that has not yet entered into reality.

Poem 13, a dinner invitation to Fabullus, is again the anticipation of a high point in a friendship. In lines seven and eight, Catullus good-naturedly jokes about turning out his pockets in order to explain the nature of his invitation: “Our charmer, you’ll dine well; for your / Catullus’ purse is full of cobwebs.” At line nine, he changes his tone, showing that it is, after all, not merely for love of a good joke or in hopes of a casual meeting that he writes, but from a sort of overflow of delight in his own life: he wants to share somehow with Fabullus his happiness in love. He offers his friend not just a meal, but “love neat” (9), and this love is soon transformed into a “perfume given / my girl by Venuses and Cupids” (11–12). The point is that Catullus wants to find some way to share with his friend something immaterial, his happiness in love, and he represents it as something coming originally to his mistress from the Venuses and Cupids. In other words, his happiness comes from her to himself, and this is a possession that he now has the power to bestow on his friend in turn: “For I’ll provide the perfume given […]” (11). Poem 50 similarly describes a dinner meeting with another one of Catullus’s friends (this time it is a fellow poet named Licinius), but the emphasis again is not on the meal, but rather on the companionship that they share:
[...] I left there fired by
Your charm, Licinius, and wit
So food gave poor me no pleasure
Nor could I rest my eyes in sleep
But wildly excited turned and tossed
Over the bed, longing for daylight
That I might be with you and talk. (7–13)

Another one of Catullus's friendship poems, poem 12, is particularly interesting because it is not directly addressed to Veranius and Fabullus, but presents them, and Catullus's attitude to them, to a third party, one Asinius Marrucinus, whom he accuses of having stolen a napkin which was a gift from those two friends. At line twelve, Catullus explains that he is talking about something that can be valued no more in verses than in coin. It is a napkin with purely sentimental value because it was a souvenir given to him by Veranius and Fabullus. He says, “I'm not concerned about its value / But it's a memento of my comrade” (12–13). The napkin represents his memory of his friends, and so he claims that he is bound to “love” it as dearly as he loves those friends himself. Poem 6, like poem 12, is not addressed directly to Veranius and Fabullus either, but rather to a different friend by the name of Flavius. In this poem, Catullus tries to gain his friend's confidence by claiming that the reason that Flavius doesn't confide in Catullus about his love affair with a certain girl is that the girl is impossible. He says, “In fact you love some fever-ridden / Tart, and you're ashamed to own it” (4–5). But it also seems that Catullus is asking to know more than just what he learns from his friend's bed, and it may be not just some detail such as the girl's name that he is after, but the actual act of confidence—that is, not only the communication of information about something else, but also a confirming event in their own friendship. Catullus does not care if what Flavius has to say is good or bad: “So tell us what you've got, for good or ill / I wish to emparadise you and your love in witty verse” (15–16). It is the trust that Flavius must have in confiding in Catullus about his affair that Catullus is after, and he wants Flavius to know that he would not react with scorn to his friend's “secret.” On the contrary, because Flavius is his friend, he intends to exalt Flavius and his mistress in poetry, regardless of how shameful the affair might be.

As one can see from the friendship poems discussed above, Catullus's version of a friendship without reserve means a friendship in which the friends know one another perfectly. Catullus in his friendship poems represents himself both as penetrating, or seeking to penetrate, the inner lives of his friends (poems 9 and 6) and also as enabling his friends to know and thus penetrate his own inner life, as in poem 13 and in poem 50, which he ends with,
But after my tired aching limbs
Were lying on the couch half dead [from the dinner party]
I made this poem for you, Licinius
So you could spot my trouble from it. (14–17)

Aside from the friendship poems about his male friends, Catullus often includes women in his poetry as well. In all of these (with the exception of the Lesbia poems), Catullus never actually addresses women as friends or potential friends, and the women whom he does address are usually portrayed as so contemptible that it is almost to the point at which one would think that he despises these women. In poem 41, for example, Catullus attacks Ameana, who has asked a high price for her past or prospective favors: “you female fuck-up […] that girl with the unattractive nose […] the girl’s not well” (1, 3, 7). This is one of the few poems that have no formal addressee, although its second half is an apostrophe to the girl’s guardians. The fact that the poem, like most of the poems in this group, is thus unaddressed helps represent not Catullus in relationship but Catullus in a dramatic gesture of derision for the amusement of his readers. Another poem on women that is openly derisive is poem 42, in which Catullus’s notebooks are in the hands of a woman who refuses to return them. The poem is addressed not to the woman but to the poet’s hendecasyllables: “Come, Hendecasyllables, one and all / From everywhere, every one and all (1–2). This is an example of Catullus “thinking out loud.” In addition, poem 42 shows him plotting out a sort of practical joke based on a stock feature of Catullan women: the loathsome creature actually thinks herself attractive! This stock psychological feature makes her a Catullan Everywoman, while it is only in the particulars of her ugliness that she has the stamp of individuality: “You see that one / With the ugly walk and the odious actressy / Laugh and the face like a Gallican puppy’s?” (7–9). The words of abuse that Catullus heaps upon her lead to the punch line of a joke that could be made about any stock Catullan woman: the key to the “dirty adulteress” (11) is to call her “Virtuous Lady” (24).

The above poems are all good examples of the poet’s mockery of women. However, the most characteristic form of Catullus’s contempt for the women he addresses is found in poems 43 and 86: women are contemptible in comparison with the unique Lesbia, and the admirers of women are contemptible in comparison with the unique admirer of Lesbia (in other words, Catullus himself). Poem 43 attacks the Ameana of poem 41 by detailing her shortcomings with respect to a checklist of feminine virtues:
Greetings, girl with no mini nose
Nor pretty foot nor dark eyes
Nor long fingers nor dry mouth
Nor altogether felicitous tongue. (1–4)

When compared to the beauty of Lesbia, the standard lot of famous beauties—to which Ameana belongs—is not only unbeautiful but actually ugly; and just as Lesbia is the sole standard of women's beauty, so Catullus is prepared to set up his appreciation of her as the sole standard of taste. It is of course a common form of gallantry in a lover to praise his mistress's exceptional beauty, but Catullus's insistence on demonstrating Lesbia's incomparability by comparing other women to her, in detail and with derision, is rather a different thing. In poem 86, the type of standard that Catullus makes of Lesbia—the unique case, the woman by comparison with whom all other women seem to belong to a different class—emerges even more clearly. Poem 86 is a dissection of Quintia's claim to the label “beautiful” (1). Catullus here begins by distinguishing his taste from that of the multitude and ends by distinguishing Lesbia from all other women. His argument is that Quintia has all the right single qualifications for beauty—she is “fair, tall, straight” (1–2)—but she has no “charm” (3), and the reason she has no charm is that Lesbia, “most lovely” (5), has carried off all the charms of all other women. If all other women are then deprived of charm, and since charm is a prerequisite for “wholeness beauty” (3), it is impossible for them to be beautiful. Quintia's claim, like the claims of her admirers, is disqualified automatically: she belongs to the class of “all women except Lesbia.”

The only women who seem to be exempt from Catullus's contempt are his friends' women, who have to their credit not so much their own attractiveness as their association with his friends. For example, in poem 6, Catullus wants to know about Flavius's girl, however “unsmart and unwitty” (1) and “fever-ridden” (4) she may be, in order to put his friend's love affair into a poem. In poem 10, the “tartlet” (3), whom his friend Varus takes him to visit, impresses him at first as “by no means unwitty or unattractive” (4), and he is inspired to undertake for her sake a bit of self-aggrandizement that leads to his own exposure. He thereby lowers the girl in his estimation to “damned tactless—a living nuisance” (33). Catullus allows that the only women in whose eyes he wants to shine are his friends' women, and his feeling is conditioned solely by the friendship of his friends. These two poems, 6 and 10, are the only poems in which Catullus is either neutral or sympathetic towards women because these women are the mistresses of his friends. Friendship is all-inclusive; Catullus's friends have women, so Catullus draws their women into the charmed circle of the friendship. The women them-
selves are not Catullus's friends or potential friends.

Of all his experiences in dealing with the opposite sex, the most extraordinary relationship that emerges from the work of Catullus is the one with Lesbia. Catullus, in his poetry, ensures that Lesbia is set apart from all other women, and that his love for her is set apart from all other men's love of all other women. Twice, in poems 43 and 86, he writes that other women cannot be compared with Lesbia, and in doing this, he expresses at the same time his genuine and considered contempt for all other women. Three times he says that his love for Lesbia was “passing the love of women,” and in poem 37, and then again in poem 87, he writes,

No woman can say truly she has been loved as much
As Lesbia mine has been loved by me
No faith so great was ever found in any contract
As on my part in love of you. (1–4)

The assertion that no woman has been or will ever be loved as much or as truly as Catullus loves Lesbia, if it is to yield its full meaning, must simply be taken at face value rather than as a vague general expression for “I loved her very much.” That Catullus believed no woman ever to have been the recipient of a love like his for Lesbia is clear and convincing if we consider what kind of love other women do receive in Catullus's poetry.

Lesbia seems to be the only woman towards whom Catullus expresses the hope or expectation of knowing one another. That is, as we have seen, an experience he otherwise restricts to men. This possibility of knowing one another truly and completely is the ground for Catullan perfect friendship, which aims to be comprehensive and to assimilate all relationships within itself. Family relationships, the love of women—each of these is a relationship more restricted than Catullan friendship, which seeks to comprehend them all. In general, women are excluded from the possibility of friendship by their inability to know Catullus, and thus by their inability to transcend one of the lesser relationships that are the parts or aspects of Catullan friendship. But Lesbia, according to Catullus, is not like any other woman; he imagines with her uniquely the qualities of an unheard-of relationship: perfect friendship with a woman. He approaches this concept, however, in a very peculiar manner. Catullus's character is revealed more intimately in the fact that, even to male friends like Veranius, he uses the language of a lover: “Embracing you / I'll kiss your merry face and eyes” (poem 9, 8–9). As for the boy mentioned in poem 48, of whom he says, “Your honeyed eyes, Juventius / If someone let me go on kissing / I'd kiss three hundred thousand times / Nor never think I'd had enough” (1–4), he seems to treat Juventius both as his beloved and as his son. These examples reveal that there is also likely to be found in Catullus
a strong dash of the feminine, although it is an ingredient that has nothing
to do with effeminacy. This explains a remarkable thing about him—his
capacity for identifying Lesbia with himself. It may be that he has created her
in the image of his own heart, and if one therefore reads his love-verses and
is deceived into thinking that one has truly grasped Lesbia’s image, this is a
tribute to the feminine in Catullus, which enables him to identify himself
with her. In doing so, he is revealing himself to his lover and allowing her the
opportunity to know him almost as well as she knows herself, and, as we have
seen, Catullus has used this technique of self-revelation as an instrument of
perfecting his male companions’ ability to truly know him. This, however,
causes him to see Lesbia not as the way she truly is (wayward, fickle, and per-
haps heartless and shallow), but rather as the substance of his own emotions.

Perhaps it is Catullus’s blindness to Lesbia’s true nature that eventually
leads to the disintegration of their romance. While there are many love
poems devoted to Lesbia, readers will notice that there are, at the same time,
many bitter poems about Lesbia’s betrayal of his love. For example, in poem
11, among the most poignant of his “betrayal” poems, Catullus remarks,

Simply deliver to my girl a brief disourteous message:
  Farewell and long life with her adulterers […]
  And let her not as before expect my love,
  which by her fault has fallen like a flower
  On the meadow’s margin after a passing
  Ploughshare has touched it. (15–17, 21–24)

Lesbia’s infidelity apparently wounded Catullus deeply, but perhaps not
just because she did not remain loyal to him, but also because she failed to
achieve with him that perfect friendship that he sought from her. In other
words, her betrayal of him can be thought of as a result of her failure to come
to know him as he knows himself. In poem 72, Catullus reproaches Lesbia
by saying, “You said one day you only knew Catullus” (1), but he seems to
be saying also, “… and you were right, you knew only that third-person per-
sona and not me as I know myself.”

The experience of relationship with male friends, women, and Lesbia as
Catullus has expressed it in his poetry makes a perfect circle that can now be
fully traced by the reader. Catullus loves Lesbia “not only as common men
their girlfriend” (poem 72, 3), but “as a father loves his sons and sons-in-law”
(poem 72, 4). To Catullus, what is wonderful about loving a woman “as a
father loves his sons” is that this is a kind of love from which women are, sim-
ply, excluded. It is not “paternal love” in general, because it excludes daugh-
ters, but rather the strictly masculine politico-familial bonds of Roman soci-
ey. Catullus loved Lesbia in a way in which she alone among women was
loved: not merely as a man loves a woman, but as a man loves the men to whom he is most deeply bound. And he can love her in this way because he has made her in his poetry unique among women: he has created for himself in her, by the kind of relationship that he assumes with her, the one woman who is loved as man and as woman. The key word here though, is that he created this, because we must remember that Catullus in the end still failed, when Lesbia betrayed him and therefore left him unable to attain that “perfect” friendship with her for which he had hoped. It is possible that such a perfect Catullan relationship can never even truly exist, for the absolute perfection of an ideal love is, ultimately, unattainable in the real world. It may exist only in the mind of the ambitious lover that is Catullus, whose only mistake was that he tried to impose the ideals of a male-male relationship on his female romantic partner. Perhaps it is no wonder that this kind of relationship was doomed to fail sooner or later: Catullus needed to treat Lesbia more as the woman she was instead of burdening her with the expectations of a “perfect” male Catullan friendship. Such is the complexity and tragedy of love. ♦

WORK CITED
In her essay, “Perspectives on the Human Good,” Annie Kalt offers a carefully considered analysis of the way of life advocated by the classical Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu. On her reading, Chuang Tzu’s vision of the good life encourages us to see all of our judgments as determined by our particular, limited perspectives. After carefully demonstrating the nuances of Chuang Tzu’s perspectivism, Annie raises a potential problem with such a view, namely, that it entails the abandonment of our ethical judgments and so seems to lead to moral apathy. To address this problem, Annie considers the case of a character from Albert Camus’s The Stranger, Meursault, who seems to attain something akin to a Taoist perspective on life and yet is hardly a spiritual or ethical exemplar. Annie works through the problem by showing that Meursault never moves beyond his own limited, self-oriented perspective, and so arrives at a bleak view of life that, in fact, contrasts sharply with the joyful laughter advocated by Chuang Tzu. Annie then compares Chuang Tzu’s views to the moral absolutism of Dante’s Divine Comedy. Where most readers might see only difference here, Annie finds some surprising similarities, both in the texts’ movement through moral perspectives and in the authors’ characterization of the sacred as an attunement with nature accompanied by a profound sense of joy. Annie concludes that, although some of her initial worry about moral apathy remains, Chuang Tzu’s writings nevertheless have given us the tools we need to attain appropriate perspectives on this and other fundamental spiritual questions. Annie’s essay is distinguished by its careful reading of the texts, deft use of evidence, effective argumentation, and a beautiful mastery of language. But, what makes the essay truly remarkable is how easily and effectively it moves among three very different authors, thus demonstrating, and not merely describing, what Annie has gained through her sensitive reading of Chuang Tzu.

—Greg Reihman
Perspectives on the Human Good

Annie Kalt

For a reader whose understanding is limited, to truly characterize the spiritual task imparted by the *Chuang Tzu* proves nearly impossible. As Chuang Tzu’s text says, “A frog in the well can’t have much to say about the sea” (84). Nonetheless, even in the humility and sense of humor that it demands, this predicament captures something important about Chuang Tzu’s path: it seems intimately related to the question of perspective. Chuang Tzu urges us to begin from our limited vantage points and continually expand our perspectives to accommodate greater truths, culminating in the Tao. As with any spiritual journey, however, questions arise: Where does this path lead me in this lifetime? What kind of life does it suggest I should lead? Chuang Tzu perhaps gives a surprising answer: that our notions of the human good, the categories by which we structure conceptions of the “moral life,” belong only to a limited human perspective, and have no place in the limitless perspective of the Tao. In this view, our spiritual path actually asks us to abandon right and wrong. Before submitting to this radical path, however, we must consider objections posed by other spiritual conceptions. On one side of the spiritual spectrum lurks the threat of moral nihilism, or a sense that Chuang Tzu’s abandonment of moral discernment could annihilate our sense of the sacred. On the other side lies the moral absolutist charge, which might suggest that Chuang Tzu has fundamentally misconceived the sacred by failing to see it as the foundation of ethical judgment. When considered in the context of Albert Camus’s *The Stranger*, however, the moral nihilist’s apparent submission to Chuang Tzu’s non-morality appears rooted in a fundamentally inadequate vision of the sacred. Meanwhile, the moral absolutist scheme of Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* shows surprising synergy with Chuang Tzu’s vision of transcendence of judgment through union with the whole of the divine. Thus, as vision penetrates appearances, the critical lenses of these two texts and their schemas actually illuminate and sustain Chuang Tzu’s rad-
ical vision. This illumination might reveal in the *Chuang Tzu* a suggested journey of the spirit, in which an enlarging perspective asks us to give up our categories of human good to arrive, laughing, at perfection through alignment with the One.

To begin to perceive elements of Chuang Tzu’s full perspective and its implications for the human good, let us reflect on the following passage of the *Chuang Tzu*:

> Looking at it from the Tao, there is no noble and no mean. […] When you know heaven and earth as seeds of grain and grass, when you know that the tip of a hair is a mound or a mountain, then you know something about difference and measurement. As to their worth, they have worth according to what they are, and of the ten thousand things that exist, there’s not a one that doesn’t. (86)

Here Chuang Tzu describes complete perspective gained “from the point of the Tao,” containing no moral categories of “noble” and “mean.” The first key aspect of this perspective seems to lie in acceptance of the completeness or wholeness of nature. We must come to “know heaven and earth as seeds of grass and grain.” This instruction perhaps urges understanding that nature encompasses all things, and that all things that spring up in heaven and earth do so as naturally as plants. When we come to see all things in this way, as proper parts of a single nature, we accept the existence of each equally. Chuang Tzu instructs: “Embrace with your heart each of the ten thousand things. Which deserves more? This is called being unbiased. The ten thousand things are one, and equal” (89). In this conception, nature, like the Tao, performs no discrimination. As Chuang Tzu says, “There is no thing that is not acceptable. Sprouts rise up, and mighty pillars, lepers and lovely women, strange and extraordinary things […]” (12). His statement suggests that all things in existence have arisen naturally in a complete nature, and are therefore acceptable. Perhaps the notion that any thing is right in existing and another wrong becomes as meaningless as saying tall trees are more right than short ones. Each thing exists according to its intrinsic character. Thus, Chuang Tzu explains the completeness of the Tao, asking us to see things as part of a single nature, and to abandon the value judgments we apply to subjective qualities.

Meanwhile, Chuang Tzu’s perspective on the subjectivity of qualities reveals moral distinctions as relative, without grounding in absolute meaning. Understanding of relativity occurs when one “know[s] that the tip of a hair is a mound or a mountain.” In other words, the text asks, “How could you know for sure that the tip of one hair is sufficient to measure smallness or that heaven and earth are a measure of what’s big?” (85). This question suggests
that all our judgments are contingently defined by circumstances. Perhaps in all our distinctions, we are like frogs sitting in a well, judging our pool as large and not knowing of the sea; or, if sitting in the sea, we are dwarfed by the possibility of something infinitely larger. Even the sea god says, “of all the waters of All-under-heaven, none is bigger than the sea […] yet I haven’t let this make me take myself for ‘big’” (84). This perspective recognizes all relative qualities as meaningless when held up to the infinite. When this notion of relativity applies to moral distinctions, moralism appears as a source of great division and contention. Chuang Tzu says: “From the point of view of things, each takes itself for noble and all others for mean” (86). This perspective, in which we see right and wrong as contingent on our personal vantage points, leads us to loosen our grips on the rights and wrongs to which we are most attached.

With the natural acceptability and relativity of all things established, Chuang Tzu’s vision of the human being brings his ideas to bear upon human morality. More specifically, Chuang Tzu suggests that when properly viewed, human beings are mere things within nature. A tree says to a human: “You and I are both things. Why pass judgment? You’re a man born to die. Are you mere trash? Why call me trash?” (12). This suggestion that humans are things encompasses humankind within the completeness of nature. The interplay between man and tree as objects of judgment establishes the notion that condemning a human is as naturally nonsensical as condemning a tree, each having arisen organically in the universe. Chuang Tzu also suggests that much human difficulty arises from our persistent tendency to consider ourselves distinct from nature. Describing a virtuous person, Chuang Tzu explains, “despite his proximity to perfection, he has not yet attained the perfection of a tree” (3). While things are contingent and temporary, we perhaps tend to assign ourselves and others a more permanent and absolute identity that might be praised or condemned. Chuang Tzu undercuts this view, reminding us that the completeness of nature includes humankind, and revealing humans as contingent, relative, temporary things.

Through all these elements of Chuang Tzu’s complete perspective, we arrive fully at an unsettling notion of the human good: perhaps moral categories of good and bad are just qualities arising in nature, like tall and short, without moral weight or absolute meaning. As Chuang Tzu says, “There is no thing that is not acceptable. Sprouts rise up, and mighty pillars, lepers and lovely women […]” (12). In this view, all kinds of things, people included, sprout up with equal acceptability. Perhaps humans whom we might consider good or evil arise just like lepers and lovely women, and “good” or “evil” are as arbitrary and relative as “ugly” and “beautiful.” When we see different
kinds of people as naturally arising objects, without fundamental self-authorship, we begin to forego condemnation of people as we forego condemnation of any mere object. Chuang Tzu describes a sage having been hit on the head by another person. The sage, “though bent on revenge, doesn’t wreak it […] any more than even the most ill-tempered of men, being struck by a falling tile, would blame the tile” (103). In this case, the offender strikes due to nature and circumstance, just as the tile falls; the person has aggression, just as the tile has hard edges. The sum of Chuang Tzu’s perspective reveals moral distinctions—the categories of the human good by which we divide and structure our lives—as mere distractions from the One.

In this suggestion to abandon notions of human good, however, an inevitable objection arises: does this view forge a path towards moral apathy? The central character of Camus’s *The Stranger*, Meursault, lends force to this objection, as he seems to adopt elements of Chuang Tzu’s suggested perspective yet offers an unconvincing spiritual role model. He finishes as a remorseless murderer condemned to death, with no sense of sacred meaning, concluding that “nothing, nothing mattered” (Camus 112). Does Meursault attain the perspective described by Chuang Tzu, and if so, does he demonstrate the tendency of this perspective to produce apathetic harm?

In some ways Meursault does seem to adopt elements of Chuang Tzu’s perspective. He associates his own indifference about the choices he has made with “the gentle indifference of the world,” recalling Chuang Tzu’s notion of complete nature and the equivalence of all things in the eyes of the universe (Camus 122). Meursault also expresses understanding that moral judgments are relative to circumstance and form, and are thus in some sense arbitrary. He reflects on aspects of his sentence, such as “the fact that it could have been an entirely different one […] and the fact that it had been handed down in the name of some vague notion called the French (or the German or the Chinese) people” (Camus 109). Because of all this, he “couldn’t accept such arrogant certainty” (109). The arrogant certainty that Meursault questions recalls the arrogant certainty of “things” entrenched in their judgments, each taking itself as noble and others as mean. Meursault also seems to grasp the notion that humans bear worth equal to any other thing in nature, saying that “Salamano’s dog was worth just as much as his wife” (121). These elements suggest that perhaps Meursault attained some of the perspective encouraged by Chuang Tzu. Perhaps Meursault, attending his own trial, accomplished the instruction: “The alternating noises of disputes await their turns, but you need not attend them […]. Forget judgments! Flap your wings and fly to the palace without judgments and live there!” (18). But, if so, the hopeless Meursault does not seem to inhabit a palace in which anyone would want to join him.
When considered more closely, however, Meursault’s failure to find meaning seems rooted in his own failure of perspective, in which he increasingly closes himself rather than opening, and remains unable to see beyond the well of his self. As he nears his own death, Meursault asks: “What did other people’s death or a mother’s love matter to me?” (Camus 121). He considers the implications of an indifferent universe only in its relevance to himself, while demonstrating a closing of heart and rejection of human relationship that underlies the entire novel. When the chaplain reminds him of the inevitability of death for all the living, Meursault objects that it’s not “the same thing” and not “a consolation anyway” (117). Meursault here demonstrates an awareness of the natural cycles of living and dying, but an unwillingness to open his awareness to include others and transcend his own perspective. This failure to open and self-transcend perhaps culminates in the moment that Meursault frames as his greatest self-expansion, when he states: “I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world,” and finds this world “so much like myself—like a brother really” (122). As Meursault claims to glimpse the universe, he in fact glimpses the reflection of his self concept, and remains able to perceive the truths of the world only in relation to his self. Thus, while Chuang Tzu speaks of opening, expansion of perspective, in order to “embrace with your heart each of the ten thousand things,” Meursault remains unwilling to embrace his fellow humans, so his perspective remains fatally limited to himself (Chuang Tzu 89).

On closer consideration, Chuang Tzu does not describe a path to nihilism at all, but rather one of joyful perfection in the sacred. In describing a sage, Chuang Tzu’s teachings state: “He’s a mist anointing ten thousand generations, but he doesn’t do ‘benevolence.’ He’s been around longer than antiquity itself, but he doesn’t do ‘old.’ He covers heaven and bears up earth, carves and engraves innumerable herds of forms, but doesn’t do ‘skill’” (51). In relinquishing distinctions of benevolence, skill, age, and accomplishment, the qualities we feel we must strive for, the sage arrives not at nihilistic destruction but at near perfection of these qualities. In this movement towards perfection, Chuang Tzu’s path seems to have nothing to do with bleak nihilism, but appears as one of immense joy. Chuang Tzu states: “Making do is not as good as laughing. Laughing’s not as good as opening up. Just open. Let changes happen. There you will find your wings, and become one with heaven” (50). Through relinquishment of the human good, Chuang Tzu brings us to something new, in which we attain and perfect that which we have relinquished by laughing, opening, and aligning with the sacred.

However, even as the harmony of Chuang Tzu’s path becomes apparent, the challenges posed by other carefully wrought, seemingly oppositional
moral systems remain. For example, from the vantage point of its details, the moral absolutism of Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* seems to challenge Chuang Tzu with the burning objection: morality exists, as well as the possibility for objective judgment of right and wrong. The following inscription above the gate to Hell in Dante’s *Inferno* reveals much about his apparent challenge:

THROUGH ME THE WAY TO THE CITY OF WOE.
THROUGH ME THE WAY TO ETERNAL PAIN.
THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THE LOST.

JUSTICE MOVED MY MAKER ON HIGH.
DIVINE POWER MADE ME,
WISDOM SUPREME, AND PRIMAL LOVE. (3.1-6)

The way in which Dante characterizes the divine and human natures, and the relation between them, appears essentially different from Chuang Tzu’s. The Divine exists as an absolute entity, a “maker,” while reference to “the lost” suggests humans with permanent identities capable of suffering a permanent fate in the “eternal.” This reveals a relationship in which the Divine provides an absolute by which human qualities might be measured, and human goods might find ground in their divine counterparts, such as “wisdom supreme, and primal love.” Thus, Dante’s human categories and identities are not relative, as they are in Chuang Tzu’s universe, due to the absolute reference point of God. Moreover, this notion of the absolute reference point reveals a special human relationship to God in which humans exist as reflections of their maker and the subjects of His justice. It establishes humans as distinct from all other things within God’s natural world. These elements represent basic differences between Dante’s characterization of the sacred and Chuang Tzu’s. Distance remains between Dante’s view and Chuang Tzu’s when viewed from what Chuang Tzu’s text calls “the point of view of difference,” and perhaps only higher spiritual understanding could determine a more accurate view (34).

However, when viewed from “the point of view of similarities,” the two views are not so distant, and may in fact show a surprising synergy (34). To consider this point of view, the reader must zoom out towards the whole of Chuang Tzu’s path: that of abandoning moral distinctions, expanding perspective to infinity, and thus attaining perfection through unification with the sacred. One must then consider Dante’s sacred whole, and whether it might find union with Chuang Tzu’s. The inscription on the gate of *Inferno* establishes Hell, the kingdom housing evil, as part of a perfect whole, a system of justice made by absolute goods: “Divine power, Wisdom supreme, and primal Love.” Thus, from a perspective encompassing the Whole, all
parts exist properly within the system. Distinctions of right and wrong fall away because all elements contribute to the total good or sufficiency of nature or the universe. Individual sinners within God’s whole system cannot mar its total goodness, or, as Chuang Tzu’s texts suggest, they “haven’t sufficient footing to muddle the harmony” (39). Within this complete whole, Dante’s path to goodness appears similar to Chuang Tzu’s, rooted in expanding one’s perspective to include the whole and attuning to the sacred. Chuang Tzu’s teachings on human perfection urge: “Let your mind be in harmony. Take delight. Understand. Never let joy be lost, day or night, ceaselessly, eternally in the springtime of things” (39). Similarly, when Dante nears human perfection at the peak of Mount Purgatory, his guide instructs:

“You’ve seen the temporary fire
and the eternal fire, […]
from now on, let your pleasure be your guide;
[…] look at the grasses, flowers, and the shrubs
born here, spontaneously, of the earth.” (Purg. 27.127-135)

Both Chuang Tzu’s and Dante’s texts include reference to understanding or sight, leading to an attunement with nature characterized by pleasure or joy. Thus, when the moral and spiritual conceptions of the two masters appear from the perspective of their wholes, the two views gain surprising union, and perhaps enrich rather than challenge each other.

In such a journey through the suggestions and implications of The Essential Chuang Tzu, readers perhaps begin to expand perspective and unify the divisions between right and wrong. The very different perspectives provided by The Stranger and The Divine Comedy encourage such an expansion. The spiritual shortcomings of Meursault help to explore nihilism, and dissociate it from Chuang Tzu’s joyful path towards the sacred. The Divine Comedy offers a very different picture of what it might mean for a human to unite with the divine, yet shares aspects of Chuang Tzu’s vision of the One, or God’s universe. Yet even as expanding perspective reveals Chuang Tzu’s spiritual path as increasingly true and joyful, his suggestions about the human good remain overwhelmingly difficult to internalize. The nagging voice of objection says: moral discernment does seem critical for a well-lived life. To this, Chuang Tzu perhaps replies: “And you—your knowledge doesn’t even extend to the boundaries of right and wrong! And you want to get a view of Chuang Tzu’s words” (9). As the distinctions of the human good remain, the frog remains in its well, encouraged to humility and self-laughter by Chuang Tzu, and in this laughter, perhaps a chance for self-transcendence. •
WORKS CITED
AUTUMN 2003 HONORABLE MENTION

Bob Hough

INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

Bob’s essay, “Living with Death,” is a testimony to the power of logical reasoning. One of the works Bob chose to analyze, Daniel Callahan’s *The Troubled Dream of Life*, forcefully asserts that advances in medicine have fostered in doctors and patients an inability to accept death peacefully, leading to unnecessary pain and suffering. This argument became one of the conceptual pillars of our course. Bob compared this text with Leo Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, which portrays doctors and modern society, more generally, as sources of Ivan’s agony during his last days. Obviously, Tolstoy’s novella supports Callahan’s thesis. Rather than accepting the obvious, Bob put the two works next to each other and with precision tested Callahan’s claim. The results are stunning. He convincingly argues that, in fact, Tolstoy’s depiction of death in nineteenth-century Russia suggests that a cultural unwillingness to face death must predate the medical miracles of the twentieth century. He then uses this insight as a wedge into the genuine similarities and differences between the two texts. He finds in both works a critique of the ideology of the Enlightenment, a position that was not fully developed in our course and is interestingly somewhat overshadowed in Callahan’s writing by his focus on recent technological breakthroughs. Here, Bob utilizes the comparative framework to its fullest potential, putting the texts in a dialogue with each other in order to shed new light on both. And as befits an essay for an interdisciplinary course in philosophy and anthropology, logical argumentation creates an opening for a nuanced discussion of contemporary cultural currents. As Bob analyzes the two authors’ remedies for the ills of modern society, he identifies and explores the tensions between those who seek to infuse life and death with meaning by strengthening the bonds of community and those who believe that any authentic life path must come from personal conviction, liberated from the limits of convention.

—Allison Katsev
Modern medicine, Daniel Callahan argues, has transformed human death, taking a once disliked, yet accepted, reality and making it a paramount source of human fear. But one hundred years of medical advances have not really changed the relationship between Western civilization and its dying members. Indeed, Callahan's critique of the medical institution in *The Troubled Dream of Life* and Leo Tolstoy's depiction of the struggles of a lonely dying man in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* present a unified criticism of the disrespect that modern society shows the sick and dying. Yet, it is in the two authors' solutions to this social problem that they differ: where Callahan's global perspective leads him to seek social customs that give society a framework for discussing death, Tolstoy's individualism reviles ritual and turns instead to spontaneous personal compassion.

“For Christ’s sake, let me die in peace!” Ivan Ilyich exclaims to his wife, Praskovya Fyodorovna, as she is about to mention his medicine (Tolstoy 125). According to Callahan, such a fear of medical disturbance in the face of death is not unique to the dying man in Tolstoy’s novella; it pervades society. Callahan defines the ideal death as one in which the dying person, surrounded by friends and family, is aware of his passing and its meaning and is not unduly afraid (54). The medical institution fails to respect these goals, he says, because it regards death as an unnecessary evil that must be conquered. Indeed, Callahan can convincingly point to a paucity of research funding and scientific discussion on care of the dying in his assertion that prevention of death, not death’s amelioration, takes precedence in the scientific community (190). The result is what Callahan calls “technological brinkmanship,” where patients are given the maximal treatment to maintain some quality of life (40–41). Physicians, however, tend to err on the side of greater treatment and lower quality of life to the extent that a peaceful death is no longer possible, either because the patient is not aware of himself at the time of his death, or because he dies a death so encumbered by medical paraphernalia
(drugs, catheters, artificial organs, and respirators) that he can never be comfortable (47). This disrespect for death in the medical community is projected onto society as a whole, Callahan notes, so that the elderly, who generally respond to questionnaires by saying that they would prefer minimal end-of-life management, upon illness, are observed to request the most aggressive treatments available (48).

But there is reason to suppose that society's revulsion at death may have evolved with, rather than because of, the attitudes of science. In nineteenth-century Russia, in a highly educated society like our own, but at a time when medicine could not reasonably be expected to prevent death, Tolstoy portrays a distinct aversion to any consideration of mortality. This aversion is the reason Ivan Ilyich is so dumbfounded by the realization that he will die; he has simply never considered the possibility of death. Tolstoy writes that Ivan is familiar with the famous syllogism, “Caius is a man, all men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal,” but he never thinks of applying it to his own life (Tolstoy 93). Similarly, Ivan’s family and friends find the subject of death distasteful. During his sickness, they carry on with their ordinary lives: Ivan’s judicial friends visit him to discuss court proceedings and play cards, pretending that his reasoning is as unclouded as ever, and Ivan’s family holds parties and attends the opera. Meanwhile, they see Ivan as a nuisance. His daughter complains about the bitterness with which he treats the family, even as they enjoy life without him (125–126), and his wife would wish for his death, except then she would have no income (74). Clearly society does not need science to detach itself from death; the loathing is present already.

In fact, both Callahan’s scientific disinterest in death and Tolstoy’s social aversion can be traced to the displacement of mysticism with rationalism in the Enlightenment. For Callahan, the connection is direct. Following the Enlightenment, science adopts the attitude that the entire natural world can be objectively explained; man ceases to be guided by the supernatural and assumes complete responsibility for his actions. Medicine thus becomes responsible for health, sickness, and eventually death (Callahan 32). With death now seen as a failure of medicine, it is only natural for medicine to fight death, not embrace it.

Tolstoy does not explicitly identify the reason death is evaded in his society, but some possibilities can be extrapolated from Ivan’s struggle with mortality. The question that haunts Ivan throughout his illness is, “Why must I die?” In the beginning, Ivan has no answer to this question, so he blames an unjust God and his fellow man for his sufferings (Tolstoy 78, 118). As his sickness progresses, however, Ivan gradually comes to consider the answer: “because I have not lived as I should have.” But this response requires moral-
ity, a belief in a right and a wrong way to live, so that, as long as Ivan's mind remains rational, this answer appears impossible to him (until he makes his leap of faith a few hours before his death). We then may infer that Ivan's rational society rejects death because it cannot understand it. Rationalism has no response to death so death must be ignored.

Although both Callahan and Tolstoy point to an excessive reliance on reason as the impediment to man's understanding death, their visions for a corrected society are diametrically opposed. Callahan seeks a society with some unifying ideas about what it means to die and so he sees a society's beliefs and its rituals as inextricably linked (223); beliefs are expressed in rituals, but as rituals are performed, a new framework is created in which beliefs develop (33). Thus, Western civilization lost its ability to converse about death when the rituals of religion were replaced by scientific study, and beliefs disappeared. Every significant culture, Callahan claims, has had both rituals and a unified vision of death, but these are missing in the United States (15); in a country with so many distinct and varied cultural backgrounds and religions, there is no common agreement on the meaning of death. Without this understanding, instances, such as the death of Callahan's own young son, arise in which many friends and relatives feel uncomfortable and do not know how to express their condolences to the family (33).

Ultimately, Callahan's vision rests upon cultural affirmation of the value of peaceful death (196). If, as a culture, we embrace a unified vision of the ideal death, then that becomes a starting point for public discourse, rituals, and other common practices surrounding it. But there is an obvious problem with Callahan's solution: how can a diverse society come to accept a single, idealized vision of death? Callahan meets this difficulty by arguing against a paradigm in which patients are given complete control over the care they receive. He maintains that it is unreasonable to expect individuals themselves to answer the question of death, which has haunted mankind for thousands of years; they need communal support. Given the option, he fears that individuals may make poor choices that harm themselves and their community as a whole (223). What Callahan suggests is that, within communities, a standardized model for treating the terminally or near-terminally ill be devised (216). In effect, he advocates installing peaceful death in America's cultural values.

Although Tolstoy also turns to a system of belief in meeting death, by approaching the problem from the personal standpoint he takes a view totally opposed to that of Callahan. Tolstoy rejects all rituals; he represents ritual as a negative force, distracting individuals from the introspection necessary for spiritual understanding. On his deathbed, Ivan considers his way of life, his profession, his family, and the values upheld by his society, and realizes
“the insubstantiality of them all” (127). In fact, it is precisely his former adherence to propriety and social norms that renders his life meaningless. And while Ivan ultimately takes solace in morality by embracing a “right” way to live, the rituals of the church bring him nothing but more suffering. Indeed, the acts of confession and Holy Communion, which Praskovya Fyodorovna suggests will ease his moral agony, instead function just as his medications did earlier in the novella, raising false hopes that he will be cured. Like the formality of his treatments, the church’s rituals arouse in Ivan only carnal desires so that, when the material illusions pass, it is natural that he becomes enraged and throws Praskovya Fyodorovna from the room (129).

Simultaneously, Tolstoy portrays ritual among Ivan’s friends and family as an escape, allowing them to avoid meaningfully confronting his death. This is made abundantly clear at the funeral as Pyotr Ivanovich, one of Ivan’s judicial friends, resorts to “crossing himself and bowing” rather than seriously considering the expression of reproach and warning on the dead man’s face (39–40). Again, formality serves as a front for material aims as Pyotr and Praskovya Fyodorovna discuss, in most somber terms, what grant money the government will award her. The solemnity of the conversation thus conforms to society’s sense of propriety around death, while allowing Ivan’s wife to satisfy her selfish desires. Likewise, during Ivan’s illness, his court friends hedge around the topic of death by maintaining strictly professional conversation (104), and his wife excuses herself with such formulaic actions as asking how Ivan is feeling [“merely for the sake of asking” (114)] and insisting upon having him seen by the most celebrated doctors (112). Both Ivan’s friends and his wife thus circumvent human contact by falling back upon ritualized gestures.

And for Tolstoy, it is precisely human contact that must replace ritual to make both life and death meaningful. The one character who brings relief to Ivan in his dying days is the servant, Gerasim. Gerasim does this by passing the time with Ivan; he spends entire nights, in fact, resting Ivan’s legs upon his shoulders because Ivan finds this position more comfortable. [Ivan’s wife and the doctors object to this position because it seems unnatural (112).] Gerasim says, “It would be different if you weren’t sick, but as it is, why shouldn’t I do a little extra work?” (104). Gerasim’s compassion is inherent in Ivan’s fond memories of his youth, as he recalls time spent playing with his mother, nurse, and brother (122); this is essentially what Ivan comes to call the “real thing” as he is lying on his deathbed. In adopting this “real thing” by grieving for the suffering of his wife and family, Ivan’s life is resurrected (132–133). Thus it is compassion and open communication among humans that Tolstoy portrays as the source of meaning in both life and death.
The difference between the perspectives of Tolstoy and Callahan is embedded in the fundamental conflict between an individual and society, namely, to what extent does the conformity required by society ultimately rob the individual of the autonomy that makes him human, and, therefore, what is society’s role in establishing values that lead the individual to greater fulfillment? Whereas Tolstoy relies upon the individual spirit to find compassion once it is freed from the constricting rules of society, Callahan sees lost individuals in need of some collective guidance. But Tolstoy and Callahan could agree that this is a question that demands everyone’s consideration. An individual’s response defines not only his attitude toward death, but also the way he sees himself and his role in all organizations. It becomes his social identity.  

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Patrick R. Callier

INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

In his essay, “Matter, Systems, and Alternatives from the Americas in Borges,” Patrick Callier offers an insightful examination of the relationship between matter and idea explored by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges in two of his most memorable short stories, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” and “The Lottery in Babylon.” Patrick argues that in these stories, called “fictions” by the author and “metaphysical fables” by some of his critics, Borges utilizes objects and the ideas that they signify to expose the arbitrariness and inconsistency of systems of thought derivative of “Enlightenment-era rationalism and mercantile capitalist economics” to challenge European modes of rationalizing and organizing reality. Combining the theoretical framework (particularly, Professor Richard Rosa’s theoretical propositions) that guided our course, Roots and Routes: Narrative Identities and Geographies of the Americas, with interpretative aplomb and analytical penetration, Patrick elucidates the author’s skepticism of European thought and his unwillingness to submit to its overarching interpretations of reality and definite meaning. In “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” Patrick maintains, Borges expounds the process of systematization of reality to show how the encyclopedia, a tangible object with precise economic value, functions as an emblem of European rationalism, but whose arrangements are purely artificial and thereby susceptible to analytical scrutiny and questioning. In “The Lottery in Babylon,” Patrick contends, Borges critiques the origins of market economy by chronicling the evolution of the lottery from a rudimentary exchange system of simple objects (coins, tickets, bone squares) to the institutionalization of the more complex and abstract notions that support it (debt, penalties, meritocracy, the company, and property law). In both cases, Patrick concludes, these accounts are parodies of established notions of order, which in some ways seem to represent the “alternative” philosophical response of an American writer—the term “American” used in its truer sense—who wishes to underscore the arbitrariness, falsity, and imperfection of legitimized systems that often are imposed on realities with radically different principles and structures. This is a remarkable essay that reveals the intellectual courage and formation of a young and independent thinker, an essential critical disposition in our contemporary world in which such arbitrary impositions of systems still prevail.

—BYRON A. BARAHONA
Matter, Systems, and Alternatives from the Americas in Borges

Patrick R. Callier

Matter, material, and objects are often agents in their own right in Jorge Luis Borges’s short fiction. Objects can act and can cause effects, and, moreover, they often symbolize systems of ideas and organizational patterns that are important in the human world. In “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” and “The Lottery in Babylon,” objects contain and signify particular systems of thought and reasoning that derive from traditional European intellectual traditions: Enlightenment-era rationalism and mercantile capitalist economics. However, in the same breath that Borges expends to set up these relationships between objects and ideas, he critiques ideas, exposing their arbitrariness and inconsistency by situating ideas in materiality, thereby provoking a reevaluation of European modes of organizing reality and of the project of universal systematization itself.

Central to “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” is the encyclopedia, which, as an object, is emblematic of a traditional, rationalist, European method of systematizing knowledge and reality. Throughout the story, the narrator and his peers organize their understanding of existence almost entirely through encyclopedias. Borges’s narrator claims to discover an entire nation—Uqbar—in a lost volume of the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* (68–70), and, until the Postscript, neither the narrator nor the reader receives any information about Tlön or Uqbar that is not mediated by encyclopedias and the systematic regime they represent. This ubiquity of encyclopedic information parallels the project of the original *encyclopédistes* and other Enlightenment thinkers who, wanting to be able to comprehend reality itself, approached the problem with a rational form of organization (Rosa). Their project ultimately aimed to divide existence up into rationally defined, discrete chunks that would correspond to encyclopedia entries. Borges’s use of encyclopedias in “Tlön” signifies this project, which is identified with European rationalism.
and bourgeois *hommes de lettres* backed by ample economic resources. The search for Uqbar also throws into relief the intensity of the subscription to rationalism and order that encyclopedists and those who identify with them make; Uqbar’s existence is predicated not on direct experience of the place, but on the existence of a reference to it within their organizational rubric. This idealistic rationalism is the primary target of Borges’s object-mediated critique in “Tlön.” When, in the Postscript, the narrator documents the production of the *First Encyclopædia of Tlön*, Borges points out that, in addition to mediating our experience of reality, encyclopedias, as a way of organizing knowledge, are constructs imagined by human minds (Rosa 78–79). The biased mediation of reality by encyclopedias and their constructed nature form two bases of Borges’s critique of the Enlightenment-style arrangement of knowledge that encyclopedias represent.

This critique also turns on Borges’s treatment of encyclopedias as objects in and of themselves, and not just as abstract representations of knowledge. He refers to them almost always by individual volume (68–72), and makes a point of narrating their paths as tangible objects with location and economic value. For example, he emphasizes the materiality and geographic reality of *A First Encyclopædia of Tlön*, Vol. XI, which arrives “in a sealed, certified package from Brazil,” is “1001 pages,” “printed in octavo major,” and in a “leather-bound volume” with a “yellow spine” (71). Borges focuses on the economic value of the encyclopedia-as-object as well. The narrator remarks, for instance, “Bioy had purchased his copy [of the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*] at one of his many sales” (62). In addition, the project of authoring the *First Encyclopædia of Tlön* is initiated by, and hinges on, a sizeable economic contribution (72). The physicality of “Tlön’s” encyclopedias is clearly salient in Borges’s treatment of them, and their contextualization of ideas in time and space allows for his critique of hyper-rational, idealistic systems of organizing reality.

Borges’s critique maintains that Western Enlightenment-style rational thought, represented by the encyclopedias, seeks to systematize reality in a manner that is arbitrary and distorts reality. The encyclopedias’ flaws arise both from their historical, constructed nature (which may be said of all projects of systematization) and from their material nature as objects. Borges taps into both of these conditions in his critique of rationalist, Enlightenment-style philosophical systems. The placement of the entry on Uqbar in the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* illustrates quite clearly the arbitrariness and the irrevocable imperfection of organizational systems like encyclopedias. The largest contributing factor to the article’s location—the choice of alphabetic boundaries between volumes XLVI and XLVII of the *Anglo-American*
Cyclopaedia—is entirely arbitrary because it depends on factors such as how many pages the authors want the volume to be, how many volumes the encyclopedia will comprise, and so on. But, by chance, the boundary lines exclude the word “Uqbar” (68–69). The alphabetical keys on volumes XLVI and XLVII do not acknowledge the possibility of an entry beginning with “Uqb,” and, in all but the single aberrant volume that the narrator discovered, the entry does not fit between “Uppsala” and “Ural-Altaic Languages” (69). Like the country itself, whose geography defies placement onto typical maps of the world (69–70), the entry on Uqbar simply does not fit into the chosen organizational pattern of the encyclopedia. So, not only do conceptual borders squeeze Uqbar out of the organizational structure of the encyclopedia, but also the large multiplicity of possible locations that the Uqbar entry could potentially occupy in the encyclopedic system—if its name were spelled using alternative orthographies like “Ucbar, Ookbar,” or “Oukhbar” (68)—is too problematic for encyclopedic organization because it requires a one-to-one relationship between knowledge and the index for that knowledge (69).

These phenomena—information both being squeezed out and fitting, perhaps improperly, in multiple locations—are inherently problematic for any attempt to systematize reality according to a finite set of guidelines. Boundaries for volumes and the singleness of entries, as physical qualities of encyclopedias as material objects, are necessarily arbitrary. Encyclopedias themselves therefore signify and contain both the project of systematization and the critical problems with systematization. Significance and containment is an important pairing—Borges’s account of the entry excluded from encyclopedic reality by absurd and arbitrary choices not only functions as a symbolic fable of the folly of projects of the systematization of knowledge, but also as a concrete elucidation of why, due to physical circumstances, such projects must fail in their ultimate goals.

The encyclopedic system is but one imposition that human culture has made on reality; Borges critiques other systems of organization as well. In his story “The Lottery in Babylon” especially, Borges shifts his analytical focus to the traditional European economic system: mercantile capitalism. In this story, he chronicles and critiques what Richard Rosa calls the “dematerialization of riches”—the continually accruing abstraction of wealth away from its material basis into immaterial systems—effected as market-based economies advance. As with the encyclopedias of “Tlön,” in “Lottery in Babylon,” it is from the material implements of the lottery—coins, tickets, bone squares—that ideological abstractions arise—Lottery (with a capital “L”), Company, law, and private/public distinctions. At first, the ideas of the game remain closely tied to the objects involved. Silver coins are more highly valued than
the copper, and this draws the earliest players to the game, which rewards the winner of the lottery with a sum of the more highly valued currency (102). The operators of the game, at first local barbers but soon “the Company,” then make the game appeal more “to all a man’s faculties” by including the concept of penalty fines for certain unlucky players who draw unlucky numbers (102). The introduction of the fine—or “loss and privation,” as Rosa puts it—is still a direct manipulation of objects with value (102). Nevertheless, it is the start of the process of progressive abstraction and dematerialization that is the basis of Borges’s ultimate critique of market economics.

The first explicit dematerialization occurs when “announcements of the numbers drawn [begin] to leave out the lists of fines and simply print the days of prison assigned to each losing number” (102). The sublimation of debt into jail time is the result of two fabrications: property law and the Company, which arise simultaneously, though distinctly from each other. Property law is conditioned by the need “to protect the interests of the winners, who could not be paid their prizes unless the pot contained almost the entire amount of the fines” (102). The Company, which lays upon its own shoulders the responsibility of enacting this protection, is of more indeterminate origin, though presumably the descendants of barbers and other small merchants are involved somehow; the Company and its stated aim allude to corporate enterprise and its dedication to delivering returns to the sources of their capital. In the space of a single page, Borges demonstrates how the values latent in the original few objects—coins, tickets, bone squares—arrive at the point at which claims of justice are made on the basis of happenstance, how people’s freedom and power is predicated on the confluence of chance and material wealth, and how hegemonic institutions substantiate themselves on just the same sort of confluence. This account is a parody of the origins of market economy and property law; imagining these two systems in terms of their humble, physical origins, Borges challenges the meritocratic myth that power and success are accorded to the most deserving. He lays bare the hypocrisy of a system that operates on chance, coerces participation, and then piles moral odium onto those who resist involvement or lose (102). Borges’s parody even goes on to subject the reality of the Lottery and the Company themselves to the chance that they, too, embody, and the story ends with the abrupt and ironically inconsequential dematerialization of both phenomena.

These two stories, and more specifically the roles that objects play in them, illustrate Borges’s unique response to the situation in which he found himself. As a descendant of Europeans living in a Europe-dominated culture, he could not deny his origins or the prevailing systematizations of reality that existed in his day. Nevertheless, the difference of the American situation, with
its geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity, falsified the idealistic goals of thinkers who attempted to explain reality solely in terms of ideas divorced from physical situations in the real world. As Borges explains, parodically using encyclopedias and vanishing coins, these systematizations of reality all suffer from irremediable flaws by their very nature. Borges’s analysis of the intersection between matter and idea eventually shows that the very process of trying to invent a system to explain reality is futile since any such system necessarily will be just that—an invention, and not the reality we struggle so hard to reach. ♦

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INSTRUCTOR’S FOREWORD

With linguistic sophistication and an ear sensitive to the poetics of the lyric poets she examines in her paper “Male and Female Love Worlds: Inherently Separate Landscapes?” Annie Kalt describes how Sappho, Alkaios, and Anakreon outline an exclusionary gender dynamic by which anxieties over emotional and social power compel both sexes to maintain separate homoerotic “love worlds” that both satisfy emotional needs and offer protection from the aggressions of the opposite gender. Annie’s analysis succeeds through her meticulous attention to the language of these poets’ extant fragments and through her own ability to organize subtle poetic effects into a cogent argumentative structure. In viewing archaic Greek poetry through a twenty-first-century eye, she draws her subject into the modern day, and so posits theories and conclusions about the relationships between the genders that are at least as relevant today as they were 2,700 years ago.

—Dan Turkeltaub
Male and Female Love Worlds: Inherently Separate Landscapes?

Annie Kalt

In the mere fragments of the works that have survived into modernity from the archaic period, the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the Greek lyric poets offer a gift that, perhaps, poets in all times have tended to offer: a sensitivity to the patterns and undercurrents that define our worlds, both personally and collectively. In archaic Greece, a clearly patriarchal political society, the roles and divisions of gender offer such patterning perhaps never more distinctly than in the arena of erotic love. Sappho, the great female poet of the island of Lesbos, writing in the late seventh century BC, gives voice to a feminine love-experience in archaic Greece that is at once achingly personal and transcendent to the collective. Her Lesbian contemporary, Alkaios, and fellow Greek, Anakreon, who wrote shortly after her lifetime, offer corresponding male visions of the Greek love-experience. Yet, as these female and male romantic visions emerge, the poets also ask: How separate are the male and female romantic experiences, and what does this reveal about the relative cohesiveness or disjunction of a gendered archaic Greek society? The works of these three lyric poets suggest a society in which rifts between the genders make heterosexual relationships inherently imbalanced, requiring males and females to create separate, parallel love-worlds in which to attain true reciprocity of sexual power and pleasure.

Although the poets most likely engaged in traditional heterosexual relationships and marriage, both male and female depictions of heterosexual love portray it as a threat to the independent sexuality and power of each gender. Anakreon conveys a framework in which male and female sexual control cannot exist simultaneously, so one must cede to the other to consummate romance. In one poem, he asks the following of a female love-object:
Thracian filly, why do you
[…]; stubbornly flee me, and why
do you think I’ve no skill?
[…]; I could well
throw a bridle on you,
and holding the reins I could turn
you round the goal on the track. (9.1–8)

The exchange is one between tamer and animal, in which the male gains power through capture and the female through avoidance, making reciprocal romantic control impossible. Male romantic conquest domesticates the once less restrained female, suggesting that females must relinquish will in submission to heterosexual relationship. Anakreon claims confidence in his easy capacity to conquer, maintaining face in the male arena of public accolades at the track. However, the dynamic also contains implicit male vulnerability, as the female’s potentially persistent sexual avoidance threatens his skill, his ability to achieve, and so his very male potency. Thus, Anakreon portrays heterosexual love as a goal-oriented process in which the male power to assert must either win out over the female power to withhold, sealing the romance by establishing male dominance, or, in its failure, allow the female to emasculate the male.

While Sappho offers a different, feminine perspective on female-male sexual interchange, she similarly suggests that heterosexual love tends to sacrifice one gender’s power and sexuality for the sake of the other’s. In her poetic depiction of the marriage night, the poem adopts the character of a chant:

Raise high the roof
—Hymen!—
you carpenter men
—Hymen!—
The bridegroom approaches like Ares
—Hymen!—
much bigger than a big man. (57.1–7)

The male lover appears here as a huge man with pounding tools, who will drive excessively large parts into a young bride’s body. In this depiction, the chant characterizes male love as insensitive to feminine pleasure and identity. As at Anakreon’s race track, heterosexual sex appears public and goal-oriented, performed amid the shouts of a band of carpenters and associated with a distinctly male goal, to erect a high structure. Shouts of “Hymen,” invoking the god of marriage, rally the bridegroom to achieve the public goal of consummation, without acknowledgment that the word they shout is also a personal and tender part of the bride’s body and sexual identity. Meanwhile, the bride herself disappears from discussion of the sexual goal, and remains with-
out identity or will in reception of the approaching groom. In full, for the anonymous bride, the scene evokes a potentially frightening and confusing experience in which heterosexual love requires a male accomplishment that disregards and violates her sexual identity.

Even in moments when heterosexual love does not appear overtly destructive, Sappho suggests that love, or more specifically the vulnerability of longing for a male, destabilizes her feminine power. Sappho, as narrator, complains: “Sweet mother, I cannot weave— / slender Aphrodite has overwhelmed me / with longing for a boy” (18.1–3). In this plea, Sappho’s susceptibility to the other gender incapacitates her definitively female skill of weaving, making her femininely impotent just as the Thracian filly threatened to unman Anakreon. She appeals to maternal wisdom and protection, suggesting an attempt to restabilize herself through female allegiances. Meanwhile, the tone of the plea suggests a girl daydreaming about a crush, a somewhat undignified role for an educated, mature, artistically powerful woman. Sappho’s female depiction of heterosexual love thus shares elements of that offered by her male counterpart, Anakreon. In both poets’ works, male and female sexual powers seem to destroy, destabilize, or humiliate each other, therefore appearing unable to concur without imbalance.

In response to this uneven heterosexual love landscape, in which simultaneous fulfillment of male and female sexual powers and desires seems impossible, both Sappho and the male poets depict each gender as forming parallel but separate love-worlds. By avoiding the necessary imbalance of the male-female sexual exchange, these intra-gender relationships offer precious reciprocity of power and pleasure. Existing in a patriarchal Greece, the tender empowerment of Sappho’s feminine love-world emerges perhaps most distinctively. When a young girl leaves Sappho to enter marriage, and laments the loss of her feminine will in submission to patriarchal heterosexual love, she weeps: “Sappho I leave you against my will” (14.2–5). In Sappho’s response, a distinctly intra-feminine alternative unfolds:

I answered, go happily
[…] Many crowns of violets,
roses and crocuses
… together you set before me
and many scented wreaths
made from blossoms
around your soft throat …
… with pure, sweet oil
… you anointed me,
and on a soft, gentle bed …
you quenched your desire …
… no holy site …
we left uncovered,
no grove … dance
… sound. (14.6–24)

In the erotic relationship evoked by Sappho, the young girl maintains the integrity of her will, urged to go freely as Anakreon's Thracian filly was urged to submit to capture. The floral and vegetal symbols of feminine sexuality suggest gratification through gifts mutually and willingly bestowed, as each woman crowns the other with the realization of her sexuality. The woman's soft throat suggests a vulnerability exposed in trust, which, as with their gentle bed, suggests that the women lie prone to each other without the risk of the destabilization found in heterosexual love. The subtle, tender exploration of each body part, involving nearly all senses, and the quenching of the younger girl's desire, reveal a mutual sensitivity to pleasures and feeling that was so obliviously violated by the carpenters (57). The alternation of “you” and “me” in actions and receptions, culminating in the union of “we” in a sacred grove, underscores the reciprocity and balance of the eroticism. The reciprocity of the intra-feminine love makes sexual interchange a holy anointment, and the realization of sexual identity and desires a natural, even sacred, process.

Though we sadly possess a less complete poetic picture of Anakreon's erotic vision, what survives of his work offers glimpses of a parallel male love-world. In one instance, he invokes the male power of Dionysos, asking, “I implore you—come to us / kindly—to hear my prayer / […] bid him accept my love” (3.1–11). In the act of imploring, he admits vulnerability to rejection, which he explicitly denies in his assertion to the female filly: “I could well / throw a bridle on you” (9.5–6). Thus, Anakreon reveals true tenderness and vulnerability in expression of love for a boy. Anakreon's gentle reference to “us” in his plea, and his recognition of choice on the part of his lover, suggest a sensitivity and reciprocity of control absent in his heterosexual assertion. The male love-world also liberates Anakreon to explore fluid gender roles without the fundamental risk of unmanning. He addresses a boy: “Lad, glancing like a virgin / I seek you, but you don't hear, / not knowing that you are my soul's charioteer” (5.1–4). In this fragment, both the lad he seeks, like a feminine virgin, and Anakreon himself, yoked in a typically female submission to the male driving force, alternate in their adoption of male and female roles. The two men reciprocally alternate the possession of power, without risking loss of male identity to female power. As in Sappho’s female love scene, this reciprocal love seems to carry the lovers closer to the holy, to
love of the soul. Thus, in both female and male love-worlds, lovers escape a heterosexual dynamic in which vulnerability to the other gender perpetually threatens to destabilize their gender identity and power, and instead gain precious sexual reciprocity of both power and pleasure.

Yet looking beyond the benefits offered to the separate genders through these love-worlds, the dividedness of these worlds, as well as the non-reciprocal heterosexual dynamic to which they respond, have potentially harmful social implications. This dividedness reflects, and perhaps perpetuates, a social attitude holding male and female power at odds, creating a rift between the masculine and feminine experiences. Without a notion of concurrent male and female power, patriarchy perhaps remains endemic in Greek political and social institutions, and Greek cultural and historical identity perhaps remains cracked and unhealed. The smarting of this gendered split appears perhaps most clearly in the continually recurring story of Helen, and in the distance between the two genders’ appreciations of her historical significance. For example, the poet Alkaios communicates a historical view defined by the male experience of warfare, stating:

… many of his brothers …
… the Trojan plain holds conquered
because of that woman,
[…]
… and many lively-eyed men …
… slaughter …. (6.10–15)

His depiction conveys outrage at a male devastation incurred for the sexual satisfaction of one woman, confirming an understanding that males and females can only realize sexuality at the expense of one another. Helen, and perhaps women in general, appears insensitive to the true cost borne by men. In this view, the male loss at Troy was the fault of woman, establishing this most devastating war as, at its root, a gendered conflict stemming from feminine assertions of will.

By contrast, Sappho’s feminine perspective reveals a differing view of gendered relations in Greek history and, perhaps, the present. In this distance between their distinctly masculine and feminine views, no unifiable “Greek” identity or experience can emerge. As Sappho reflects upon the forces that compel human hearts and history, with particular reference to military history, she asserts:

Some say an army of horsemen, others
say foot soldiers, still others, a fleet,
is the fairest thing on this dark earth:
I say it is whatever one loves. (4.1–4)
In this passage, Sappho describes complex social and political motivations in the language of eroticism, including the provocative notion that men go to war in part out of love for it. She next draws a parallel between these men loving war, and the love-compelled heart of Helen, claiming: “Everyone can understand this— / consider Helen” (4.5–6). Without exonerating Helen, Sappho identifies with her, and suggests that all people might identify with her pursuit of love. This identification equates Helen’s actions with those of men compelled by love of ambition or war. As Alkaios holds up male loss in outrage against Helen’s selfish female pursuit, Sappho perhaps holds up Helen as a response to a collective Greek feminine loss: that of innumerable women unable to fulfill erotic or emotional desires due to society’s prioritization of man’s armies and fleets. Thus Sappho does not blame, or accept the blame of, Helen and womankind as the root of Greek conflict, but makes males equally, perhaps even more, culpable. The distinctly differing male and female perspectives on Helen’s historical significance thereby suggest a deeper gendered rift through Greece’s cultural identity. Males and females appear to live in different Greeces, sexually, socially, and historically. As seen in the destruction of “Helen’s war,” this division leaves archaic Greece vulnerable to great social costs incurred by gendered conflict.

Accordingly, these three lyric poets of archaic Greece, Sappho, Anakreon, and Alkaios, reveal complex sexual currents running beneath and shaping Greek society. These currents take route as each gender balances its own need for sexual realization against the complex challenges posed by the opposite sex. In heterosexual love, shaped by archaic Greece’s patriarchal power imbalance, males and females appear unable to realize sexual power concurrently, as each gender’s power continually undermines the other’s. In response to this perilous landscape, alternatives emerge. Males and females inhabit parallel but separate love-worlds, which offer the security and reciprocity needed for men and women to realize their sexual identities and gain satisfaction in power and pleasure. Yet as these separate landscapes emerge, a question remains in these lyric poetic visions: Is there hope for reconciliation between these alienated lands? The historical wounds of gendered warfare in Greek history remain unhealed, as differing male and female perspectives create a rift of blame through Greek society. In depicting the costs of gendered warfare, the poets leave the reader with a sense that the reciprocity of power and pleasure in separate intra-gendered eroticism, though it may be beautiful, is not enough. Greek society perhaps must find some path towards reciprocity amongst the genders as well, so that males and females might experience power in tandem, and gain true senses of themselves as part of the same human landscape, inhabiting worlds not parallel, but concurrent and balanced. ◆
NOTES

1 All fragments are quoted from and numbered according to Rayor’s translation, Sappho’s Lyre (California: University of California Press, 1991).

2 Although it remains debatable, it is likely that the term “hymen” referred both to the anatomical membrane as well as the marriage-god. See Brown, “Hymenaeus,” The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2003 ed.

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