The Montag
The College of Liberal Arts Journal of Undergraduate Research

Volume I

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Supported by the College of Liberal Arts and the Core Humanities Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, The Montag seeks to publish accessibly written, high quality work by undergraduate students that showcases the value of a liberal arts education and thoughtfully engages with the issues confronting humanity in the twenty-first century. The journal is edited and produced by an undergraduate editorial staff and publishes in the spring semester of each academic year.

Submissions are accepted from all current UNR undergraduates. To be considered for publication, please email submissions (Word or RTF format) to themontag@unr.edu. Submissions are reviewed on a rolling basis; submissions received after January 15th will be considered for the issue published the following year. Submissions greater than 15 pages will not be considered for print publication, but may be considered for online publication. Citations should be formatted in the accepted professional format of the related field. Translations should be accompanied by a copy of the text in its original form. Black-and-white photography submissions will be considered for publication within the journal. Color submissions of original artwork will be considered for the cover design; submissions for the cover should be submitted as photographs of the original composition. All submissions will be strictly reviewed for originality.
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Cover Art
The cover of this edition of *The Montag* showcases the original artwork of Erin Wohletz.

*[Image of cover art]*

*Center of the Universe* by Erin Wohletz

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Editor’s Note

Welcome to the second edition of the College of Liberal Arts journal of undergraduate research, *The Montag*.

*The Montag* is the only academic journal at the University of Nevada, Reno that was created to showcase the contemporary academic and creative works of young students. In the second volume, *The Montag* promotes not only academic excellence but also the spectacular artwork and original poetry of several undergraduates at the University.

The inspiration for *The Montag* originated from the protagonist of Ray Bradbury’s book *Fahrenheit 451*, Guy Montag, who said, “We need to be really bothered once in a while… About something important, about something real.” Although *The Montag* seeks to display the university’s academia, this publication also exhibits the contemporary scholarly position of students and their passion for the arts. This journal demonstrates the work of young writers and artists and allows them to engage with their piece in a way that cannot be created in a classroom.

The essays that were chosen out of the countless submissions examine subjects and arguments that resonate with both students and social issues at large: from long distance relationships between students, the prevalence of race and color in today’s culture, and where the line can be distinguished between what is art and what is pornography. These articles compel readers to engage with the writing as well as their own beliefs. This publication dares to challenge the readers perspective in order to embrace, what Guy Montag says, truly bothers us and so that we may approach education without contrainst.

I wish to thank the Core Humanities Program and the College of Liberal Arts for their continual support in the direction of *The Montag*. With their guidance this journal will encourage the students body’s critical thinking and their excellence in creative and scholarly work.

Read. Reflect. Enjoy.

Danika Peterson
April 2013
One of the key lessons of art in the mature years of one’s learning is that there will be nudes of men, women, and children, predominantly used with biblical references or supernatural figures. But the question that still lingers in our society today is; where do we draw the line of pornography from art without removing an artist’s freedom of expression? When is art seen as erotic or pornographic? Many people do not know how to react with the German artist Hans Bellmer. Although Bellmer’s surrealist aesthetic leads in a positive direction, several of his works have crossed the line when he added sexualized portrayals of children. Although Hans Bellmer’s art is an expression of his individual emotions and heart, there has to be a line drawn between pornography and artistic license.

Germany during the Third Reich was not accepting of the modern artist. Hitler and his cohort Joseph
Goebbels, were causing damage to the reputations of modern artists of the time due to their insecurities and societal rejection of their artistic talent by creating an exhibition titled Entartete Kunst; which translated, means “degenerate art.” In their exhibition of these degenerate artists, Hitler and Goebbels attempted to make mockerys of each artist. In 1938 Hitler spoke to the people of Germany at another museum exhibition and is quoted in *Hitler and the Artists* by Henry Grosshans to have said:

“I therefore decide to make a clean break and to set one task and one task only for our new German art. I would force it to hold to the direction the National Socialist revolution has marked out for our new national existence... It is difficult to know now as it always been whether we have artistic geniuses of lasting stature working among us... but we do know that we have created the conditions under which great genius can flourish...” –Hitler

Because Modern artists were not seen as contributing to Hitler’s ideal Germany and did not live up to his standard of acceptable art, they were labeled degenerates; “One degraded from the normal moral standard or another use is a sexual pervert,” (Webster). Some artists that were labeled unsavory created art similar to Otto Dix, seen as such because the art was anti-war; but others like Wassily Kandinsky were called degenerate because their work was not realistic at all. By being marked as “degenerate,” all of their creative rights were taken away. Modern artists in Third Reich Germany could not teach, sell, or most
importantly, create their art. Many artists fled, while others stayed, but Hans Bellmer was exiled from Germany. Of all of the artists that Hitler and the Nazi Party claimed degenerate, Bellmer seemed to be the only one to truly fit the title. Through his art, he had lost the mental and moral assets that were considered typical and appropriate.

Bellmer’s perversions started at a young age because of his unconventional upbringing. Bellmer and his younger brother had always hated their dad. Their father was a tyrant, and never cared for their mother. Bellmer would always be there for her, developing a closer bond between them. In the Oxford Art Online journal on Bellmer by Peter Webb he states, “He and his younger brother Fritz found refuge from this oppressive family atmosphere in a secret garden decorated with toys and souvenirs and visited by young girls who joined in sexual games,” (Webb, Oxford). In Peter Webb’s book, *Hans Bellmer*, he discusses how people need to separate pornography from erotic art and uses Bellmer’s work as an example of this. Webb wrote about the secret garden Bellmer and his brother had, and how Bellmer pretended he was an Indian chief, but Webb was very allusive when discussing the girls that would come to visit. Webb an erotic art fanatic himself, argues Bellmer’s art is erotic in nature and not pornographic. He supports this by omitting strong factual evidence to the contrary in order to
preserve his idol and Bellmer’s reputation. The difference between erotic art and pornography is that the purpose of erotic art is to portray arousal; however, the portrayal of children or bestiality in Bellmer’s work contradicts the original intent of the risqué art as well as Webb’s argument (Erotic Art).

In the United States, government plays a large role in enforcing laws, but society defines those laws by deciding what is morally right or wrong. The U.S. government does not take advantage of the artist’s personal expression in their work like the Nazi party, but they do enforce laws when the art work crosses the line from erotic art to pornography. With today’s laws and standards in regards to pornography, and with the help of Bellmer’s own words, Hans Bellmer’s work is considered obscene. Some of Bellmer’s work has traversed from erotic modern art to obscene pornography.

Although the First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances,” (The U.S. Constitution), it lists nothing of obscenity, and does nothing to protect something deemed as immoral material. Obscenity is understood to be anything that is offensive to morality or decency; depraved: obscene language are also cause of
uncontrolled sexual desire (Obscenity Laws). This definition of obscenity leaves room for societal interpretation. According to Robert T. Young, a retired FBI agent involved with crimes of pornography and specifically child exploitation, listed child pornography, pseudo child pornography, pornography of adults who look like children performing sexual acts, and bestiality, as explicit. By this societal interpretation Bellmer’s work in the 21st century would be labeled obscene.

Furthermore, Webb, after an interview with Bellmer, claimed that Bellmer himself was truly obsessed with sex and wanted to artistically and honestly show the viewer insight on the subject of human sexuality. In fact, his obsessions were more than just insight on sex but were also insight on his sexual fantasy preference. Many of his sketches portrayed children, including his Doll series, which had a prepubescent girl affinity. Many of Bellmer’s works are cryptic in message, and must be analyzed due to the unique nature of his work. Although Bellmer had some pieces of work that are concentrated on bestiality, his main focus of sexuality was on women and young girls.

The message that Bellmer’s art conveyed, was the idea that an individual should discover and understand their sexual being (Short 12). He points this out in certain works like *Rose ouverte la nuit* (figure 1); Bellmer expresses the idea of this young girl finding her sexual
identity. The exploration of her internal organs versus placing the girl in sexual act, allows a better understanding of this concept even if it appears to have more of an obscene meaning behind it. Childhood is the center of where our sexual journey begins, but it can only evolve through the sexual exploration of one’s self. It is the purity in being young. It is through the discovery of pleasure alone and the ignorance of what caused that pleasure that one will find their sexuality. For Bellmer, having sex at a very young age may have corrupted the discovery of his sexual being, because he did not allow himself enough time to explore independently before introducing sexual activities with others. Because a child’s brain is still developing, Bellmer was committing further damage by exposing his brain to sexual images, causing the brain to continuously shift closer to that of an addict’s brain (figure 6).

“Are Artists who create nude human forms getting ‘turned on’ while they create? Our brains are in spatial-thinking mode and conscious sexual thoughts would get in the way and defeat the intention—Kelly Borsheim” (Art Quotations). In 120 Days of Solomon, from the Little Treatise on Morals series (figure 2), the collage effect enhanced the push toward surrealist creativity. In his piece it seems as though Bellmer had his conscious sexual thoughts literally interrupt his work. This image could be seen as erotic art, until the viewer observes that in the
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center of the drawing a little girl is pulling up her dress. This little girl has an innocent smirk on her face, but also gives the viewer a look of invitation. The interesting thing is that she is drawn in gold or yellow ink rather than black like most of the piece. Bellmer’s choice of color causes the girl to stand out, becoming the very enthralling center of the piece, but the yellow tint also hides her over the other bodies in the work. The image in black and white, however, emphasizes the girl and keeps her from being hidden in the work around her.

With having such explicit pieces, acceptance in museums became difficult. His work was accepted into the Museum of Paris, and among the other artists that were accepted at the time, his work was comparatively inoffensive. The crude works of Bellmer’s that were accepted were The Doll and The Second Doll. It was not the work of the dolls that was considered vulgar, but the setting and the ideas that were included in the creation of the dolls. There was a series of events that occurred pushing him to create these pieces of work. The first was seeing his beautiful teenage cousin Ursula, second was seeing a play entitled Tales of Hoffmann, in which the protagonist falls in love with an automaton, and lastly a shipment of some old toys from his mother, which prompted thoughts from his childhood garden (Taylor 1).

All of these were trigger objects, not just for his sexual thoughts, but also for his creative mind as
well. Sexual thoughts were always occupying his mind and that is why people can see the perversion in his art. He created *The Doll* out of his infatuation with little girls’ sexuality but the inability to have possession of them. These dolls allowed him to possess what he wanted but also enabled him to be more intimate than he could in real life. He was able to build his own girl “with aggressive fingers” to his liking. He talked about *The Doll’s* pink pleats, referring to the genitalia, and intently focused on that as well as “their bowed and knocked kneed legs” (Taylor 1). He made *The Doll* out of multiple materials including ball wood joints, glue, and tissue paper, which allowed a skin like quality to the touch (Short, Pg.57).

The first doll was created and photographed to show the making of it. There were many photos of Plate from La Poupée (Figure.4), which showed the main structure of *The Doll*. Bellmer wanted to add more human characteristics to *The Doll*, such as better mobility. So Bellmer and his brother tore apart the first doll and built *The Second Doll*. Interestingly enough, his brother Fritz helped him build *The Second Doll*, and he too played with little girls in the garden. Although there is no definitive proof, Fritz might have had similar feelings to Bellmer when it came to young girls considering that they shared similar childhood activities and an indistinguishable vision in the collaboration of Bellmer’s art. *The Second Doll*, having multiple joints and duplicate
parts, gave the doll more mobility, but also entitled Bellmer to become more perverse with his photography. He most frequently used two pelvises with pairs of legs on either side for pictures and they were “always wearing white socks and black school girl shoes…” (Short Pg.61) further expressing his infatuation with young girls.

*Les Juex De la poupée* or *The Games of the Doll* was the title of the poems by Eluard that were published with Bellmer’s Second Doll photographs. This title was important because it reminded Bellmer of his childhood memories and games (Short 62). Considering his sexual exploits as a kid and combining those memories with his toys, there would seem to be a sense of perversion not only in the title, but also in the works related to the title. In figure 4, *Untitled*, Bellmer has *The Second Doll* in a secluded forest resting up against a tree. Bellmer attached both lower portions of the body at the waist creating two pelvic areas or “pink pleats” that are revealed. Her clothes are lying on the ground next to her. The photograph conveys a sense of alarm or anxiousness with the shadowy figure of a man hidden behind the tree. The viewer can clearly see him but Bellmer’s creation of the *The Doll* without a head objectifies the female body and eliminates any ‘human’ qualities. The photograph demonstrates the idea of rape or child molestation because of the *The Doll’s* nudity and the eeriness of the man in the background. The use of photography rather than painting or sketch,
allows for the realism to effectively instill an uncomfortable experience for the viewer. Considering the violence in Bellmer’s work, *The Anatomy of Anxiety* states, “Regarding his obsessive renderings of pubescent females, he stated flatly to Unica Zurn, the companion of his later years, that if he did not draw young girls so much, he might have resorted to sex murder” (Taylor 91). Although Taylor regarded the term pubescent instead of prepubescent to Bellmer’s quote, the girls could still be under legal age to have sex. Although Bellmer was able to find an alternative outlet for his perversion, his work can still have a lasting affect on those who see it.

Bellmer’s perversions were further observed in his drawing, pour *Histoire de L’oeil* (Figure 5), in which bestiality was the focal point. Noticing the legs on the animal it looks as though Bellmer was alluding to the concept that men are pigs, but because the legs are so subtle in the piece, it pushes forward into the sense of bestiality. Starting from the top of the piece, it looks as though a woman is ejaculating onto a pig. The pig is also having sexual intercourse with a skeleton, while looking up at the woman’s genitalia in bliss. If this image were in the original color, a yellow tinting, the female ejaculation would presumably change to urination. Both, female ejaculation and urination qualify as obscene material according to Young. Due to these attributed characteristics, some of Bellmer’s artwork is considered vulgar, and
therefore would be considered pornography and not erotic art.

Pour Histoire de L’oeil as well as *The Doll* and *The Second Doll* are works that can affect a person viewing them with one experience. Judith Reisman, a PhD studying the affects of pornography on the brain, realized that with the latest advances of neuroscience, these images create a mental biochemical trail. These trails are permanently embedded in the mind causing violation of our First Amendment right. Once the images are seen, whether it is soft-core or hard-core porn, they leave behind trails that are difficult to eliminate. This is the slow beginning of a porn addiction. Reisman states that, “Pornographic images also cause secretion of the body’s ‘fight or flight’ sex hormones. This triggers excitatory transmitters and produces non-rational, involuntary reactions; intense arousal states that overlap sexual lust--now with fear, shame, and/or hostility and violence,” (Riesman). When looking at Bellmer’s statement referring to his sex murder fantasies, it is clear that his sexual obsession has heightened to the point of violence. By constantly creating his works and thinking about these sexual images he is creating a thousand trails all over his brain. This is then creating the “arousal states” that Reisman refers to, and is the inspiration for incorporating violence with his sexual appetite and art aesthetic. Reisman also quoted a neurologist stating that “in 3/10 of a
second a visual image passes from the eye through the brain, and whether or not one wants to, the brain is structurally changed and memories are created - we literally ‘grow new brain’ with each visual experience,” (Reisman). With this knowledge his work is not only damaging his brain, as well as adults, but has a huge impact on younger brains that are still growing. In figure 6, *Untitled*, shows a brain that is addicted to porn. It shows all the areas of the brain that are being stimulated. When a brain is stimulated it releases a chemical, after a while of constant use the chemical will develop a pathway that causes the addiction (Taboclaon). When a person gets addicted to porn or has these pathways build up, regular male and female adult intercourse is not as appealing causing the person to further explore the extremities of porn such as child pornography and bestiality.

Considering both science and art, it is apparent that Bellmer is a strong, motivated, and creative man. However, he uses his strengths to display his weakened mind; portraying the impact sex, as a young boy, has had on his artistic skill. Even though Bellmer hides behind the term erotic surrealist art, definitions of laws stated in this paper, as well as the apparent obscene material in his work, have provided a more forthright definition. There is a connection between Bellmer’s past, his thoughts and work, the definition of degenerate art, and of obscene material; causing a huge influence not only on individuals
looking at his work, but also society as a whole.

“The undraped figure in nature has a beautiful outlook. It is the important task of the artist to save the world. To defend art from pornography means to defend art model from offensive image. Pornography offends the model; art – never. Art respects, arises, loves model. -Yaroslav Rozputnyak” (Art Quotations)

Reviewed by Dr. Jane P. Davidson

Figure 6. *Untitled.* Brain of a porn addict. fMRI.<http://www.pushofhope.com/science-of-addiction/addiction-studies-pornography-harms/>
Annotative Bibliography

“Art Quotations by Yaroslav Rozputnyak and Kelly Borsheim-
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The Montag


Mama and Papa,

I have come so far throughout this year, and I cannot wait to come home and visit. My summer vacation is quickly approaching and Bordeaux seems like a safe haven right now, as the Black Death has not struck yet. Everywhere I turn in this dead city, there is only misery and pain. But I feel that I shouldn’t get into such sorrows right now, and that I should instead focus on my schooling and the friends that I have made, for no one wishes to speak of tragedy first.

Despite the difficulties of the courses I am taking, I have found that I am skilled in logical argumentation and reasoning. Although I have not yet embarked on the quadrivium portion of my education and am therefore not aware of what my other skills in these fields will be, I have finally decided that I wish to become a lawyer, not a doctor or a clergyman. I also hope that I may teach the
art of logic at the university while I pursue this career. My logic class is, naturally, what I excel the most in, and I am always regarded highly on my persuasive essays. My skills in grammar, however, could use some work. Despite my ability to present strong points and astonish with my facts and figures, I have found that I struggle to understand basic grammatical concepts. I still am not entirely sure what a gerund is. My grammar professor has questioned me many times about this, asking how I can be so knowledgeable in the ways of argumentation if I do not possess the proper language skills to back it up. Obviously, I lack a valid response, and therefore, I believe he sees me as a moron with good luck. However, I have noticed that when I speak or write as I am doing right now, my language skills are immaculate. It is only when I am asked to dissect a sentence that things go completely fuzzy for me, and I realize that I have no clue about the specifics of sentence anatomy. Rather, I have the inherent gift of knowing what to say and saying it, without ever having to really think about it. My only complaint with the educational system is that we are forced to write extensive notes on our own parchment. This is laborious and tiresome, as many of the notes are quite long, yet essential for later review. Although, I suppose I have no right to complain as most of the people in the city cannot read or write at all. I am staying with a lovely couple that lives not too far from the university. Their son has
recently graduated and become a clergyman, and they are so excited to have another young man stay with them. My rent is relatively cheap compared to what some of my friends pay. However, most of them are staying with people who do this year-round as a second job, as opposed to a couple that have generously offered me a place to stay for such a low fee. Of course, compared to how I was fed when I was at home, the meals have become very scarce. My host family is far from wealthy, and I think that my rent is helping to feed them. Apparently, they spent most of their money to send their son to school. As they were telling me about this, it raised a concern in me that I hadn’t thought of before, and now I cannot help but be worried that the two of you are going broke because of my education. I sincerely hope that this is not the case, and that you would inform me if it was so that I could take up a trade, instead.

I have noticed that most of the people I attend the university with are rather immature. It seems that their parents were too strict with them, and now they are taking this opportunity to do whatever they can get away with. They are drunken fools, who often fight in the middle of the streets and shout obnoxious obscenities whenever they can. They have lost all ability to behave as civilized people and have instead become animals that only shout and promote violence. Just yesterday, as I was eating dinner with my host family, we heard the loudest
of yells. Worried that someone was being murdered or robbed out in the street, we rushed out to see what was going on. It was neither an assault nor theft, but instead, two drunken boys that attend my university fighting over a single coin that each believed the other had stolen from him. I did, in fact, find myself guiltily amused when the fight was over, for after they both had left, a young orphan girl rushed out into the street and picked up the coin they had been fighting over. I believe she must have had her first good meal in weeks that night. And, again, I worried about the state of my home, and whether or not my family was going broke because of me.

I have made three wonderful friends, and I am pleased to say that only one of them is anything like those other immature boys. Our immature friend is, however, very good for a laugh. He definitely keeps our conversations lively and interesting, and he can always cheer us up with his good humor. His name is Amis, and he also wants to be a lawyer, which is not surprising, because he certainly can win an argument. He also tutors me in grammar, as his skills far surpass my own. Our friend Piers is much more serious. He is already on his quadrivium, and he is hoping to become a doctor. Whenever one of us needs some intuitive advice, we turn to him. Lastly there is Geoffroi, who is a very pious man that wishes to become a member of the clergy. His advice is always spiritual and praising of the Lord. I rather enjoy our
diversity. There is something different about each of us, and this always leaves us with things to discuss.

When I first arrived in Paris it was a lively place, with bustling crowds and an air of joy. The buildings here are absolutely amazing. There are so many castles! Piers is especially fond of going to look at them with me. And he seems to know the name of every single one after viewing only one stone. I had no idea he was such a castle enthusiast until we went to see the first one, the Château de Farcheville. The square structure, he said, was what he noticed first and how he knew which castle it was. We also visited the Notre Dame, and never in my life have I been as humbled as when I stood before the steps of that great building. Our whole group went to see the Notre Dame together, and when we arrived at the steps, Geoffroi burst into tears. I believe that our Lord is proud of the accomplishment made by that cathedral, and I hope that he graces us with his light. Although, lately, this does not seem to be the case.

It began just this month, and already it has spread like wildfire, leaving with it a dark aura and still roads. When before the streets were crowded and bustling, now they have become nearly empty, and I wonder when this misery will end. I noticed a lump beneath my rhetoric professor’s armpit the other day, and I already know what this means for him, unless it is just a freak coincidence. Or hopefully, it was just an illusion of my worried mind.
After all, I saw it beneath his clothing, and it may have only been that his shirt folded in such a way that it appeared to be a lump. Still, I have planned the situations I know will arise: professors dying, friends dying, and, yes, even the two of you dying. I know it cannot stray from Bordeaux forever. My heart is heavy knowing that Johanne is in the midst of all this, with little understanding of what is going on around her. Having a four-year-old sister in these dark times only makes it harder on me. While in my classes, I cannot stop wondering what I would do if something happened to her. I have carefully planned for the event of anyone else’s death, but Johanne is my anchor and my light, and I do not think I could bear the pain of losing her. Please tell her that her big brother loves her so much. If anything does happen to her, she deserves to know that I have never strayed from her.

Your Dearest Son,

Jehan
Mama and Papa,

It is the final week before I return home. I cannot wait to see all of you again. And I do hope this letter reaches you before I arrive home. The courier says he can get it there in six days at the slowest, so I do hope he is true to his word. Not to be crude, but I am also praying that he is not claimed by the Black Death along the way. For both of our sakes, I hope that God receives my prayers. I would also like to defend myself by saying that I do not pray for him for purely selfish reasons, but also because he is a young boy, only about ten years old. Despite his young age, he is healthy and strong, and I do hope that this helps keep him safe.

I do have some terrible news. Not only was I correct about my professor having the Black Death, but Geoffroi got it as well. My professor has already passed away, and I am afraid that Geoffroi is on his last legs. He has developed the buboes, and they have begun popping and spilling black ooze. I visit him every day, with my full plague apparel on, but sometimes I cannot help but wish that it would take me, too. Everyone around me is dying, and Piers and Amis have had many coughing fits recently. I pray that it is only a summer cold they have developed, but I know deep in my heart that this is not the case, and that we will all die. It is the end of the world, and for some reason, God is angry with us.
I remember how it felt to approach Notre Dame the first time. I remember how humbled I felt and how nothing but Johanne could ever be as beautiful as that cathedral. However, when I go to it now, I feel only sadness and anger. How could God let this happen to us? How could God do this to Geoffroi, who was so devoted to his every word? How could God do this to children and to mothers? What have we done?

I have not received any teachings in rhetoric since my professor got extremely sick, but my other classes have not been cancelled. When I consulted my logic teacher on this matter, he simply said, “What’s the point? It’s almost summer vacation. We should just finish these lectures.” Sometimes I feel that they have all become completely desensitized to what is going on around them. I suppose I shouldn’t blame them for this, as we all see it every single day; but whenever someone dies, I think about Bordeaux and how happy we were, and I continuously picture it being taken over by this disease.

I am lucky, however, that my host family has been able to avoid it. They are inside most of the time and wear their plague outfits whenever they leave the house. I have grown such a strong bond with them; they are practically my second family. I have also spoken with them about my rent, and they have admitted that a large portion of it goes to provide them with food. Since this conversation, I have begun to pay them more in rent. They protested at
first, but I want the best for them. They are so generous and kind. And when I look into the eyes of my host mother, I am reminded of you, Mama, and how the light in your eyes never goes out, even in the darkest of times.

I was not sure if I should include this story in my letter, for I know how sensitive Mama is when it comes to children, but do you remember that girl that picked up the coin from those fighting boys? The other day as I walked past one of the alleyways, I saw her there, lying dead beside a pile of rubbish. She had obviously been there for some time, for her skin was falling off and her hair was already half gone. But what was most intriguing about this discovery was that that coin was sitting beside her, up against her hand, as though she had tried to hold onto it with all her might but simply could not any longer. It took me a while to realize why she had not used it to buy food. And then it hit me so hard, I wanted to cry for her poor lost soul. She had not spent that coin because it was the last thing in this world that she had to hold onto. Up until her dying breath, she had kept it with her, like an old friend. Again, when I looked at this child, I could not stop thinking, ‘What if that was Johanne’s body, completely uncared for and left to rot?’ I cannot wait to see her and hold her in my arms, knowing for certain that she is alive and well. I wonder if she thinks about me as often as I think about her.

I will be home very soon. Please, no matter what
happens, know that I will be there. Even if we all become diseased, I am nothing less than grateful that I will be with you when it does. The only thing we can do in these dark times is focus on the good and be thankful for what we are given, even if that is simply the hug of a loved one. And please remind Johanne that God has his reasons for everything, even if we do not always understand them. Let her know that if anything happens to any of us, we will go to Heaven, together.

Your Dearest Son,

Jehan

Reviewed by Dr. Greta De Jong
Theology has been consistently connected to the material reality of civilizations throughout time and across cultures. It has impacted transatlantic literature from the ancient Native Americans, to the 18th century English, and everything in between. We can examine myths, legends, speeches, and poetry to access the real life conditions of these past cultures and to contemplate how those conditions translated into a larger cultural ideology. By studying historical literature we can discern a pattern of development between the levels of cultural stability and the levels of immanence or transcendence in theology. When a civilization’s survival is tenuous or insecure, it tends to construct an immanent theology in which deities are physically present in the world and have direct control over the daily lives of humans. As a society gains stability and permanence, it tends to adopt a theology which fuses transcendence with immanence wherein
deities do not take a physical form but still directly influence the world. When a culture reaches the point of prosperity through established political structures or scientific development, it tends to embrace a transcendent theology in which deities no longer operate in the world but are a source of morality. Finally, as individuals begin to thrive within prosperous cultures, theology becomes diverse, subjective, and abstract with varying interpretations of divinity. The early transatlantic literature of America and England opens a window into development of this direct relationship between material reality and theology.

Ancient Native American mythology reflects an understanding of the mysteries of life in close connection with the natural world. Their ideology manifested in deities which physically existed in the material world. As Giles Gunn states in the headnote to “Native American Myths,” in Early American Writing, a culture creates mythology “in order to understand the meaning of their world and their place in it” (Gunn 3). This is the purpose of all theology, and for many Native Americans, a concrete mythology “was held to describe the way things truly are,” and mirrored their society’s relationship with the natural world (Gunn 4). Native Americans lived with and in nature for generations, so their creation mythology demonstrates the impact of that reality on the culture’s ideology.
The “Raven Creation Myth” of the Bering Strait Eskimos is a rendition of creation that depicts a deity in the physical form of Raven, and describes that deity’s creation of the earth and interactions with man. In this myth, man is born directly from “the pod of a beach-pea,” symbolizing an intimate connection to nature (Bering Strait Eskimo 9). The Raven deity confesses to man, “I made that vine, but did not know that anything like you would ever come from it,” illuminating the cultural recognition and acceptance of the uncertainty of the world and the mystery of life which even its creator does not fully control (Bering Strait Eskimo 10). Ancient Native American cultures had a mystical perception of life, so rather than inventing a rational explanation for existence, they permitted some mystery and uncertainty to remain in their theology. In this myth, the physical manifestation of theology in the world represents the culture’s subordination and vulnerability to nature as well as its reverence and kinship with it. The myth comes from a culture which feels both threatened by and dependent on the natural world, so nature was elevated as the most supreme and powerful thing; a physical, living deity.

While Native American mythology worked in a culture with little control over the world and little permanence in the lives of its people, Medieval Scandinavian theology operated in service of a culture which was gaining some control through political and cultural advancement, and permanence through agricultural and architectural developments. The literature of Medieval Scandinavia, namely Beowulf, provides
insight about the material reality of life in a feudal war-
rior culture. In the introduction to Beowulf, the transla-
tor, Seamus Heaney, describes the feudal arrangement
saying, “the little nations [were] grouped around their
lord, [but] the greater nations spoil[ed] for war and
menace[d] the little ones” (Heaney xiv). These hostile
international relationships created a constant ebb and
flow of power and a constant threat of invasion – an
instability which the Germanic culture interpreted as fate.

Beowulf reflects the historical period when
the dominant theology of what are now Denmark and
Sweden was in a phase of transition from Paganism into
Christianity. The deities represented here did not mani-
fest themselves in physical form, but were believed to
have influence over the living world. The motion toward
transcendent theology reflects the culture’s increasingly
rational understanding of the world and increasing level
of control over life in the world; in other words a higher
ratio of cultural thriving to physical survival. However,
the culture illustrated in Beowulf was still regulated by a
degree of uncertainty. Grendel’s persistent, unchecked
aggression against the Danes exemplifies the turmoil in
the material world manifested as mythology. The narra-
tor describes that “These were hard times…for the prince
of the Shieldings” because he was unable to “resist and
beat off sudden attacks” (Heaney 170-171, 174). Hroth-
gar’s response to the physical threat reveals the operation
of concrete theology in the physical world because, “Sometimes at pagan shrines they vowed / offerings to idols, swore oaths / that the killer of souls might come to their aid / and save their people” (Heaney 175-178). Hrothgar’s inability to defend his subjects is a poetic representation of the historic reality, and his religious plea is a direct response to the threat against his safety. He makes material offerings to a deity in the hope of eliciting a material outcome. Hrothgar represents early Scandinavian pagan theology in which deities act in the world.

As Christian cultures came into contact with the poem, monks refashioned the warrior legend in the image of early Christianity by inserting the voice of a didactic narrator. The poem presents heterogeneous voices and ideologies as the characters and narrator call upon the influence different deities as well as fate in the physical world. At times of death one would say “fate sweeps them away,” while professing that “God can easily / halt these raids and harrowing attacks!” (Heaney 476-479). In times of praise one would claim “Often, for undaunted courage, / fate spares the man it has not already marked” (Heaney 572-573). While in times of faith one would go so far as to place “complete trust / in his strength of limb and the Lord’s favor” (Heaney 669-670). These examples illustrate that regardless of the object of faith; whether it is the ‘killer of souls,’ or an unnamed ‘fate,’ or the ‘God’ of Christianity, the Medieval
Scandinavians portrayed through this piece of literature in this tumultuous culture called upon transcendent deities who asserted power in the physical world.

Eventually, Scandinavian and Germanic cultures settled the British Isles and established the British Empire. Along with the rise in British civilization came the Enlightenment which is characterized by “European and American figures in the eighteenth century who had been sufficiently impressed by the scientific advances of the seventeenth century to share several general convictions about the nature of reason, the primacy of experience, and the possibility of human progress” (Gunn xxxvii). As the Enlightenment progressed, British culture experienced a violent crisis between faith and reason. The crisis influenced the theology of the transatlantic cultures by removing divine influence from the physical world and placing it in the intellect or soul of the individual. It also opened the door for a more abstract and subjective experience of religion and a more personal interpretation a deity. Metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attempted to reconcile the dichotomy between theology and science.

One Metaphysical poet, George Herbert, was among those living through the scientific advances in the seventeenth century. He wrote poetry which enveloped the dichotomy between science and religion, and which could “illusively shimmy between physical form and
spiritual sense” (Burrow xxxii). This trend represents the physical presence of natural science in the material world and the attempt to rectify the epistemology of cause and effect with theological explanations of the world’s mystery. Herbert’s poem, “Affliction (IV),” is one such attempt. Herbert assesses his hybrid identity as both a biological human animal understood through anatomy and physics, as well as a divine being fashioned by God in his own image, and calls himself “A wonder tortured in the space / Betwixt this world and that of grace” (Herbert 5-6). This refers to the spiritual conflict between existing in a world of observable science and a world of unseen faith. He admits, “wat’ring pots give flowers their lives,” which implies that God is not present in the world and is not responsible for every life and death, but rather life is traced through cause and effect (Herbert 10). He says that this new knowledge does “wound and prick my soul,” indicating the spiritual trauma of the Scientific Revolution’s displacement of the deity from the physical world in exchange for natural sciences (Herbert 12). In this way, theology ascends to the metaphysical realm and becomes more abstract while scientific progress takes an immanent place in culture.

One response to the Enlightenment was an attempt to reconnect with God. The Puritans aimed at forming communities in Britain’s newest colony: America. Literary portrayals of stringent Puritan religious
ideology can be explained by the vulnerability of the community in the new, uncultivated world. “Many Puritans, especially when their safety was threatened [viewed the] American wilderness as the domain of the demonic,” and therefore the theology prevalent in the colonies was “dramatically affected [by] extraordinary challenges of life in New England” (Gunn xxx, xxvi). The reversal from thriving back to surviving necessitated a return to theology which has real consequences in the physical world.

Thomas Hooker was “among the first generation of Puritan colonists” who immigrated to America to establish a colony in the volatile wilderness of Connecticut (Gunn 147). In his sermon, “A True Sight of Sin,” Hooker describes the dangers of the Enlightenment inspired predilection to remove the deity’s influence from the physical world. He warns that God’s “wrath and jealousy and judgment will break out in case that [his will] be disobeyed,” saying that when a society is steeped in sin “Weeds come instead of herbs, cockle and darnel instead of wheat,” which denotes God’s influence in the physical world and negates the Enlightenment emphasis on cause and effect (Hooker 150, 152). The actual material cause of a corrupted harvest can be assigned to poor soil cultivation or unfortunate meteorological trends, while the degeneration of rational explanation can be traced to the loss of social stability and physical safety. Hooker also warns that “it would be [sinners’] content if there was no
God in the world to govern them, no law to curb them, no justice to punish, no truth to trouble them” (Hooker 152). This implies not only that God is active in the world, but also that the virtues of law, morality, justice, and truth are only possible through God’s presence in the world. The strategy behind such extreme assertions is insurance for the success of the colony. Hooker’s arguments and warnings against the dangers of sin are directly influenced by the material reality of the colonists. The common thread which united Hooker’s congregation was faith, and he used that faith as a tool to prompt subordination with the aim of survival and prosperity. By placing the deity in the world, Hooker could elicit fear of God’s wrath directed toward the community’s food supply which immediately threatened their livelihood. By claiming that all virtues come from God he could intimidate his followers to denounce sin and perform productively for the good of the community. And if a member fell into sin and threatened the success of the colony he could be cast out defenseless into wilderness.

Despite these tactics, nearly one hundred years later the Puritan colonies were still in a state of vulnerability. The Puritan adventure was met with adversity at every turn. They were outnumbered and “never constituted more than a minority” of New England’s religious demographic (Gunn xxix). Many immigrants came to America “seeking anything but religious perfection” so
“puritan leaders struggled to retain their authority in the face of the increasing religious indifference” (Gunn xxx, xxix). Furthermore, their Native American relationships suffered from “mounting hostility,” and confrontations about land rights and religious, cultural, and ideological disputes were escalating into deadly battles (Gunn xxix). The Puritans were also combated by the “spread of interest in the occult and magic” which aggravated the already “growing insecurity of the Puritan establishment” and nearly ended the entire mission with the Salem Witch Trials in the early 1690s (Gunn xxix). However, despite their seemingly futile struggle, some zealous and idealistic Puritan theologians continued the mission with bombastic sermons about the dangers of sin, the threat of damnation, and the promise of eternal salvation, preaching that renewal of the Puritan faith was the remedy for such social instability.

When God seemed to have abandoned the world entirely, Jonathan Edwards, a great Puritan theologian, responded to the persistent sense of vulnerability and instability to renew the human relationship with God and to reassert the deity’s influence on material reality. His theological fervor ignited “the religious conflagration of the 1730s and 1740s, which became known as the First Great Awakening” (Gunn 310). During this revival of quasi-immanent theology, the Puritans adopted a more anthropomorphic God who was concerned with daily
human life on Earth.

With his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Edwards undertook to extinguish the attitude of self-importance and indifference which had kindled among the New England population by reasserting man’s insignificance in comparison with God’s might. In doing so, he reintroduced the power of God in the world. He warns the sinners that they only survive in the world because of God’s grace and attests that if God should withdraw his grace (as he justly might), “you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf” of hell (Edwards 326). He says “your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivances, and all your righteousness,” which had been aimed toward their own earthly and sinful self-interest, would amount to nothing in the wake of God’s wrath (Edwards 326). His reaffirmation of God’s power in the world directly responds to the mounting vanity and materialism which emerged as a result of social progress and economic prosperity at what Edwards viewed as the cost of piety. He goes on to polemically claim that if God did revoke his favor, that the very fabric of the world would collapse and “the earth would not bear you one moment,” and that in fact “the world would spew you out” (Edwards 326). He claims that man has abused and corrupted God’s creations, calling upon natural imagery such as the sun, the soil of the earth, the air,
and even the animals as all of the victims to man’s sin. He warns that the time is nearing when people will have gone too far and incurred the merciless and irrevocable wrath of an angry God. Edward’s use of natural imagery notes a cultural shift toward embracing the heritage of Native American mythology. Since the Puritans could not replace the nature inspired theology their culture began to adapt and blend its imagery with their own messages.

In spite of these heroic efforts, nothing could be done to abate the inevitable decline of Puritanism. The ever expanding and diversifying immigrant population in America gave rise to a “much more pluralistic and heterogeneous” religious life across the country (Gunn xxvi). With Puritan fervor calming down, tension between Enlightenment thought and Awakening thought eased, giving rise to the “distinctive theological position called Deism,” an abstract theology which claims that divinity does not act in the world (Gunn xxxviii). Instead, a deity created the laws of nature and physics that govern the world then stepped away from the project and no longer intervenes. This new theology was the product of a historical moment in which the benefits of scientific advancement that secured a state of prosperity were met with less skepticism. Deism seemed to have sufficiently blended the dichotomous realms of natural science and religion.
Two of the most prominent Deists to influence not only theology but also American politics were Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. In his essay, “Of the Religion of Deism,” Paine outlines the basic tenant of Deism and its foundation upon reason. He says that “when the divine gift of reason begins to expand itself in the mind” the existence of God becomes self-evident, based on the fact that the world exists, and that man’s faith in God is affirmed by “the creation itself and his own existence” (Paine 490). This implies that the rational faculty is innate in man, that the creation is sufficient evidence of the creator, and that all other religious doctrines are unnecessary and artificial. In other words, Jefferson is stating that the ritualistic nature of organized religion conflates and obscures true piety which is, on his account, faith in reason and faith in the existence of the world. This relates to Jefferson’s “Act for Establishing Religious Freedom,” in which he states that “Almighty God hath created the mind free,” similarly implying that free will and reason are the innate guiding forces given by God to man (Jefferson 442). The emphasis on rational theology is the product of Enlightenment influence coupled with increasing public insistence on reason.

The result of Jefferson’s theology is political Deism, as demonstrated in Notes on the State of Virginia, “Query XVII,” which relates theology to civil liberty by asserting that citizens “are answerable for [the rights of
conscience] to [their] God,” meaning legislature cannot supersede the divine gift of reason as the governing faculty in the daily life of man – an influence which persists in the doctrine of separation between church and state in America today (Jefferson 440). Paine concludes that “in Deism our reason and our belief become happily united,” and advocates the superiority of Deism because “It is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason [and rather] honors reason as the choicest gift of God to man” (Paine 491, 494). This version of abstract theology marries the powers of reason and faith in the world and attributes these powers to a transcendent deity. This is a direct result of the state of physical and intellectual progress in the post-Enlightenment era which inspired rational reflection of all phenomena with a particular emphasis on theology. In this way, the material reality of late eighteenth century America is manifested as transcendent theology.

The final theological turn at the end of the eighteenth century was a proclivity toward Pantheism represented by many of the Romantic poets, in particular William Wordsworth. His poem, “Tintern Abbey,” “inaugurated what modern critics call Wordsworth’s ‘myth of nature’: his presentation of the ‘growth’ of his mind…through the interaction between the inner world of the mind and the shaping force of external Nature” (Lee 244). Wordsworth’s ideology places the deity in a state of
ultimate transcendence and claims that all morality comes not from belief in God but rather from reflection upon the natural world. This results from his loss of faith in the human connection with divinity, and his experience that the good of the world is comprehended through contemplation of nature.

In “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth details his epiphany that morality is the product of intellectual reflection upon nature rather than man’s relationship with a deity. This revival of the purchase in nature is a response to the increasing degeneration of morality and justice in urban England at the close of the eighteenth century, which Wordsworth describes as “the fever of the world,” and the “sad music of humanity” (Wordsworth 53, 91). Wordsworth attests that nature is “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being” (109-111). This means that communion with the natural world inspires the virtues of morality and implies that reasoned contemplation is the mode of access to goodness, not contemplation of a deity. Wordsworth removes God from the world and places theology in an entirely transcendent sphere. He does this because the “dreary intercourse of daily life” is infested with “evil tongues, / Rash judgments, [and] the sneers of selfish men;” making it impossible for a human being to ascend to pure reason and true moral virtue (Wordsworth 131, 128-129). His
description of the bleak material reality of the period exposes the difficulty of asserting a deity’s influence over the physical world which is becoming ever more corrupt, and also provides evidence to support the rationale behind placing morality within nature which is more permanent and less corruptible than religious institutions which are inevitably subject to the vices of man. His particular theology is a very abstract version of Pantheism; it draws an analogy between deity and morality and places morality in the physical world.

This selection of observations draws together a multitude of historical developments before the nineteenth century and explores the relationship between culture and religion. Theology has always attempted to explain the mysteries of life in the world, and therefore has always been directly influenced by material reality. At periods of chaotic material reality, the inventors of theology saw the need to create an immanent deity who was physically present in the world. As social stability rose, theologians removed the deity’s physical presence but maintained its active influence over the mundane reality. As reason gained hegemony, theology was further abstracted and the deity’s influence was further removed from the physical world and reseated in the intellectual sphere of morality. By the close of the eighteenth century, what remained of divine influence was for some people wholly replaced by reason and theology became wholly
transcendent, while the natural world remained as evidence of a deity’s existence and the source of morality.

As history continues, these patterns will likely echo throughout social progress and a deity may be called back into the world in various states of immanence, and in turn expelled from the world in various states of transcendence. But the cyclical nature of theological movement suggests that religion will ever be wholly removed from the world. Reason will continue to progress and attempt to explain the mysteries of observable phenomena, and continue the mission of discovering the origins of life and the world. And theology will persist as an explanation of metaphysical phenomena such as the human capacity for belief and faith, and will also persist as an explanation of human existence. It is unlikely that either one will ever wholly replace the other because they each play a unique role in answering the fundamental questions of existence.

Reviewed by Dr. Ashley Marshall
The Montag

Bibliography


The sharp contrasts between the 50th, 100th, and 150th anniversaries of the American Civil War, and the changes in American culture that occurred between each of them, were mirrored at the time in the mainstream media’s reflections on the war and its meaning. In each case, editors and editorial boards have actively used their influence to help determine the shape of “memory to come,” the evolving shape of the war’s meanings and its uses in the country’s master narrative.

The fiftieth anniversary was marked by an unabashedly reconciliationist spirit, often referred to as “reunionism,” a term aptly borrowed from the language of theology, where it refers to the attempts to reconcile the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. As with its theological sister meaning, in which both parties are urged to recall their common faith and aspirations and set aside the old quarrels over long-dead kings and popes,
reunionism in its American Civil War frame of reference calls on all parties to see their common ground and forget the reasons for division. As David Blight noted,

In the spring of 1911, the New York Times urged its readers to “avoid needless celebration” of Civil War anniversaries. “All the battles of the civil war were won by American soldiers,” declared the Times. “All the heroes of that war were Americans.”

This was the tone of the majority of outlets at the time, but by the 100th anniversary, cracks in the plaster covering over the nation’s divisions began to appear. This anniversary was marked by conflict and dissent, with many white Southerners planning their own anti-reunionist celebrations of rebellion and “freedom,” in unapologetically backwards and sectarian displays. Perhaps the best example of how deeply the country, and the media, was divided by the centennial was that even Holiday, a middlebrow tourist magazine, ended up weighing in to warn tourists “…that over the next few years, anyone traveling in the South was “likely to encounter certain other sights and sounds and excitements, of a very special nature, which may give him cause for wonder and alarm.” It went on to point out that a sanguinary civil war had been fought over slavery, finally culminating in the demise of that institution. Now the country was preparing to
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commemorate the conflict in “holiday mood…cheered on by gleeful commercial interests, and blessed by sentimentalists who prefer to forget…that some of us even now are being brutally denied certain personal freedoms.”

On the other hand, the sesquicentennial “looks to be a relatively low-key affair,” as “Troubled Commemoration” author Thomas Cook noted in a historian’s roundtable discussion in 2011, “partly owing to the [Obama] administration’s decision not to create a federal planning commission and the absence of congressional legislation to accomplish the same objective.” Kenneth Noe adds in the same roundtable discussion that “obvious societal changes and the continuing economic recession have led thus far to a quieter, harder-to-film commemoration,” referring to the absence of street level conflict around race today and therefore the absence of newsworthiness around the subject in the current media environment. And of course Ken Burns’ Civil War miniseries in the 1990s stole much of the revivalist thunder that might have otherwise been generated on the 150th anniversary.

But in addition to the sea change in public attitudes about the war, race, and the value of remembrance over forgetting the greatest alteration in the media since the last commemoration has been the change in how news is presented to the public. As Sue Robinson noted in her study of a small paper going from print and online
to an online-only format, we are seeing the decline in influence of the members of the old school of “traditionalist,” top-down journalism, in which reporters and editors see the story as printed on paper as the last word on what a paper should say. They are gradually being replaced by “convergers,” frequently younger writers more willing to spend time interacting with readers in their outlets’ online forums, even incorporating their feedback into evolving versions of their stories, which they don’t feel the need to see cast into stone upon publication.  

News consumers today are not willing to passively absorb the news and react privately. They want to interact publicly with other readers, the writers, the editors, and sometimes even the subjects of the news. Reddit.com is a news aggregator, and a symbol of the new “supermedia” outlets, with all of its content consisting of user-submitted links to a variety of news outlets (as well as funny cat pictures, of course). The stories that get “upvoted” to the top are referred to as having “made the front page,” as if Reddit was indeed a physical paper. On Reddit, however, the “news” is only the beginning; the comments on the articles or other links compose the lion’s share of the content on the site. In a recent post, a link to a Washington Post story on conditions in North Korea, the story had over 1,500 comments as of November 27th, whereas the story on the Post website has only 75. In many cases, the
“aggregator” environments are becoming content shells through which people access the mainstream media, because the online communities in place in these shells allows them to interact with the same people consistently, rather than with different users at different media sites.

Previously, letters to the editor, carefully vetted, “were the only direct link between journalists and members of the public within the news product.” But now the public wants, and expects, a forum where anyone speaking within the bounds of civility has the opportunity to be heard, not just by the other readers, but also the outlet’s writers, editors and policy makers. The question of “who has ultimate textual privilege” in the news media is being answered. Readers are taking the privilege and power by participating in the forums, and ignoring media outlets that don’t provide such forums or make them hard to use. Bypassing them via aggregators, they are remaking what we once thought of as “the news.”

The New York Times and the origin of the “Disunion” Blog
The New York Times chose a highly “convergent” path for its own commemoration of the sesquicentennial, when it chose to re-report the Civil War on a day-by-day basis. The Times created the “Disunion” blog as part of its online “Opinionator” section, which offers significant online-only content in addition to the editorial content in
the print edition. In a telephone conversation with Jamie Malinowski, originator of the blog and its first writer, and in an email exchange with George Kalogerakis and Clay Risen, editors at the Times, I was able to learn how the Times chose this approach.

Malinowski was a freelancer who proposed the idea late in 2009 or early 2010. He’d had a long interest in the Civil War, “though I’d never really written about it before. I was thinking of things I wanted to do and the sesquicentennial was coming up, and I thought there would be an interest in doing something to commemorate it. I had the idea to blog the Civil War, to use the new kind of media to try and cover it in a different way. Blogging means different things to different people but my interpretation was to do something daily or semi daily in a granular way that would recap the experience as it was unfolding for readers today.”

He talked to editor George Kalogerakis (with whom he’d worked at the late, great Spy magazine) and a group at the Opinionator section, and pitched the period between the election of Lincoln and the start of the Civil War as the time frame for the blog. “I don’t think people know much about that at all, we get the short version of events in school – Lincoln’s elected, the South secedes. As we know, things don’t happen that automatically; the way we consume media today, a million blogs, 24 hour news channels, we see how much to-ing and fro-ing and
how small incidents and personalities can take center stage for a period of time and influence how things are conducted.”

At the same time, Adam Goodheart, a former Opinionator writer who’d gone into academia and written the Civil War book “1861,” was separately discussing doing something with the *Times*. The paper realized that they had access to a number of people who’d written about Lincoln and could involve them as well.

The blog was kicked off in October 2010, two weeks before the anniversary of the election of 1860, and began as a weekly article, similar to a cover story in a news magazine, about the events of the previous week. “I tried to write in a way that was really ignorant of all we know was to come, to try and put myself in the position of someone writing at the time,” Malinowski said. The *Times* played with the idea of creating period ‘identities’ a la Chautauqua that the writers would take on, but that was rejected as “too contrived.” The decision was made to write as if the events were fresh and the future unknown, but from a viewpoint that had omniscient access to all the knowledge as of that date.

“So much of what we know about the period did not come from newspapers, but out of journals and letters that were revealed later, and that was the sort of thing I assumed into my knowledge, as if I was omniscient reporter who heard about people coming to blows at
dinner parties, for instance.” Malinowski worked on the project for six months, four days a week, researching and writing it, but once the blog ran past the original time frame, the content “got so much more complicated after that with armies and generals running around and I wasn’t in the position to make the investment.”

The question then became when to end the blog, which had originally been posited as a six month project on a little-known part of history between the election and secession. “Should we stop at the start at the war? If not, you’re committing to going on to the war’s end,” Malinowski noted. Editor Kalogerakis agreed, saying the blog’s run was “open-ended from the start. We thought it might just be the six-month run-up to the war, which was a fascinating and rich period—but it quickly became clear that people wanted it to continue, so we did. And we’ll probably keep it going for the duration of the war.”

Institutional memory is strong at organizations like the Times, and I asked editor Kalogerakis what lessons were looked at and learned from previous commemorations, mentioning the Life magazine retrospective that came (and continues to come) under fire for de-emphasizing the moral and economic reasons for the war, namely slavery. Kalogerakis stated, “We didn’t spend too much time thinking about what others have done. We’ve just tried to cover all we can in a balanced and interesting way—realizing that this is not a science
and that it’s not possible to do it all. Also, we did feel that what we were doing was pretty unique, and that there weren’t a lot of models out there anyway.”

Asked a similar question, Malinowski was more reflective about the media’s history of remembrance, mentioning Cook’s book “Troubled Commemoration” without any prompting. “It’s interesting to me how the anniversary is being marked. I thought there’d be more attention paid. I think it’s interesting that it’s not. I think it shows that a lot of the issues are just…fading away.”

In regard to the historical and institutional memory going into today’s commemorations, he acknowledged that there was a definite agenda at the Times. “I think one of the things that was implicit in the decision to blog this was that it was going to be able to easily accommodate lots of kinds of experiences and views, that not only would we want to be able to talk about blacks and women and slaves, different people, different perspectives, [and] that this would make it easier to do that.”

**The Blog and its Commenters**

I’ve chosen to examine three posts on the “Disunion” blog, which generated significant comments. A benchmark for “heavy” commenting on these posts was 75 or more comments, with one reaching 147. As a general reference to what a heavily commented story on the
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*Times* consists of, there were just over 2200 comments (before commenting was closed) on a big story broken by the *Times* after the 2012 general election, so while without statistical research it’s impossible to say what constitutes “a lot” of comments, 147 comments on a story about Walter Scott’s influence on the American South does stand out as significant at least on an anecdotal basis.

The three stories I selected for review based on the volume of reader response covered a mix of topics. Cynthia Wachtell’s piece discussed the influence of Sir Walter Scott’s novels on antebellum white Southern culture. John Fabian Witt charted the creation of the first official rules of war, created as a response to the crisis touched off by the Emancipation Proclamation. And Ted Widmer’s article addressed Lincoln’s courting of the Mormons and the territory of Utah at the beginning of the Civil War.

These were very different articles and yet there were marked similarities in the responses. Commenters were predominantly interested in doing several things as their part of the “added value” to the article, noted by Robinson as one of the primary drivers from the news side in adding the commenting feature. They often provided additional factual information which enhanced, or corrected, the main narrative; they used the forums for the drawing of parallels between “now” and “then,” with the “now” parts often generating great emotional heat;
and they self-policed the forum by correcting or not “upvoting” incendiary or inaccurate comments.

1. Providing additional factual information

This was a constant across the board. In the case of Wachtell’s article, for instance, many commenters provided deeper information about Scott and his attitudes toward slavery and multiculturalism, one of them noting that it was “Interesting that the Southerners idolized Ivanhoe, who freed his loyal serf Gurth in return for loyal service.”19 Another pointed out the selectivity of the South’s reading of Scott, since “so much of the far greater novels about Scottish history, the books like Waverly or Old Mortality or The Heart of Midlothian: books about the inevitability of modernization, about the need to put that sense of a noble heroic past to rest; a past that may look beautiful but that cannot possibly endure in the present.”20 Best of all was the writer who added, “Throughout his novels, the leaders Scott idealizes most are the ones who understand that you can’t put a cultural conflict to rest with a military defeat-- to do that, you need to act generously toward the defeated, giving them a fair stake in a new, unified social and economic identity. The figure in the Civil War who best embodies Scott’s ideals is. . . Abraham Lincoln.”21

In Witt’s article, a commenter added information about how the code created in the Civil War even reached
as far as the Boxer Rebellion, when the American general refused to allow his troops to participate in the massacre of Chinese civilians. “Chaffee’s actions were dictated, the article said, by General Order No. 100, dating from 1863...”22 Another added that “It is worth noting that ‘the Lincoln administration never did execute a Confederate soldier or place any of them at hard labor’ James McPherson, ‘Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief’ (p 205). His order succeeded in deterring official Confederate abuse although not repeated unofficial atrocities.”23

“Added value” was attached to Widmer’s article on Lincoln and the Mormons after a correction appeared in the fourth posted comment, nine hours after the original posting to the web. “‘...It was not until 1978 that African-Americans were invited to join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,’ is a statement perhaps, written in haste, but definitely in error. African-Americans were members of the LDS Church for decades before 1978.”24 The article was quickly amended to reflect that African Americans were banned from the priesthood until 1978, not banned from the church. Discussing Lincoln’s order of books on Mormonism, Widmer said that “For some reason, he also ordered a volume of Victor Hugo, in French, a language he could not read.” A commenter received 60 “recommends” from other readers for noting “Perhaps Lincoln ordered the volume of Victor
Hugo for Mary Todd Lincoln, who was fluent in French? I like to think of him adding it to the list as a small kindness for his wife...”25 And another qualified Widmer’s admiration for Joseph Smith’s prophesying skills by noting, “That Joseph Smith made a prediction in 1832 that the U.S. would eventually erupt into a civil war started in South Carolina wasn’t particularly remarkable considering that 1832 was the year of the Nullification Crisis in which the government of South Carolina passed an Ordinance of Nullification regarding federal tariffs it found abominable and threatened secession.”26

In the case of Wachtell’s article on Scott, the comments made the article look poorly researched and written, or at least much sketchier on the subject than it could have been. Even my own cursory web search provided a fascinating article on the (selective) echoing and recycling of Scott’s “Ivanhoe” in Thomas Dixon’s “The Clansman,”27 which was far more interesting than the bad poetry “inspired” by Scott that Wachtell includes in her article. Perhaps the intent was to keep the focus on Scott’s influence on the South before and during the war in line with the blog’s “current events” theme, but Witt’s and Widmer’s articles did not hesitate respectively in discussing the afterlife of the rules of war or the continuing influence of the Mormon church on politics.

2. Contemporary analogies and “emotional volume”
All these articles also saw a good deal of comparison between the present and the past, with commenters more than willing to draw conclusions that perhaps the authors, or the *Times*, were not. Also, those posts dealing with the political present as much as or more than with the past received far more “recommends” in a number of circumstances.

In Wachtell’s article, John Hay was quoted as saying that “The books a boy reads are those most ardently admired and longest remembered,” and a commenter added dolefully that “It would seem today that far too many impressionable youths have read ‘The Fountainhead’ and ‘Atlas Shrugged,’” a comment recommended by 46 *Times* readers. Building on Wachtell’s comment that “the lived reality of four years of suffering and slaughter did not neatly conform to Scott’s knightly norms,” readers noted that this chivalric brain death extended well into the 20th century: “During WWI thousands poured out of trenches to their deaths, and repeated this over and over simply because there wasn’t anyone who would stop the madness. We went into Vietnam and, not having learned our lesson, made the same mistake in Iraq.” This comment was an editorial *Times* Pick as well as receiving 20 reader recommends.

The majority of the commentary on Witt’s article was around the modern-day “war on terror” and the stark contrast between Lincoln’s approach to war and our
modern presidents. The emotional volume also rose higher here in terms of the number of “recommends” received for comments such as “People like Lincoln were a different kind of Republican than we have today with these war-profiting, chickenhawk torture-advocates,” which gathered 29 recommends. The comment “Never, until Bush the torturer, did the United States establish the use of torture as national policy,” by a self-described retired military officer, received 39 votes.

Widmer’s article on Lincoln and the Mormons seemed to attract a relatively stable block of recommenders who came to the defense of the Mormon religion, significantly outnumbering those who voted up anti-Mormon comments or comments highlighting the church’s history with African-Americans. Contradicting some of Widmer’s facts and taking offense at the author’s reference to “magic underpants,” one commenter who self-identified as LDS said that “No real ‘Mormons’ were consulted in the preparation of this article.” This received 56 recommends. Another self-identified member of the church received 46 recommends for his similar comment, which noted that “Mormons do not have a ‘runaway hit on Broadway’ the producers of South Park do. An Important distinction to make that someone is getting fame and fortune off our peculiarity. The play does little to enhance our image, only stereotype it.” 33 readers recommended the comment that “I for one,
though, know first-hand that it [Mormonism] continues to produce in people's lives exactly what it professes to when followed—that is self-reliance, concern for neighbor before self, industry, pursuit of knowledge, and a healthy dose of happiness amidst a world of tumult.”

This last spate of comments indicates a further field of study for which I don’t have time or room. It may well be that there was no great sudden influx of Mormon defenders to the Disunion blog, only pre-existing readers and members of that church who suddenly felt impelled to comment and endorse the comments in defense of their religion. Or, they may have networked and agreed to “weigh in” in an environment they considered hostile. The Times requires readers to create IDs and log in, but there is no way to click on a commenter’s handle (which is anything you’d like it to be) and see how long they’ve been members, or see their previous commenting history. Regardless, given that readers who only read highly recommended comments would get these voices near the top of their list is a powerful reminder of the impact an organized mass of people, if that they were, can have in this kind of commenting environment.

3. “Self-extinguishing” flames

Robinson’s article on the implementation of a commenting system noted the amount of time that was spent policing the site she researched, with up to 15% of
comments requiring deletion. Times editor Clay Risen told me via email that at the Disunion blog, “The community of readers has more or less evolved to police itself — there isn’t a lot of quarter given to trolls or partisans. The Times has a dedicated staff of comment moderators, as well, but the percentage of flamers/trolls is very, very low, particularly given the sensitive nature of some of our topics. On the flip side, we have many well-informed and lively readers, who do add information and correct the occasional error. It’s a lot of fun.”

The most “commented on comments” where readers noted their disagreement with the parent comment were still written within acceptable parameters, even if they were wrongheaded and their ideas disagreeable. Take this statement: “While Southern Whites may have reacted to the Emancipation Proclamation with fury, there was no such reaction among northern White slave owners, because slaves in the north were not freed until well after the Civil War. That’s another bit of history that Americans know little about, because emancipation is hailed as a great humanitarian gesture, when it was more accurately a well-timed political strategy to keep England and France out of the war as CSA allies.” While this got 7 recommends, the contradictory answer received 26: “There were no slaves in the north except for those states bordering Confederate states. Lincoln’s proclamation could only apply to the states in rebellion;
he was barred by the Constitution from freeing the border state slaves, where it took a Constitutional amendment to free them. Historical, usually Southern, revisionists somehow miss this point.” And author Widmer’s own reference to “magic underpants” is the most offensive thing in the article or the comments on Lincoln and the Mormons.

Editorializing via Times Picks, or lack thereof

One of the more interesting features is the number and nature of Times Picks among the reader comments, highlighted with a virtual gold ribbon at the side of the comment and filterable via a tab at the top of the comments section. Some articles have these picks, and others don’t, across the board at the Times. Given more time it would be interesting to dig more deeply into how these decisions are made, but it’s interesting to note that of the three pieces discussed here, the Walter Scott article had six comments picked out, all of which were well-written additions to the information in the article; the “rules of war” had three comments picked (one for incomprehensible reasons as all it said was essentially “great article”); and the article on Lincoln and the Mormons had none. Similarly, the article noted earlier on Mitt Romney’s post-election “Gifts” rant, with 2200 comments, was conspicuously lacking a single Times Pick. However, a recent article on legalizing marijuana with
579 comments did garner one *Times* Pick, which weighed in, thoughtfully, on the side of legalization.\(^42\) Again, any reasoning behind this selectivity as to which topics get *Times* Picks and which don’t would be a paper in itself.

**In Summary**

In the historian’s forum on the sesquicentennial, Kenneth Noe was not generally thrilled about most online discussions about the Civil War:

> At their worst, these discussions admittedly generate more heat than light. Anger, name-calling, and…partisan misinformation…abound at many web addresses, places where imaginary brigades of African Americans fought willingly for Stonewall Jackson, diatribes about the allegedly socialist Abraham Lincoln blend seamlessly into attacks on the current occupant of the White House, and Internet trolling is rampant. The sight can be discouraging, if not occasionally frightening. Yet at their best…web offerings offer challenging posts and thoughtful conversations about the war and its legacies for a generation attuned to forming opinions at their keyboards.\(^43\)

Wondering about the overall civility of the tone at the “Disunion” blog, I asked Jamie Malinowski if perhaps *Times* readers weren’t the type to get up in arms about state’s rights and other conservative monomanias in the first place. “I read a lot of comment for my pieces,” he said. “I thought there were people who took that conservative, retrograde position. The difference between how
we handled it and the *Post* handled it – the *Post* took a conventional approach to this, writing about re-enactors, a lot of the same sort about battles and battlefields and generals. I think we were a lot more creative and it’s ended up being a project we’re all pretty proud of.”

His comments about the *Post* seemed like a non sequitur until I discovered a recent Opinionator post on how comments are moderated at the *Times*. The editorial page editor, Andrew Rosenthal, responded to a reader who said, “I just appreciate that the *Times* moderates comments in the first place. The bile that people are allowed to post at the *WSJ* and the *Washington Post* is absolutely frightening — misogynistic, homophobic, and racist.” Rosenthal did not contradict the reader’s view of the comments on the other outlets, noting “That is why we have hired a team of professional journalists to read through each and every one of them.”\textsuperscript{44} One is left wondering how much the *Times*’ policy is like the anti-graffiti policy of New York City – i.e., the faster you erase the graffiti, the less likely you are to see it sprayed on the same place again, as the taggers simply give up and find another environment. Why the two other top-tier newspapers in the country have such a different policy about commenting would no doubt be yet another paper.

As Robinson noted, “traditionalists” and “convergers” alike in her examined newsrooms agreed on the need for moderation as part of the comment
management process, and user comment ratings systems provide a form of self-policing. Ironically, discussions about the American Civil War of the 1800s, once the most incendiary province of commentary and conflict, have become civil. The “American Civil War” of today moves on to gay marriage, medical marijuana, the size of government, and with the march of that war go those who fan and feed on the flames.

Reviewed by Dr. Scott Casper

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PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


Although what is commonly called the ‘humanities’ is known for its celebration of difference – sexual, racial, linguistic, and ontological difference, for example – their method of communicating these differences is surprisingly singular. Though oftentimes professors in this area of studies often speak many languages, their discourse is unified – their speech is dominated by the methods of critique. Now though, we have finally come to a point in which both the need and possibility of “critiquing critique” has come around. Though critique has undoubtedly been useful for thinking through many social problems in the 20th century, does it still serve as an adequate vehicle for the 21st? Does it still have its scathing force and political relevance? And if it has lost its edge, what could possibly come after? Must this ‘post-critique’ sacrifice all the progress of its predecessor? This essay plans to take up these questions in the following
way: (1) it will first examine an environment where critique undergoes apoptosis, where its own logic destroys the possibility of reaching its intended goal; (2) it will then go on to examine a way out of the problems of critique by looking at the works of Bruno Latour and Elizabeth Grosz.

I. The Apoptosis of Critique

Before we get to the heart of this investigation, we must begin with a preliminary question: what is critique? Critique, in its modern form, can be traced back to the work of the “Critical Theorists” of the Frankfurt School. The original generation of the ‘school’ was made up of the theorists Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. The goal of this school of thought was to examine the social forces that go into recreating forms of oppression within society (specifically Capitalism), usually by way of uncovering the dominant types of ‘ideology’ that helped reinforce certain social values over others. In this way, the origins of critique lie with developments in Marxism and other fields of social science and philosophy that tried to undermine the dominant forces of the status-quo. The three tiers of this form of social investigation were: (1) interdisciplinary practices (since the field of study was so large) (2) emancipation and (3) critical inquiry. Thus the method of these thinkers can be summed up nicely: Critical Theory is an
interdisciplinary school of thought that focuses on the emancipation of oppressed peoples through the vehicle of critical inquiry (that is, an inquiry that shows how society, through ideology, deceives and dominates), and critique is the type of discourse that emerges from the work of the Critical Theorists (especially as it was adapted for disciplines as various as Feminism, Critical Race Theory, and Gender Studies). Critique is also the form of discourse that is carried out, broadly, in Derridean deconstructive practices and Foucauldian investigations into Power/Knowledge and biopower, among others.

Thus we can see that the power and scope of critique is extremely encompassing. All of what can be termed the ‘humanites’ today has at least some roots in the Critical Theorists and their heirs, even if the connection isn’t explicitly outlined. And due to the scope and usefulness of critique, it must be noted that this essay in no way wishes to deny the advances it has provided, nor reject them for some ‘pre-critical’ world view. Critique is a valid form of inquiry, and to some extent it is a necessary way of looking at things so as to prevent the reproduction of forms of oppression.²

The problem isn’t that critique is a ‘bad’ type of inquiry, necessarily, but that it has become the standard method. Oftentimes, when confronted with a text, or some concrete feature in the world, the first instinct is to try to critique it – to show the hidden, ideological bias
that structures and makes possible what the object of study is. It's a knee-jerk reaction, and one that needs to be used a little more 'critically', so to speak.

This impulse for critique doesn't just exist among those locked in the ivory-tower of academia though. Critique has become the dominant form of inquiry in our society. From the work of TV broadcasters that try to expose the hidden political agendas of working congressmen and congresswomen, to that one ‘friend’ on Facebook that incessantly posts about the hidden agendas of some industry or another (the meat industry, the movie industry, the fashion industry, etc.), we are bombarded with and constantly engaged in critique when trying to talk about ‘larger’ issues (e.g. political, social, or global issues). This all-encompassing presence of critique helps negate its power and relevance, partially due to the self-sundering nature of the logic of critique (as will be discussed later).

Even the statements of conspiracy theorists rest on a prior grounding in the efficiency of critique\(^3\). Both the academics and the conspiracy theorists find it necessary to stipulate the existence of some hidden entity that makes possible the phenomena being examined – whether the gaze of the Panopticon\(^4\) (academic) or something like the Illuminati\(^5\) (conspiracy theorist). To see how far the reach of critique has stretched itself, and how it has become poisonous to its own desired goals, we
must look at the social networking website, Tumblr.

Tumblr is what is known as a ‘micro-blogging’ website. It has all the capabilities of most blogging platforms but tends to have shorter posts. Part of the content on the website includes pictures, sometimes accompanied by small amounts of text. The medium has been noted for its capabilities in engaging in politics and social theory as well. This is most obvious in the case of the “We Are the 99%” movement, an unaffiliated arm of the Occupy Wall Street protests that started in 2011, and whose blog was hosted on Tumblr. Whereas other forms of social media have been touted for their help in facilitating revolutionary action, Tumblr is unique in both being able to create a central hub and medium which people use to communicate with one another and in being less restricted in the formats and styles of posting allowed. Along with picture posts, there can be audio, video, and text posts, which puts the website at odds with competitors like Facebook and Twitter. These characteristics create an environment that allows for both in-depth commentary on political, social, and theoretical issues, while allowing a degree of social networking that creates fast-paced responses and thinking, along with a strong democratic and community-based conversational style.

This environment has led to the creation of many different types of political and theory blogs, ranging from the humorous (a blog devoted to imposing quotes from
“postmodern” texts onto pictures of cats) to the rather serious (a blog that discusses the way that Western culture appropriates Native American dress and culture as a form of oppression)\(^\text{10}\). There are blogs fighting for the rights of contemporary Greek people, both in the face of the IMF and of a western culture that wants to erase their relevance, along with blogs working to expose the dubious practices of media manipulation happening at Fox News\(^\text{11}\). Further, there are blogs devoted to politics and current events generally, some focusing on technology and modern science, others focusing critically on emerging forms of art (video games), and finally some that are reworking the boundaries of academia, and trying to expand mathematical and theoretical work far beyond the boxes they’re generally put into\(^\text{12}\). These are all listed here, not just to highlight great work that deserves to be highlighted more, nor simply to show how diverse the range of thought can exist on this website, but to make us wary of the way in which an environment rife with critique can produce the conditions for types of oppression to manifest themselves, instead of eliminating them. So, while Tumblr has created a wonderful environment for discussing pressing issues in a variety of fields and from a variety of viewpoints, the method of discourse that tends to be taken up (critique) is in dire need of questioning. And although the problems that appear on this website are a symptom of critique generally, the
hyperconnectivity and speed of discourse that typifies Tumblr allows for the problems to crop up faster and in more concentrated forms. This is why it’s the perfect site to study – like how a biologist may use a specimen that goes through hundreds of generations in a day to test an experiment, so as to generate results faster. The specific symptoms of Tumblr have to do with a special brand of identity politics: those of ‘otherkin’, the ‘transabled’, and the ‘transethnic’.

One of the primary qualities of critique is the narcissism of the author of the critique. Because of the fact that critique rests on the logic of substitution – that is, replacing a network of events under the framing of some theoretical edifice (e.g. substituting the concrete relations between people in society for an intangible ‘ideology’ that encompasses the entirety of relations) – the critique is never ‘wrong’. At worst, the critique may be ‘problematic’ – a word that opens up the space for ever more critique – but because the critique is never wrong, it feeds into the ego of whoever authors the piece. Further, not only is the author of the critique never wrong, but they also occupy a privileged space that allows them to say that everyone else is wrong – or at least caught up in the ideological fetishes that construct their attachment to things (to certain objects, to religions, the relations with others, etc.). Somehow the author of the critique is able to peer through the fog of the day-to-day to see the true motives.
and drives of people. They alone see the hidden forces at work; they alone are able to think through the problems that plague society. As Latour puts it:

Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind? Why critique, this most ambiguous pharmakon, has become such a potent euphoric drug? You are always right! When naive believers are clinging forcefully to their objects, claiming that they are made to do things because of their gods, their poetry, their cherished objects, you can turn all of those attachments into so many fetishes and humiliate all the believers by showing that it is nothing but their own projection, that you, yes you alone, can see13

This is the core appeal of critique as a type of discourse: you are both never wrong and are able to prove that everyone else is slave to some hidden force you were somehow able to see through and theorize till it disappears. You are both immortal to the ills of social construction and are the hero that slays the evil beasts of ‘ideology’, ‘fetish’, and ‘social construction’.

This narcissism is present on Tumblr as well. As oftentimes in discussions of race, gender, and sex, it is the poster making the critique that has the privilege of being correct and showing how everyone else is wrong. On that website, there’s a tendency to try and force members that don’t belong to a minority group out of the discussion – to create feminist spaces free from straight, cis-gendered men talking over the other participants; to create spaces
dealing with racial politics free from white people making the entire discussion about them. And they’re right to want such. Traditionally, men have dominated the discourse over feminism, and white people have forced themselves into discussions they don’t belong in. To create safe spaces for discussion about oppression is a great and important thing, and the people trying to create these spaces should in no way be blamed for the effects that rise up from it. But if you’re middle class, white, and male, and are looking on in these discussions where people are always right, and where they have the power to denounce the thoughts of large groups of people justifiably, and if you’re not allowed to have this ‘power’ because you are barred from entering the discussion (due to the lack of any real forms of concrete social oppression), then what action can you take that can step around all these problems? There’s one easy step you can take: you can invent forms of oppression that are caricatures of real ones, so as to gain all the benefits of critical discourse without the problems of actually being oppressed. No one actually wants to be oppressed; but, in yet another case of the colonization of minority spaces and language, it is desirable to create pseudo-oppressions that allow one to ‘justifiably’ participate in critical discussions, and thus receive the ego-boost and sense of fulfillment that comes with these discussions.

This is where the terms ‘otherkin’, ‘transabled’, and
‘transethnic’ come from\cite{footnote14}. All of these categories appropriate the struggles of transgendered people – that is, an identity that relies upon a disconnect between a person’s gender identity and assigned sex\cite{footnote15}. For example, a transgendered person may have been assigned as ‘male’ at birth, but may present themselves in a way that would traditionally be labeled ‘female’ – so there’s a disconnect between the two. The idea is that while the category of ‘sex’ has some biological base (though this base is dubious for many reasons as well), ‘gender’ is something that is constructed – the things that we associate with ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ are relevant to a certain historical moment, and not to any static unchanging essence of what makes up those categories, and thus there’s no essential connection between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. Working off of this distinction, people that identify as ‘otherkin’ see a disconnect between their being ‘labeled’ human, while they ‘identify’ as some other animal; people that identify as ‘transabled’ are ‘labeled’ as being able-bodied, but ‘indentify’ as being disabled; and people that identify as transethnic see their own disconnect as being between being ‘labeled’ as belonging to one ethnicity and ‘identifying’ with another one – and all of these ‘identities’ originated in the critical space that Tumblr created\cite{footnote16}.

This is the point at which critique ruins itself upon its own logic, the point at which we have to say “maybe critique isn’t always the best type of discourse.”
Anyone that is actually interested in the theoretical and practical work being done in gender studies would rightfully be horrified at these identity-categories, and would also rightly point out that to claim that these categories face similar oppression to transgendered people is laughable at best. Whereas gender-presentations lack rigorous definition, and ahistorical presence, something like species-presentation (i.e. identifying as a human or not) doesn’t. There’s a definite difference between the two sorts of ‘presentations’ – and the same goes for racial-presentation (in this context) and able-bodied-presentation. But these sort of conflations are endemic to the form of critique – in their rightful attempt to create spaces of discussion that exclude those that already have the majority voice in society, they create the ability for those that have that majority opinion to create their own spaces of discourse that are free from any sort of fundamental disagreement or negation. It’s easy to see why categories like ‘otherkin’ don’t make sense, but in a society that values critique so much, and values individual identity so much, any attempt to show why those categories don’t make sense to people that self-identify with them is seen as a form of oppression. And while these identity-categories take away from the concrete struggles of transgendered people, say, the ‘uncritiqueability’ of critique renders any attempts to prove this moot from the beginning. This is exactly why we need to move away from the unitary
discourse of critique – specifically so that critique can actually happen again, so that other discourses can exist to help create the ends that critique wishes to achieve (the interdisciplinary work and emancipation mentioned above) when it’s barred by categories created by its own internal logic. It is here, at the apoptosis of critique, that the need for a ‘way out’ appears.

II. Realism, Darwin, and Post-Critique

A possible way out of the self-negation of critique is offered by the work of Bruno Latour – most specifically, his essay “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?” Latour’s essay, much like this one, is speculative in nature – it doesn’t declare the death of critique, but instead expresses an unease felt amidst an environment of critique. The essay sets out to try and address where that unease comes from, to figure out what the virus is that causes the illness, so to speak.

The essay begins by talking about two contemporary phenomena whose structure is analogous to contemporary critique: (1) conspiracy theories and (2) global warming denial. Addressing the former, Latour laments: “What has become of critique when my neighbor in the little Bourbonnais village where I live looks down on me as someone hopelessly naive because I believe that the United States had been attacked by terrorists [during ‘9/11’]?” He mentions that critique has now become
automatic: the dust didn’t even settle on the twin towers before conspiracy theories were propped up on the site – both academic and ‘popular’ ones\textsuperscript{19}. And as was already mentioned earlier, there exists a structural similarity between the ontologies of conspiracy theorists and those of modern critical theorists. Both of these ‘theorists’ need to posit the existence of some third entity to frame their discourse – whether the CIA or ‘social construction’. And while the conspiracy theorist has to add an entity to their ontology, the global warming denier has to subtract them (namely ‘facts’, which instead are ‘constructed’)\textsuperscript{20}. At this point, we can add an extra dimension to the definition of critique: critique is that which performs the double movement of subtraction and addition simultaneously – though which entities get added or subtracted is a matter of what’s convenient for the author of the critique.

Since critique has to posit or deny the existence of entities to form its structures, Latour thinks that the best way out of the domain of critique is to have a fundamentally, almost naively, realist ontology – one that gives equal weight to the existence of all objects, and doesn’t substitute the existence of one object for that of another. On one hand, this is a brilliant move for Latour to make: if the point is to try and move past critique by subverting its form, then taking a realist position, where the important thing is to try and trace the influence of every actant in a network of objects on each other\textsuperscript{21}, and thus resist...
the critical impulse to posit and deny.

But in the spirit of Latour’s essay, I wish to express unease with Latour’s realism. The problem isn’t that there’s something wrong with realism generally, but with the idea that realism alone is robust enough to account for something that would be ‘post-critical’. The thing that’s so satisfying about critique, as Latour is sure to note, is how extraordinarily encompassing it is. Everything can be critiqued, and critique can take on many different forms – both idealist and realist, even if the brand of realism that critique would take up isn’t as ‘flat’ as Latour’s, to use the now common metaphor. So to get past the current climate of critique, we need something stronger, something as robust and malleable as critique is, but without the same pitfalls. Latour hints toward a possibility for such a post-critique at the end of his essay, though he mentions it the context of his realist framework:

What would critique do if it could be associated with more, not with less, with multiplication, not subtraction. Critical theory died away long ago; can we become critical again…[t]hat is, generating more ideas than we have received, inheriting from a prestigious critical tradition but not letting it die away, or “dropping into quiescence” like a piano no longer struck.

From this, we can tell that to move beyond critique we need to have a method that’s built upon construction
rather than destruction. Instead of constantly trying to substitute one entity for another, and positing the existence of objects lacking any corporeality, we must accept the full reality of any situation (as Latour recommends) and then see what new structures can be built out of what is already given to us. This seems like an obvious procedure, but sadly it’s one that has been mostly lost in recent social theory. Situations and states of affairs, objects of all kinds, are things we can work with to try and build better theories and models with. Our first impulse shouldn’t be to destroy ideas or even ‘ideology’, but instead to see what can be salvaged from their wreckage, what can be built the foundations they have laid down.

A possible model of this ‘impulse toward building’, of a post-critical method of reading texts, can be seen in feminist and philosopher Elizabeth Grosz’s book *The Nick of Time* and with her engagement with the work of Darwin. The purpose to Grosz’s book is to try and formulate a theory of time utilizing the works of Darwin, Nietzsche, and Bergson – all read through the lens of Deleuze and Irigaray – so as to help feminist, post-colonial, and anti-capitalist struggles theorize about change and potentiality. In this way, she’s attempting to fulfill two out of the three categories of critique listed above: interdisciplinarity and emancipation. But what is unique about her work is that her engagement with these theorists is marked by constant construction and
synthesis, rather than critique. Though I won’t be able to provide here the detailed exposition that Grosz’s work deserves, I can highlight its usefulness in trying to move past critique. This is shown most clearly when she begins working through texts by Darwin, in which Grosz explicitly distances herself from other feminist work concerning him.

Grosz is obviously acting from quite different impulses from most contemporary feminist criticism when she says “The Darwinian model of sexual selection comes to a strange anticipation of the resonances of sexual difference in the terms of contemporary feminist theory”\(^{25}\). Grosz is unique in trying to tie biology and contemporary Continental feminism together, instead of seeing biology as a reservoir of gender essentialism cloaked in the ‘objectivity’ of scientific discourse. Instead of using the “standard, knee-jerk feminist reading of Darwin”\(^{26}\), Grosz tries to show how Darwin’s theory of evolution fundamentally reorients our ideas about culture, nature, and society. As Grosz puts it, Darwin’s theory establishes that:

Culture – whether patriarchal, class-based, or racist – is no longer the extension and completion of nature, the coloring in of the contours provided by nature. Nature is open to any kind of culture, to any kind of “artificiality,” for culture itself does not find pregiven biological resources, but makes them for its own needs, as does nature itself\(^{27}\). 

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Where the standard feminist reading of Darwin wants to instantly critique him for how he privileges the existence of men in the progress of evolution, Grosz wants to highlight how Darwin’s celebration of difference as necessary for progress opens up the space for a critique of the necessity of any form of culture – that is, she wants to build new structures from Darwin’s work, rather than instantly tearing it down. And though Grosz’s rejection of current feminist work on Darwin may seem like a form of critique, her rejection is based on a need for progress rather than any necessary problem with those readings – she thinks that those critiques have served their purpose, and now it is time to see what can be salvaged and built up from Darwin’s work. As it’s put shortly after the above quote:

[R]ather than regard [Darwin] as another in the unceasing history of the patriarchal oppression of women (which he undoubtedly is), he needs to be addressed, as Freud has been in the past three decades by feminist theorists, as a scientist/theorist whose aim, whether successful or not, was descriptive, not prescriptive, and whose goal was not to render female conformity to his scientific expectations, but to provide evidence of the range and scope of the behaviors of both sexes.28

This is where Grosz’s approach is so interesting: she’s fully willing to recognize that Darwin’s theories were extremely sexist, but wants to disregard that fact as being of any importance to her current investigation. Yes,
Darwin was a sexist – but what can that fact do but force us to reject his work for its sexism? Yes, he was sexist – but isn’t it more useful to ‘bugger’ (to use the Deleuzian term) Darwin and try to find the subversive feminist potential latent in his work?

Given the current hyper-critical environment of culture today, Grosz’s work comes across as a breath of fresh air. Instead of succumbing to the narcissism of critique, she’s willing to put forth a definite thesis that could possibly be definitely wrong or right. She opens herself up the possibility of being incorrect – the thesis that Darwin’s work holds latent anti-oppressive potential can be debated openly, rather than constantly being held at arm’s distance by critique. And further, she doesn’t need to posit or subtract the existence of any entities to conduct her research: she says only that Darwin’s texts exist, and that these are things we can work with. In this way, her work is one of the very few examples around today of a strong contender toward moving past critique. Though realist in some sense, as Latour would like, its realism isn’t what makes it strong. It’s the attempt to get her hands dirty, to try and construct new buildings where before there were only empty lots, that makes Grosz’s work so important and so interesting.

In this essay, I have attempted to show the need to move past critique as a dominant form of discourse. By way of taking the social-networking website Tumblr as an
example, I have shown that critique tends to produce categories that negate and render impotent its political force (namely ‘otherkin’, ‘transabled’, and ‘transethnic’). In trying to look past the self-negation of critique, I examined the work of Bruno Latour, and his realist ‘critique of critique”. Though I showed admiration for Latour’s work, and his assessment of the impotence of critique, I questioned its assertion that a robust realist framework provided a strong enough alternative. In an attempt to find an alternative, I engaged with Elizabeth Grosz’s attempt to work through Darwin’s texts without critiquing them. Her ability to use Darwin’s work to produce new insights into culture, nature, and society, instead of stopping at addressing his overt sexism, is a model of what could be labeled post-critique. In a world where the statements of conspiracy theorists and global warming deniers are on the same footing as the trained specialist’s, these types of models are essential. Though terms such as ‘truth’ and ‘objectivity’ are often seen as obscene in today’s theoretical climate, perhaps it is time to try and reclaim them in some degree so as to prevent the irrelevance of discourse within the humanities.

Reviewed by Dr. Debroah Achtenberg
The Montag

Works Cited


Unbroken
By Lisa Kasum

I have always admired those who sit with a rugged peacefulness.
An expression of confidence chiseled by humbling experience.

Those made up of a thousand chipped glasses who remain unbroken.

And instead dazzle in the sunlight as a thousand different colored rays beam through them in a brilliance unknown to an unmarred glass.
Cassie By Danielle Cooke
Take Care By Michelle Laxalt
Allocating Serenity By Mariela Meza
At the Barre by Haleigh Hoff
Always
By Kyla Sweeney

His breath, the salty ocean mist—
Caresses the cheek, a lingering kiss
whispers—
Be still, let go
Fall with me

The torrent is swift
But with you
The creative processes associated with artistic works are often thought of in terms of influence from environment or intrinsic inspiration. However, the development of emergent ideas can be akin to a complex system. Art changes over time given that movements emerge and dynamically evolve in both abstract and concrete standings. One notion from a physicalist perspective can look at the mental processes involved in cultivating ideas as neural networks making novel connections in the brain. What makes the artistic process complex is that consciousness cannot be identified as merely a material substance, yet attempts by physicalists to identify material properties as the principle of consciousness. Alternatively, there is the position in which mental properties emerge when writing a novel and the physical manifestations of literature materialize. Additionally, in relation to the external world, society has a feedback
process connected to the individual that impacts the processing of ideas. What follows is an exploration of the three aforementioned viewpoints: neural networks, emergence of mental events, and feedback loops. These positions posit how artistic activity flourishes in nonlinear thinking and are defended by the idea that mental states are complex systems needed to produce meaning in art.

Artwork is seen as an object that stands in relation to the individual observer who interprets its meaning and how the artist captured the idea. That is to say, there may be innumerable ways in which an artist or playwright can create inspiration for a project, but how does this specialized thinking happen? Physicalism in philosophy of mind uses “the language of physics [as] the universal language of science and, consequently, any knowledge can be brought back to the statements on the physical objects” (Keith, 2010). For example, the perception of a painting enters the brain and a material view would speculate that a behavioral response would interpret the piece as significant. A reductivist, one who reduces a whole to its parts, would look at a painting and see a mixture of colors and shapes that form a unity of art based on mere properties. Both cases consider art, from its conception, as merely neurological phenomena explained in a mechanistic aesthetic experience. Past experiences of exposure to art create behavior that influences reactions to what is seen and the painting would
follow this handling. For instance, a person who enforces the notion that a Van Gogh painting is indeed a work of art will make connections in their neurological network to reproduce paintings that follow Van Gogh’s aesthetics. A type of historical lock-in occurs in which other styles that are not Van Gogh may be seen as lacking and meaningless and this response leads to the reality of the artistic representation. The artist would look at the patterns that they produce as pleasing because of what has influenced their ‘creative side’, yet they follow a discrete set of principles that should differentiate their work from works and techniques that do not draw upon Van Gogh.

The concept of inspiration, in which a dancer or photographer attempts to realize their artistic vision, can be perceived as folk psychology or a reductive process. Inspiration is merely an explanatory device to express mental states or behavior in simplistic terms. Intentionality, such as desires and beliefs, is reduced to analogous terms to make the experience easier to understand for others. An author may want to produce a work of art that is recognizable in use of characters such as those found in Romeo and Juliet and the goal is simply to replicate the talent of writing based upon contact with this literature. Modern-day masterpieces of this sort reduce the mental process to a role in which the work of art is fulfilled. In this respect, goal-oriented activities are natured to create desired results. This eliminates the idea that artistic
inspiration is emergent, and instead directs the artist to seek a rational, reductive explanation for how Shakespeare developed his characters and dialogue.

A mental state of creativity from which an author fabricates a plot can be reduced to a mental state that is associated with artistic development. There is a type of physicalism that can look at mental states as the source of creative mental activity. Consequently, the experience of an epiphany in creating a literary character may come from a series of inputs in a neurological feedback system which outputs creativity that is, in part, a characteristic of an artist’s framework. A mental state may be fulfilled by the physical state in which the mental realm supervenes on the physical; however Jaegwon Kim, professor of philosophy at Brown University, denies mental states in their abstract forms as physical. Kim states, “Phenomenal mental properties are not functionally definable and hence functionally irreducible” (2005). The notion of supervenience, which is when the mental process relies on the physical state, is mental activity as natural phenomena that are not merely a collection of neurons in the brain functioning inside a recollection network. That is to say, there exists something extra in artistic creation that physical activity in the mind cannot fully explain and needs the mental state to realize art. Physicalism cannot fully capture the mind and the experience in which creativity emerges. This excludes neurological descriptions
as being sufficient in explaining how a painter sees a sunset and can recreate the experience in their work.

There is an essence to what one sees and smells, but this private and personal experience is difficult to capture in language. Qualia, the quality of experience, is defined as “The ‘what it is like’ character of mental states. The way it feels to have mental states such as pain, seeing red, smelling a rose, etc.” (Eliasmith 2004). This calls into question the role of qualia in not only experiencing works of art, but also in the development of artistic ideas that seem to originate from the abstract. German philosopher Martin Heidegger believed that “experience is the source that is the standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment but also for artistic creation” (1971). A piece of music can be defined by notation on paper, but music can be fully appreciated by the aural experience that is grasped personally. Qualia is an important philosophical notion that can fill the gap between the scientific explanation of thought and the artistic process of creation.

In the attempt to capture reality through an artistic representation, the complexity involved in creating the illustration is revealed in emergence. Certain properties in an artwork interact with each other to create a collective piece that exhibits meaning relative to the viewer. A film is a prime example in which the audience may see the artwork as merely entertainment while a critic may consider the author’s intent as social commentary. The
sensory experience of film and the reflection of culture is a dynamic system that is constantly changing in its interpretation and valuation. Feedback in society may cause a genre of film to vanish and signal the need for a new variety. The physical manifestation of the artwork from the permeation of mental interpretation gives rise to a project that may not have been planned: ‘spark of inspiration’. If art is a process that necessitates both the physical and the mental, and not merely neurological responsive emotion, then the experience of contact with the art and its creation dictates a balance. It can now be established that artistic creativity is the equilibrium of mental and manual labor. An author may draw inspiration from the viewing of everyday events and depict a mental creation of how it can be unique in a literary framework from a set of fictionalized characters. It may be argued that the characters or events are from previous experiential exposure; the way in which they are united, under a singular narrative, is a special usage of creativity. The mental processes described may capture a physical literary form; as in a novel, where the reader can appreciate the artistic brilliance in an experience that only qualia can define.

It is difficult to consolidate the physical and mental states into universal terms that can explain how an artist conceives an idea and puts it into a reality. If one can accept emergence as a crucial part to the complex system from which creativity originates, then the physical
reality that art aims to praise is also comprised of mental states that are associated with creative intelligence. The component of qualia helps capture the experience of art forms that the mind perceives as significant, and a physiological description removes the indescribable qualities of experience. Despite the efforts of critics to dismiss art as merely a physical response to environment, there seems to be mental processes that subjectivity alone best interprets the physical manifestations of the artwork.

Reviewed by Dr. Thomas Nickles
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Will Smith, Denzel Washington, Barack Obama, Jay Z, Robert Griffin III, Sammy Sosa, Kobe Bryant, and Michael Jackson are all prominent and influential people within the African American community. These men have been in the public eye at one time or another and are personalities recognized throughout households in the United States. However famous they are, each of these men are affected by a certain discrimination that has survived in the United States of America since its independence. This type of discrimination has survived slavery and the civil rights movement; living on from generation to generation without abatement. This discrimination is known as colorism. Colorism is the discrimination against one person based on the lightness or darkness of skin tone. It is seen throughout many other races but one that is synonymous with the African-American community since their arrival in the United States.
In order to describe the effect of colorism within the community today one must know where it originates: The North Atlantic slave trade within the original colonies. Colorism found its start in the late 1600’s when the Atlantic Slave trade reached an all time high in the colonial United States, with nearly 300,000 slaves being imported in the 1830’s alone, with 100,000 each going to Alabama and Mississippi (Miller). African slaves were typically given jobs in the fields tending to different agricultural cash crops such as tobacco, cotton, and sugar. Ordinarily in this environment slaves were never allowed near the plantation household. Slaves lived in log shacks usually two families to one shack containing ten to twelve people. These shacks had no more than dirt floors. These instances were recorded in various primary sources including Frederick Douglass’, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.” Written in 1845 where he states:

There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. This, however, is not considered a very great privation. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep; for when their day’s work in the field is done, the most of them having their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day; and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down side by side, on one common bed - the
cold, damp floor - each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets; and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver’s horn (F. Douglass 17).

Although this type of treatment has been mentioned by many sources it is not assumed to be indicative of just a few incidences, but one that existed everywhere throughout the United States at this time.

The living standard of slaves is not the only area where the treatment of African-Americans was subpar. With slave codes being established throughout the South, the most common theme included these five rules: 1) Maintain strict discipline and unconditional submission, 2) Create a sense of personal inferiority, so that slaves “know their place,” 3) Instill fear, 4) Teach servants to take interest in their master’s enterprise, 5) Deprive access to education and recreation, to ensure that slaves remain uneducated, helpless and dependent (Stampp). Rules two and three are ones that are most exemplified when examining slavery. Many accounts state how slaves were brutally beaten and stripped of their dignity.

Many slave owners physically harmed their slaves; whipping them in front of other slaves to induce fear and to make an example that it could and would be done to anyone who disobeyed. Consequently, there are numerous accounts of slaves being hung on the front porch of a plantation household for all slaves, both owned or fleeing
north, to make clear the message that if caught they would be killed. Slaves endured the worst of the brutality when there was any relationship, or assumption thereof, between male slaves and the white women of the household. White women were strongly warned against this type of behavior in order to keep the white American blood pure. While the slaves were usually killed for this type of action, whether it was deemed consensual or not, slave owners were motivated by a separate set of rules. Slave owners would act in extremely brutal fashion towards the black slave women, often sexually abusing them. Women were subject to harsh sexual abuse due to the cultural hierarchy of this time. This is where the preponderance of variations in the lightness of African-American skin tone originates. Interracial sexual relations happening, with or without sanction between slaves and white men, forced the slave community to have and raise these children of mixed race. These children of mixed race were often born with a lighter skin pigmentation than their parents but were darker than the plantation owners. The most widely known and accepted case of interracial sexual relations concerned the President Thomas Jefferson who is on record having had six children with one of his slaves named Sally Hemmings (E.A. Foster).

The biracial children of slaves and their white owners often received favorable treatment; either because
of their biological relation with the slave owner or, as seen later when the mixing had no known clear origination, because of their lighter skin tone. The favorable treatment consisted of rarely being subject to the harsh and brutal treatment that their darker skinned parents were accustomed too. While darker slaves were subject to having responsibilities in the field, those that were lighter-skinned were given household jobs. Able to escape the heat, these lighter-skinned African-Americans were typically given rooms inside the plantation households. The standard of living within or close the main household of the slave owner was much higher than those of the slaves that lived near the fields. This set a precedent that light skin was an asset for a better life among the slave community; a stigma that continued into future African-American communities. As the nation grew with independence and the trial of several wars fought on American soil, legislation passed during the Civil War and slaves were set free. With this newfound freedom, colorism became a solid force of discrimination throughout the United States society. Racism, discrimination upon another based on race, was prominent throughout the Southern United States after the Emancipation Proclamation, but colorism became a growing trend of intolerance beginning with its inception and continuing well after its abolishment.

In the twentieth century colorism thrives due to
the separate but equal laws that gained popularity in the South. These laws were commonly referred to as Jim Crow laws, which included such tenets as the ‘one drop rule’ which stated that anyone having even one drop of Negro blood was considered black. Although the regulations on African-Americans encouraged society to treat all blacks the same, those African-Americans of lighter-skin color were not subject to the same brutal standards as those who had darker skin tones. Among the most told stories, the most brutal and heinous crimes against African-Americans were committed against those with the darkest skin. In 1916, the death of Jesse Washington, who was accused of raping and murdering his boss’s wife, with no eyewitnesses to the event, was not only hung but also burned alive in Waco, Texas highlighting the violent effects of colorism (DuRocher, Rising Racists). In 1955, Emmett Till, the boy who was brutally beaten and thrown into a lake, a cotton gin fan tied to his neck, was most indicative of the treatment African-Americans could expect during a time when freedom was enjoyed by all but did not grant equality to all (Huie, Killers confession). The violent acts carried out upon African-Americans are thought to be the prime catalysts of the Civil Rights movement.

The Civil Rights Movement from 1955 through 1968 created an umbrella for colorism to safely continue plaguing light and dark skinned African-Americans
behind the scenes of the larger fight for equality for all African-Americans. Instead, the majority of African-Americans were focused on fighting the same cause. There are different reasons for African-Americans coming together, key figures are often credited of paving the way for Civil rights activists such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks each represent the various shades of African-Americans of this time and all of them fighting jointly for the same cause. Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X set the highest example; regardless of their disagreement with the other’s tactics they recognized that they were at war with a common enemy: inequality.

However, it was more than the figure heads who made the impression that shade is unimportant, but it was something that came from all sides of the Civil Rights Movement. White Americans called all African-Americans ‘colored’ or ‘negro’. Case in point, Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandardge, who, despite their different skin-tones, were still seen as part of the African-American community as a whole. Moreover, pop culture played an even larger part into this ‘black is black’ movement. Rivaling the ‘one drop rules’ of the Jim Crow law’s, Sam Cooke’s hit “A Change is Gonna Come” along with, the God-Father of Soul, James Brown releasing the pop song that would eventually become the mantra of the movement stating “Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud.” Even
though James Brown’s mega hit ‘Black and I’m proud’ became the song for a generation, many African-Americans did not like to think of themselves as “black”. It wasn’t a well liked term because it sounded dirty, according to various accounts of African-Americans, or was too dark of a description for their actual skin tone. A popular hymn often referred to declared, “If you’re black, stay back; if you’re brown, stick around; if you’re yellow, you’re mellow; if you’re white, you’re all right” (Nittle). Black may have been black, but even amongst Africa-Americans there was no consensus as to what the group wanted or liked to be called, which can be thought of as colorism working within the community to dissuade cohesiveness.

Although these Colorism undertones were omnipresent during the Civil Rights Movement, colorism it was pushed further behind closed doors due to the emergence of the ‘black is beautiful’ movement during the 1960’s and 70’s that brought about a style that was defined by full lips, big hair, and even bigger cars. During this time darkness was celebrated; the mega-pop sensations the Jackson 5, and their lead singer Michael Jackson, are the most famous of examples. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, major revelations were brought to the American Government system, except for the issue of colorism which took a back seat to other matters such as, The Communist Threat, The Gas Crisis, and the assassination of brothers John and Robert Kennedy. Martia
Golden commented on this matter in her book “Don’t Play in the Sun: One Woman’s Journey Through the Color Complex”, affirm:

What happened is we did not keep the conversation going about black is beautiful. We got co-opted. The major failure of my generation is we dropped the ball on that. . . . I look at young girls coming of age today and they don’t have an anchor like that (Golden 76).

Marita also goes on to explain how during the 70’s and 80’s African-Americans were often subject to the “Paper bag test” which is defined in the example of an African-American would come in for a job interview, the business place would compare his or her skin to a brown paper bag. If their skin was any darker they would not get the job, but if it was lighter these people were the ones thrown into the job and often given promotions at a much quicker pace than those of darker skin (Golden 72). In the latter half of the twentieth century there are parallels to the slave treatment to those lighter-skinned Africans. The paper bag test is just one example of actions and preconceived notions of white Americans that was commonly used to promote lighter-skin with an affluent lifestyle; making more money than those same African-Americans who are more qualified but were ‘too dark’ to be lifted from the depths of society.

In modern times colorism is not discrimination based solely on the shade of one’s skin but a difference
in how African-Americans act: the difference between ‘book-smart’ and ‘street-smart.’ A pop-culture example of this contrast dates back to the 1980’s and 90’s with sitcoms like as “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air”, where Will Smith represents the street savvy adolescent from West Philadelphia while Alfonso Ribeiro portrayed Carlton, the book smart African-American with the father who was a lawyer and a judge. The show was a great success lasting nine seasons, and brought colorism into mainstream popular culture, helping it spread rapidly as a tool for discrimination of and amongst African-American communities across the nation.

Even more indicative of modern colorism is that developed into more than just discrimination based on physical characteristics, especially since Carlton was the ‘book-smart’ adolescent, but was darker then Will. Throughout the show Carlton wasn’t “black” enough; not quite being able to fit in with any crowd because he acted too “white” for the black crowd and too “black” for the white crowd. This is now the most common form of discrimination used against and amongst the African-American community now, where those who become successful, speak-well, and are the quintessential ‘book-smart’ African-Americans are stripped of their “blackness.” The examples of this in twenty-first century popular culture are numerous including the comparisons between African-American actors like Will Smith and
Denzel Washington or the viral Barack Obama versus Jay Z debate. Recently this type of stereotyping was publicized on ESPN when journalist Rob Parker questioning the “blackness” of football phenomenon Robert Griffin III. Parked cited the following reasons for Griffin’s “whiteness”; he is engaged to a white woman and identifies himself as a Republican, saying “that he might be purposefully separating himself from the African-American community” (Zaldivar).

Of the multiple facets to colorism from the birth of a nation, through its growth, and into the future the majority of examples have dealt primarily with African-American males. African-American women bring much more to discuss. African-American women are very much affected by colorism in the same and more ways that affect African-American males. Whereas men are told whether or not they are in fact ‘black’ enough, African-American women are told whether or not they are pretty enough. These messages are constant in African-American culture with the most apparent being an African-American woman’s hair. African-American women tell their children, “You have that good, pretty hair.” The difference between “good” and “bad” hair is that “good hair” is straighter, easy to comb, and was not thick or kinky. In less words, “good” hair is more like the hair of Caucasian ethnicities leaving the natural African-American hair less desirable. When the hair is difficult
to deal with the alternatives in the African-American community are to indulge in what some call the ‘creamy crack’ technically known as relaxer. Interviews in Chris Rock’s modern movie Good Hair explain that, “Once you start, there is no way you can stop” (Good Hair). This is because the relaxer alters the hair making natural curls weaker. The procedure is similar to dying ones hair in that once the roots grow out one must continue to get the procedure done. Those in other ethnicities use perms to curl and instantly add volume to their hair while the exact opposite rings true for African-American women. They instead spend hundreds of dollars using relaxers, perms and even the 1980’s Gerry Curl to make their hair straighter and more manageable. Another alternative is weaves, which is most lucrative institution within the business of black hair care. African-American women will typically spend around $1,000 on a weave, which are more of a temporary fix to the colorist problem of trying to achieve the unnatural and elusive ‘good’ hair (Good Hair).

African-American women are criticized for their beauty based on how dark their skin tone is. African-American woman are told such things as, “Oh you’re cute... for a dark chick’ which suggests that compared to a white or light-skinned African-American woman she loses her beauty. In the media today African-American women such as Beyoncé or Queen Latifah are featured
on the fronts of magazine covers with ads such as L’Oreal, Dove, and other hair-care or hygiene products primarily because their light skin color is considered clean and more acceptable, similar to the acceptability of light-skinned slaves in the 1800’s. African-American women are rarely featured on the cover of Vogue magazine, with the one of darkest being the First Lady Michelle Obama, although not even she is exempt from criticism. Critics responded by saying she is a statistical anomaly, in that she is both dark-skinned and gorgeous, a lawyer and married to the first African-American President of the United States. All of the First Lady’s critics relayed the message that another dark-skinned African-American woman can only be seen as beautiful as long as she has the same accomplishments as the First Lady. With the President and first lady being of medium skin tone and in the most powerful positions in our nation, the effect of their actions on the colorism conversation is yet to be determined.

If one thing is certain, it is that colorism is still very much alive and well today. Consistent and constant messages advertised to and perpetuated within the African-American community are that it is better to be lighter and more like the white counter parts but at a cost of losing one’s ‘blackness.’ In that we will purposefully attack ourselves for some sort of self gratification. Colorism has had a lasting effect on the identities of African-
American people: an identity crisis that stems from the time our Ancestors spent in slavery. An argument can be made that the cultural identity crisis is so engrained within the African-American community that it can no longer be resolved. It remains to be seen if even legislation can effectively combat the long term effects of colorism.

Colorism as a tool of discrimination having survived throughout African-American’s history has created a cultural identity crisis to this very day. It is hard to predict when or if it will come to an end. It will take a movement similar to those that have defined growth throughout American history with everyone of all backgrounds coming together to stamp out this type of discrimination once and for all. When African-American’s overcome the effects of colorism there will finally be a time where African-Americans, regardless of skin tone or behavior, can look back on the many accomplishments throughout the collective American history and add that to list of things to be proud of.

Reviewed by Dr. Jennifer Ring
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Most wars are fought over women, whether directly or indirectly. The story of the Trojan War, at least, began after Paris of Troy took Helen from Menelaus, the King of Sparta. In war, there are two sides of any battle. In the war for defining life, there are pro-life and pro-choice soldiers. There are four “battles” present in the War of Personhood: the battle of perception, the battle of support, the battle of power, and the battle of medicine. The courts are the battlefield. The Personhood Amendment, that aims to define and protect “personhood of the unborn from the earliest stages of life” (“Nevada Personhood Amendment” 1), is Helen being taken from Menelaus. The crippling force with this issue resides in the deep moral and ethical premise; as currently understood it is a controversial subject with no clear consensus.

In theory, the effects of war are to bring about peace and understanding. However, defining peace and
understanding depends on the perspective of each side. The Personhood Amendment proposes to reform values and beliefs of individuals. They must do this without crippling the way individuals have accepted their understanding of what life is. This is a complex and possibly improbable process, if both sides cannot make compromises.

The reformation of social norms is often a complicated situation. The social norms that this Amendment attempts to adjust, when life begins and what constitutes life, parallels the reformation of religion in a subtle manner. In the times of religious reformation, such as the Protestant reformation, the teaching of how to read and write became standardized. The primary reason for this was that the people could interpret for themselves, without having to be told by the church, what faith was. The interpretation of religion for oneself relies on personal choice, just as this issue in question identifies with personal choice.

**The Battle of Perception**

The interpretation of determining whether there is a personal choice or not lies within the law. The Personhood Amendment threatens this personal choice, making the issue a Battle of Perception. Interpreting law through deciphering its words and events is similar to that of interpreting religion. The vagueness of the
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Amendment, in a subtle manner, conveys that everyone can perceive it in their own way, just as religion has grown to be interpreted similarly. Laws are inevitably rooted in values and morality of society. Chet Gallegher of the Nevada Prolife Coalition states: “It’s not the amendment itself that outlaws anything” but rather what is “approved by legislators” (Robison 3). The perception of the language is the main ammunition that legislators have to define the constitutional amendment. Legislators can control behavior of society through the laws, in order to maintain order and punish acts that are seen as wrong. But how does one determine what is wrong or right? The law is constantly interpreted differently, as history shows in many cases, the definitions of citizenship and voting rights for African Americans and women are key examples. Consequently, one could argue that perception of the law is the main weapon one could utilize in the legal system.

By passing this amendment, the Amendment would have a lot of open ended issues that could take advantage of the vagueness of the language in the amendment. This amendment initially was proposed in 2010 to add a simple yet debatable ambiguous statement to the Nevada constitution, as follows: “The term ‘person’ includes every human being” (Pecquet 1). This addition to the Constitution of Nevada was ruled against by Carson City District Court Judge James Russell, declaring
it “too vague” and “violated state law that limited questions on ballot to only one specific subject” (“Nevada Personhood Amendment” 1). The group, Personhood Nevada, appealed to the Nevada Supreme Court shortly after. The Supreme Court of Nevada ruled the proposal did not violate the specified state law and allowed for the petition to be circulated. The court gave Personhood Nevada a deadline of June 15, 2010 for the needed amount of signatures on the petition. However, the Amendment did not gain enough signatures by the deadline the court ordered in the 2010 election and the lawsuit was thrown out (Whaley 1).

Personhood Nevada filed another lawsuit initiative on October 13th, 2011, for the 2012 election, this time earlier than the previous 2009-2010 one that began in November 2009 (“Nevada Personhood Amendment” 1). This time the initiative had changed their language, but still was viewed as vague. The new reformed initiative by Personhood Nevada stated:

“The intentional taking of a prenatal person’s life shall never be allowed in this State. The term ‘prenatal person’ includes every human being at all stages of development before birth” (Robison 1).

On October 14th, 2011, the day following, a second initiative similar to that of Personhood Nevada’s was filed by Nevada Pro-life Coalition. Both 2012 were heard by
Carson City District Judge James Wilson, resulting in a ruling that both need to change their language to be more specific about details of effect. Once they changed the language, to eliminate ambiguity, then they can be approved. The effects the language had on the voters was not included in the proposed question and the judge rule it to be “unnecessarily broad” (Whaley 1). Nevada Pro-life Coalition abandoned their initiative and joined the ranks of the similar initiative put up by Personhood Nevada, in order to unify their efforts. However, the 2012 initiative ultimately ended in failure to gain the needed signatures supporting the question on the ballot, just as the 2010 initiative had (Pecquet 1).

The Battle of Support

The vagueness most likely was the reason behind the 2010 and 2012 initiatives not gaining enough signatures to support their appearance on the ballot. The need to constantly recruit pro-life ‘soldiers’, in order to meet the petition deadline, creates a Battle of Support on this issue, in the sense that winning this war of defining life will require gaining the support of voters. Voters simply did not understand or support the initiative; therefore, would not sign the petition. The initiative had too many aspects that were not fully understood by the population. Judge Russell and Judge Wilson both viewed the Personhood Amendment as “vague” and “misleading”
(“Nevada Personhood Amendment” 1). Ultimately, the failure of the initiative to gain support from the voters on the petitions appears to show that the voters may have viewed it as misleading as well.

Descriptions of the questions on a ballot usually explain to voters the issue and its effects surrounding the question. But if the question does not display the effects it will have, then how can the voters know what they are actually voting for? District Judges Russell and Wilson feared the question proposed to voters would be misinterpreted, resulting in voting in a misinformed manner. Therefore, voting for changes that the proposed amendment will add may drastically change the personal choices in the social lives of voters unknowingly. It seems, above all the vagueness of the amendment’s language, a failure in the battle to acquire strength in numbers to support their stance on the issue is partially Personhood Nevada’s problem.

The Battle of Power

Although vagueness is beneficial for perception of the issue, vagueness in the law has dangers. Where does one draw the line between personal choice and government intervention? Amending a state constitution, to impose one’s values upon others to stop the killing of unborn life, is in itself immoral. The ramifications of determining this personal choice through law pertains
not just to women, but also to men. It takes a man and a woman to create life, or at least gametes from both. Therefore, men are also a part of the decision-making process in a family. This ultimately elicits another battle, the Battle of Power.

Through history, men have played dominant roles in religion, politics, and even the workplace. Religious positions are male dominant. For example, the position of the Pope has always been male. There has never been a female Pope, since that is not even a possibility for a woman to achieve. Women have been constrained to a subservient domestic lifestyle through history, while men have been viewed as the “bread-earners” in society. Although women are slowly shifting into politics and the workforce in the modern era, males are still mainly dominant. With this male ‘bread-earning philosophy’ in mind, women in the political and even social spheres are viewed as less competent to make their own choices in situations. These decisions include control over the life or death of an embryo or fetus that they ultimately are the host for.

This battle plan to adjust the Nevada Constitution aims to use the amendment to outlaw all abortions, protecting human life of helpless unborn babies of all early stages. The change would affect common birth control, in-vitro fertilization, ectopic pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies resulting from rape, and embryonic research.
development that studies treatments for diseases (Pecquet 1).

Men have controlled politics throughout history. Even now, women are still less represented in Congress and state legislatures than their male counterparts (WCF Foundation 1). The struggle for equality for women in politics, as well as in the workplace, is increasing in the modern day. In a way, some men seem to hold on to America’s early forefathers as a way to justify their biased nature against women though. Society is changing and the way of the past is only a guideline, even the forefathers did not take all of the English system with them to America. Times change and so do the social and political structures of society. Who are men to say what women can and cannot do with their bodies, especially regarding the birth of life they are hosting? This question perpetuates the issue of power over personal choice and the preservation of life.

Common birth control like ‘the pill’ could be threatened by this power struggle. In a case regarding contraceptives, such as the following from a fact checker article in the RGJ about the Personhood Amendment, Elisa Cafferata of the Nevada Advocates for Planned Parenthood states that taking the pills, “even if the intent was not to flush out a fertilized egg, the action of taking the pills was ‘intentional’ and the effect might be to flush out a fertilized egg, making it a violation” (Robison 2). The
result could still be punishable in the law, if the amend-
ment were to pass. Intent and intentional are different
definitions entirely, when looking at this manner, but are
confused to be very similar. Women specifically seek-
ing artificial insemination by in-vitro fertilization would
have conflicts in doing so as well. This is because the
methodology of current in-vitro fertilization would be
threatened. In the current procedure, anywhere from
four to twelve eggs are taken out of a mother, and then
the eggs are fertilized and reinserted into the mother.
The others are discarded or frozen for later use and even
research (Robison 2). However, this Amendment would
not allow current methods of in-vitro fertilization, unless
all the embryos are saved in the process (Robison 2). This
requirement could be a costly storage cost in the medi-
cal field and also threatens to take away the prospect of
embryonic research that could help develop treatment
for diseases. Should the government continue to control
research projects? Should the government control repro-
duction for women who may not be able to reproduce
normally?

Saving all early helpless life is the general goal
of this amendment, even in cases where the mother is
threatened. In ectopic pregnancies, that threaten mothers’
lives, it would be illegal to abort the baby when the intent
is to solely abort the baby. If the intent is to save the
mother, then it may be viewed as acceptable. However,
Elisa Cafferata of Planned Parenthood states:

“Even if the doctor’s intent ... was not to terminate a pregnancy, a medical procedure is an intentional act, this act ends a pregnancy and there are no exceptions in the language of the amendment” (Robison 2).

The same would be illegal for cases where the mothers were raped. Healthy mothers with ectopic pregnancies would die carrying these babies that will not be able to be birthed. Choice is a determinant that would be taken away from mothers and decided by society’s politics rather than by a family’s personal choice. ‘Does one save the mother or let her die because of the ectopic pregnancy?’ is the ultimate moral question.

Rape victims that become pregnant may struggle to support the child they are bearing because legislators believe the baby’s life is of greatest importance. What if a sixteen year old girl, whose parents died when she was young and is struggling for her own life, gets raped and becomes pregnant? Is it moral or even ‘just’ that her health be threatened by the financial and physical strain that is forced upon her by this unwanted pregnancy, especially when she is not even technically an adult in society yet? This amendment proposes drastic guidelines with very few exceptions when it comes to prenatal life. The Battle of Power between men and women to control this creation of life in society is controversial to say the least.
Who should control this decision? Men and women in families should have equal right in the decision and some cases should depend on the circumstances surrounding them, especially when it comes to ectopic and rape pregnancies.

The Battle of Medicine

Physicians are at the midst of this controversy between the pro-life and pro-choice soldiers. First of all, physicians themselves may have their own personal choices when it comes to this decision. Whether they choose to operate on some patients may be affected by their own choice, but they need to follow their ethical guidelines in practice as well. Doctors have a duty to patients to protect the health of the individuals. However, when it comes to rape victims, in-vitro fertilization, and ectopic pregnancies, can doctors be held liable for the death of unborn babies resulting from medical operations to help the mothers?

A Battle of Medicine and its faculty, in a sense, surrounds the issue that this Personhood Amendment is trying to define. The amendment proposal would define prenatal life. This definition would have many implications in the research of embryos, would make aborting ectopic pregnancies illegal, and could possibly make abortions of unwanted pregnancy resulting from rape illegal (Robison 2-3). It is a battle of ethics combined with
the medical field. Intertwining politics, morals, ethics and medicine is a recipe for madness if you are attempting to control the existence or non-existence of life. Personal choice would have no victory in the battlefield proposed by the Personhood Amendment, if it were passed.

Doctors could face law suits from pro-life coalitions and personhood groups. Medical practices would be weary as to who to treat in cases surrounding pregnant mothers. The vagueness of the law could easily threaten the medical practice of doctors when it comes to pregnant mothers and as a negative result doctors may become weary to operate on expecting mothers that may need serious medical treatment. A war of defining life may have drastic influence on the current established practice of medicine, in regards to women in general. However, the medical field has a lot of influence because it is a large industry. If legislators aimed to create laws that punish doctors’ actions as a result of this amendment, then the doctors would most likely fight back, if such occurrences of accidental death would occur. Medicine would encounter more legal nightmares with liability issues and possible malpractice lawsuits, if this initiative were successful. Upholding the punishment of doctors would be a nightmare for the legal system because it can be argued that it is a duty as a professional doctor to care for their patient. Also it can be argued that the patient has some extent of over how to proceed with treatment in
regards to their health.

As Elisa Cafferata expressed before: “there are no exceptions in the language of the amendment” (Robison 2). The language says that the “intentional taking of prenatal person’s life” (Robison 1) could easily be directly related to medical operations that are intentional, even though there is no intent to take a life of an unborn child, as discussed prior. Although birth control is not taken with intent to kill, it is intentionally taken. Ectopic pregnancies do not have intent to kill the baby, but are intentionally carried out. This difference between intent and intentional in the language of the amendment is problematic when interpreting it and can be misleading. Defining prenatal life in a vague manner allows for interpretation, which as expressed can have its pros and cons in the field of medicine. These pros and cons could easily be interpreted as issues that could lead to malpractice in the field, preventing doctors from completing their duty as medical professionals.

The Aftermath of the War of Personhood

Although the Nevada Personhood Amendment did fail to acquire its goal of even getting on the ballot for election in both 2010 and 2012, the issue it addresses of defining prenatal life is an extensive social conflict. Should politics be incorporated into the decision of defining a social definition of parental life? This
determination would affect the laws that deal with American individuals’ and families’ choices on abortion, medical operations, and contraceptives. The war over defining personhood, just as any war, has various issues the war is fighting. Wars are often sparked by multiple reasons. Modern day wars are fought over religion, resources acts of terror, and even “peace-keeping” (however one may want to define that).

Treaties are made when an understanding has been made. In this case of the Personhood Amendment, a treaty has yet to be made. Common ground may or may not be found on this issue, but it appears Personhood Nevada will most likely continue its efforts as long as it has the drive and resources to do so. The Amendment will probably continue their struggle to show this proposal is beneficial when passed. However, the language used in the amendment seems to need more precision and detail, in order to be understood by the populace. Currently, it appears the legislators and the voters are filled with doubt and opposition to the cause. However, it would not be surprising to see another lawsuit around 2014 starting this War of Personhood all over again. These battles will persist if nothing is done. The battle for perception would need to clarify the language of the laws. The battle of support would need to gain the needed signatures of voters. The battle of power must come to an agreement as to who will control the decision-making.
The battle of medicine will need to ensure there is peaceful understanding between physicians and politicians as well. All of these conflicts must be resolved for anyone to claim victory in this war.

Reviewed by Dr. Robert Chaires

Bibliography


The Defense on Behaviorism’s Naïve Critique

Philosophy is the fundamental worldview one takes in his or her perception of the world; it encompasses all aspects and realms of the individual, and will thus lead to the individual’s interpretation of life. The philosophy of psychology aims in understanding the principles of human behavior. It tackles such questions as: What is consciousness? Is the notion of the ‘self’ valid? Do we possess innate knowledge? A psychologist’s philosophical viewpoint will not only influence the scientific methods they use in their investigation, but will also influence the interpretations and conclusions they make from their data (Chiesa, 1994). This paper will provide the reader with a brief historical context of how B.F. Skinner’s Radical Behaviorism came to be so heavily criticized and will defend his position by focusing on the critique that radical behaviorism is “oversimplified and naïve.”
Traditionally, *mentalism*, was the philosophical groundwork in psychology—it pinpointed internal states, thought processes, and structures such as beliefs, perceptions, memories, morals, desires, and other various mental entities as the causes of behavior (Baum, 2005). From a natural scientific perspective, attributing causes of behavior (a physical phenomena) to the mind (a non-physical entity), will invalidate any conclusions one can make about the relationship between the two; prediction and control of the latter variable is impossible. If it cannot be seen, nor manipulated, the conclusions that are drawn cannot be used to benefit humankind (Chiesa, 1994).

Many then appealed to the emergence of methodological behaviorism in the beginning of the 20th century, which focused on observable events and behaviors, drawing support from experimentation and leaving little to the ‘mind’. It prescribes that behaviors can be described scientifically without having to rely on internal states of hypothetical structures such as thoughts and beliefs. The original methodological behaviorists were primarily focused on the stimulus-response (S-R) relation that people and animals had with their environmental circumstances (Moore, 1999). Although they acknowledged the presence of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs— they rejected the need to further investigate these phenomenon because it was believed that only understanding overt, observable behaviors’ relationship with the
environment was necessary to provide meaningful benefits to world issues.

In 1945, American psychologist, B.F. Skinner, wrote “The Operational Analysis of Psychological Terms”, which introduced a new behaviorist school of thought eventually termed “Radical Behaviorism” (Skinner, 1945; Skinner, 1974). Radical in the sense that Skinner attributed internal, covert events (such as thoughts, beliefs, and language) also as behaviors having a causal relation with the environment—not only overt, observable behaviors. He provided a more holistic account of the study of behavior as not only influenced by an S-R relation, but also shaped by the consequences of responses. This in turn provided a more pragmatic method for studying human interaction (Moore, 1999).

However, controversy arose to his denial of the mind as a separate entity from the body because he acknowledged the existence of thoughts and viewed them as nothing more but private behaviors that relied on the same principles as observable behaviors. This, in addition to cognitive Noam Chomsky’s scathing review of Skinner’s account of verbal behavior and Skinner’s statements on freedom, facilitated the unpopularity of behaviorism (Schnaitter, 1999). Skinner then wrote About Behaviorism in 1974 to clarify the critiques of behaviorism at the time, one popular notion he addressed was that “It is oversimplified and naïve and its facts are either
trivial or already well known” (Skinner, 1974, p. 4).

To have judgments placed on any fairly new field of study is natural and expected, provided the judgments are acquired on some level of accuracy in studying such field. For example, having the criticism that behaviorism ignores consciousness, feelings, and states of mind possess some merit. However, to believe the aforementioned critique on behaviorism is a thoughtless proposal stemming from one who has not given much thought to the study in the first place. B.F. Skinner argues that behaviorism is quite complicated especially compared to its rival, mentalism. It is critiqued to be simplified because it is a scientifically based conceptualization that has vast implications on human lives—a thought that people tend to reject to protect one’s notion of “individuality” and “freedom.”

The science of behaviorism has been simplified into its most basic features for the majority to understand its concepts at the surface level. This applies to any field of science as Skinner contends: “All sciences simplify the conditions they study as far as possible, but this does not mean that they refuse to examine more complex instances” (Skinner, 1974, p. 254). If Skinner were to write his theories explaining in the most explicit detail and applying terminology uncommonly used in the verbal community, most would find it difficult to comprehend, thus, unable to apply in “real life.” The purpose of
simplification is for the benefit of comprehension. The information processed is then understood as a basic introduction to the more complex issues at hand: it “is possible, indeed, that a behavioral analysis will be more complex” (p. 229). In the study of mentalism, behaviors are attributed to internal states and are left at that without further possible inquiry (p. 231). Whereas from the viewpoint of a radical behaviorist, causal relations of all behavior, both covert and overt, are determined by the organism’s genetic endowment, their individual history of reinforcement with their past environments, and the context of the individual’s current environment. The external environment of an individual is easily manipulated and observable, thus enabling a scientist or practitioner to explore, predict, and control one’s behavior to improve their quality of life (Skinner, 1953).

And yet, behaviorism is often thought of as trivial with its first principle: “a person is…an organism, a member of a species” (Skinner, 1974, p. 228), of which people reject due to its implications. This falsely assumes a person is not unique or an individual, and is just a puppet or tool in its vast membership of its species. But in the film, A Conversation With B.F. Skinner (1972), he states he himself does not feel like a puppet and is not attacking freedom, but rather, going beyond it. Skinner is not saying that humans are robots; he admits that humans “cannot be adequately treated simply as a black
box” (Skinner, 1974, p. 233). Skinner is instead treating humans as a member of a species, regarding the person as not completely different biologically from the next, and is regarding the human as a whole—acting with respect to their personal environment based on their personal histories.

In today’s modern culture, people mistakenly believe that parts of the brain are the sole proprietors for certain functions; such as when the removal of some part of the brain disables the use of an arm while still attached. That part is then said to control the function of the arm. However, the arm itself is also the controller. The reason for its disability is that the organism isn’t fully functioning as a whole; not that it isn’t functioning specifically due to the removal of a part of the brain, but due to the relational effects the removal of the function has on the entire organism (Skinner, 1974, p. 236). It is the same as with the analogy of the spider and experimenter. The experimenter tells the spider to jump, and it does so at a high height. The experimenter then removes a leg, and tells it to jump again—it does, but less high. This procedure is repeated until the last leg is removed; the experimenter tells the spider to jump and it doesn’t. The experimenter concludes that the spider hears with its legs. This shows that extreme caution must take place when attributing functions solely to the brain.

People find Skinner’s theories controversial
because of their cultural history that reinforced the idea of “freedom” as a requirement of fulfilling life. Traditionally, to be free meant escaping from discomfort or aversive conditions, as with the prisoner escaping harmful punishment. Skinner agrees that man should escape from aversive stimuli, but in the process, “it has given him the feeling of freedom, and perhaps no feeling has caused more trouble” (Skinner, 1974, p. 216). Control is branded wrong because of the idea that it is always associated with aversive stimuli but humans are still under control even when they feel free (A Conversation With B.F. Skinner). Instead of being under the control of a dictator or government, the control is shifted to the environment. Skinner states: “Unfortunately, the feeling of being free is not a reliable indication that we have reached such a world” (p. 217). An example of such is in the form of a government trying to raise money. In one condition, the government will be direct and force taxes (aversive stimuli) on its citizens. Eventually, the citizens will use counter-control and escape the aversive stimuli. In another condition, the same government will impose a state lottery that allows for its citizens to voluntarily give up their money. In the latter, the people have a sense of freedom and will not be as likely to engage in counter-control. In any case, the government achieves its goal of raising money. Although this experiment is simplified due to reasons mentioned earlier, this acts as a metaphor that humans are organisms
continuously under the control of their environments, which leads to behaviorism’s trivial reputation (Skinner, 1974, p. 218).

Whether or not an individual agrees with Skinner does not matter because once the environment is studied, it cannot be ignored. This statement can be proved in the context of control. No one has yet to control the internal states or feelings of a person and therefore, controlling or predicting their behavior. Behaviorism has not yet perfected the use of control either, but it has more accessibility than mentalism. The behaviorist can induce feelings by injecting the person with a drug, or changing their appearance surgically to appear more “beautiful,” etc. These are all changed through the environment and have so far been successful (Skinner, 1974, p. 220). Thus, when a person claims behaviorism to be simple-minded and trivial, that person has not fully comprehended behaviorism or the benefits it has to offer humankind.

My Thoughts On The Matter Of Behaviorism

Majoring in psychology has forced me to delve into other fields of psychology and to interact with many types of psychologists. None has offered a greater contribution than B.F. Skinner in the sense of predicting and manipulating behavior. Although, it is difficult to assess every individual’s personal history reasonably in order to pinpoint a cause. In addition, the behavior-environment
relationship is bidirectional such that once a behavior is exhibited, the environment changes, which then influences the behavior, and so on and so forth. Upon studying the environment and its effects on human organisms, and being able to manipulate the environment to control behavior, is a grand step in the evolution of behaviorism, which therefore cannot be ignored or belittled as “naïve.”

I maintain Skinner’s views on behaviorism such that it is hard to ignore environmental settings once studying its effects on behavior. It is also easier to use behavior analysis for predicting and controlling one’s own behavior than attempting to manipulate nonphysical inner states of being such as emotions and attitudes. You can change contingencies and environmental settings to manipulate behavior, but you cannot change or make any one feel by implanting an inner state or emotion. This is the idea that I find most agreeable with Skinner.

The idea that humans are an organism as part of a species, and that the human organism’s behavior is manipulated by past contingencies of survival, its genetic endowment, and their environmental settings is acceptable and should not be viewed negatively. For example, the environment first made its contribution in the evolution of the human species and then its second contribution by the effect it has throughout the lifetime of the species. The two effects then result in behavior, if “either can be changed, then behavior can be changed” (Skinner,
When speaking of inner states of being, though, it is assumed that these are invented to easily explain in the verbal community the reasoning of behavior. Behaviorism is an empirically validated scientific method that has successfully demonstrated the prediction and control valued in the scientific community without attributing causal relations to unobservable metaphysical entities such as “the mind.” The study of behavior has made profound significant advancements in the treatment of autism (Jensen and Sinclair, 2002), improving the safety of factory workers (Ray and Frey, 1999), and its contributions to psychotherapy for those suffering from mental disorders (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, and Lillis, 2006). This demonstrates that the philosophy of behaviorism is still relevant today, benefitting the lives of millions, and should not be dismissed simply because it appears simplistic and naïve.

Reviewed by Isabel Munoz, M.A.

References


When in college, students often engage in a long-distance relationship with someone. Whether it is with their friends, family, or loved ones, many college students are likely to make a proximal move away from their original homes and the people they know and love. For some students, they find romantic relationships in a shared class on campus. For other students, they find or maintain romantic relationships with those in another state. The idea of long-distance romantic relationships (LDRR) has the ability to bring about excess worry for couples debating on trying one. There are difficult problems couples must face when dealing with a LDRR, however, there are a lot of problems that couples in proximal romantic relationships (PRR) have to deal with every day as well, that LDRR couples do not. Those in LDRR learn important life lessons as well (Roberts & Pistole, 2009). Research suggests that it is not the distance that
destroy the relationship, but the characteristics of the couple experiencing the relationship. Based on the couples’ positivity, trust, assurance, and good communication, the couple is more likely to succeed in their relationship (Roberts & Pistole, 2009). However, if the LDRR couple does not show these characteristics and there is negativity, a lack of assurance, and poor communication, they are more likely to fail (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). The successfulness of a college couple’s LDRR all depends on the characteristics the couple share and express.

Successful Characteristics

Successful characteristics are what lead a relationship to be long lasting and what brings satisfaction to the couple. Communication was a characteristic frequently listed in all research found, in being a reason as to why a relationship succeeds. In a study trying to figure out if ‘separation makes the heart grow fonder’, results showed that 56.6% of the participants talked on the phone and/or 53% emailed their significant others several times a week, 22% talked on the phone at least once a day, and 8.8% talked with each other several times a day (Knox et al., 2002). This demonstrates the importance of partners staying in contact throughout the day, as well as making efforts to see each other in person. One study even reported partners seeing each other at least once a month (Maguire & Kinney, 2010).
Openness is a key factor in communicating ones feelings and can be viewed as being comfortable in expressing ones thoughts without judgment from their partner. Openness was associated with six items on a 20-item questionnaire where participants were measured on missing their partner (Le et al., 2010). It was positively correlated with the satisfaction of the relationship (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). In another study, partners were asked what they gained through their experience of being in a LDRR and one of their answers was better communication skills. Not only did their level of communication increase but also, the LDRR helped them resolve problems and let each feel more comfortable in expressing their true feelings (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). It is clear that if the couples want their relationship to be successful, they must have effective communication skills with one another.

Assurance in future plans is another key component that led to more successful relationships. Having assurance in a relationship, the couples are certain of their future or of why they are in the relationship source. Many couples reported this to be a very important characteristic for being successful in their relationship (Le et al., 2010). Maguire conducted research on couples who felt certain with their relationship versus couples who felt uncertain. The participants who were in the certain group, stated assurance helped them significantly more
with their relationship, than those who were uncertain about their relationship. The couples who reported being confident and satisfied with their future had a higher satisfaction rate along with a lower stress rate (Maguire, 2007). Those in LDRR that saw themselves in the future together and living in the same city tended to give more effort into maintaining their relationship than those in PRR (Maguire, 2007). LDRR participants were driven to work with their partner and manage stress by solving problems so that when they became proximal, they were ready (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Both those in LDRR and PRR were asked how likely they were to marry their significant other in the future; 80.3% of LDRR reported they were more likely to marry compared to 62.3% of those in PRR. This leads to the conclusion that couples in LDRR were more likely to have the desire to get married in the future (Stafford & Reske, 1990). The data suggests that successful LDRRs take their relationship seriously and work hard to make sure they have a future with their significant other.

When a couple is unable to see their partner every day, it is important that they keep a positive attitude towards one another. Positivity was associated with 50% of the items on a survey dealing with how much the couple misses each other in their LDRR (Le et al., 2010). When approaching a LDRR with a positive attitude, couples may find themselves learning important life
lessons, such as problem solving. Problem solving was more helpful to those that looked at it in a positive manner, which leads to a more satisfying relationship. When one partner is feeling sad and weak, it helps if the other partner supports them with positivity and encouragement to solve whatever is bothering them (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Another quality positivity initiates is patience, something participants stated as a top three important characteristic learned. LDRR couples learn it takes time to communicate effectively and that they must both be patient with one another's individual issues. Handling problems slowly and carefully is what a lot of PRRs do not practice or learn (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). LDRRs are more satisfied and more in love than PRRs (Stafford & Reske, 1990). This finding suggests that positivity is an important attribute to sustaining the longevity of a LDRR.

Another potential benefit of a LDRR is the amount of time people have for themselves. People stated they were willing to be in a LDRR because they had so much free time on their hands to go towards academics, work, and personal goals, as evidenced in the following example, “I learned how to have a life and a boyfriend at the same time” (Mitzner & Lin, 2005, p.5). Participants in LDRRs tended to test as better students than those in a PRR because of the free time they had to spend on school work (Maguire, 2007). Time management was one of the
characteristics LDRRs stated was a skill they learned in their experience. With more free time, they were able to make their own friends, concentrate on excelling in school, not have to worry about coming home tired from work, and were able to have extra time to relax. Learning how to set up your day in an organized manner to balance out one’s personal life and also fit in time to talk to one’s partner is a very important life lesson. Participants also stated how they learned more about themselves as individuals and how much they were committed to their partner. “We both learned to live our own lives – but still be involved in each other’s” (Mietzner & Lin, 2005, p.7). Being independent and in a relationship is possible, and is an advantage of being in a LDRR.

In order to be confident and successful in any type of relationship, one needs to be able to trust their partner. A LDRR provides an opportunity to see how strong a couple’s commitment is to one another during the separation (Knox et al., 2002). Participants stated that trust was essential to their relationship not only to help them out as a whole, but also to help them out individually. Some of the couples in LDRR stated how they learned more about themselves and became more secure and confident in themselves to make their relationship work (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). “Learning to trust—it made me make sure I knew who I was. (I learned) to trust when you can’t see what is going on” (Mietzner & Lin, p.4).
Some even reported stress as a positive correlation with trust in where the relationship was standing. Missing one’s partner has the potential to help one better understand their individual beliefs about their relationship (Le et al., 2010). Trusting in oneself to be loyal and in one’s partner to be faithful is the perfect equation for a successful LDRR.

Unsuccessful Characteristics

Research suggests that the biggest downfall to a LDRR is loneliness. Separation from a loved one for a period of time can make a partner feel very lonely. Forty percent of participants stated that they believed in the phrase “out of sight, out of mind” after going through a LDRR. Twenty-one and a half percent of participants reported breaking up and 20% said it made their relationship worse after going through the distance (Knox et al., 2002). Being apart from one’s partner was the most frequently identified stressor in both successful relationships and unsuccessful relationships (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). One study even suggests that separation can even cause depression (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). Obviously, when physical distance between two partners is increased, seeing each other becomes a more difficult task. Not being able to see or connect with one’s partner could not only make them feel lonely, but also they will not engage in intimate activity as much as those PRRs.
Even if those in a LDRR think all is well and a bright future is ahead, it just may be an idealization (Stafford & Reske, 1990). Either way, the feeling of loneliness can make a partner weak and vulnerable, leaving the relationship at increased risk.

When loneliness occurs, a natural response is to talk about it to fix the problem. However, if the couple has not learned how to communicate properly or effectively, their relational problems could build up over time. Communication in general is hard for a lot of people. For a LDRR couple, their relationship depends on good communication. If they want their partner to be in their life as much as possible, they are going to want to include them in on as much information, decision making, and goals in each other’s lives. If that does not happen, their relationship may deteriorate (Johnson et al., 2009). Frustration in one’s significant other can arise if they are not communicating effectively about what they want from each other (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Most of the interactions LDRRs go through are done over some sort of electronic device. An email, text messages, or letters are not going to have the same effect on the couple as talking and seeing their partner in person. This is something PRRs have a definite advantage with. LDRRs are limited to the amount of communication between each other every day, and in the mode of communication. When this happens, the closeness could be lost (Stafford & Reske,
Communication is what holds a relationship together. The relationship is in trouble if the partners are lacking in the quality of communicating with one another.

When a couple faces a problem in their LDRR, they may go to fellow LDRR or ex-LDRRs for advice. Because some LDRR couples were more likely to believe in the phrase “out of sight, out of mind” after going through long-distance, they may pass on negative advice (Knox et al., 2002). Negativity can fuel jealousy, dishonesty, increased stress, and uncertainty (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). When uncertainty occurs, couples may lose reason as to why they are in a LDRR to begin with. Soon they may start being uncertain about reuniting in the same city, which is the goal most successful LDRR couples strive to meet. Thirty percent of participants said uncertainty about their relationship caused a lot of stress. It can be a threat to the relationship if either couples or even one of the partners is uncertain about why they are in a LDRR or where it is going (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Uncertainty also creates a communication problem. If partners are unsure about how to handle the feelings of uncertainty, they may want to delay talking to their partner as much as possible (Maguire, 2007). Negativity is a ticking time bomb in a relationship. It can build up a lot of emotions and even create high levels of uncertainty.

If there is a trust issue in the relationship, jealousy
and stress are likely to arise. A number of participants report a high level of stress when dealing with a LDRR. Those who tended to feel less satisfied with their relationship said that stress was what threatened it (Maguire & Kinney, 2005). Most participants had a hard time adjusting to the difference. “Trust became an issue and caused fights…lying was easier to get away with…” (Mietzner & Lin, 2005, p.7). Spending physical time with one’s partner can help the couple assess and see the emotional needs of each other, however when they are apart, conflicts can arise and questions are asked regarding the location and whereabouts of the other partner (Mietzner & Lin, 2005). Feelings of inequity may then arise. Those in LDRRs have reported to be constantly wondering about if their partners are as committed to the relationship as they are, which can cause stress and constant worry (Maguire & Kinney, 2005). A relationship could be just fine, but once jealousy begins and trust is questioned, a relationship may have a hard time progressing.

Critical Review

There were a few issues found in methodological choices for this research. For example, most of the participants were college students from Midwestern colleges. Further research should compare various geographical demographics and assess if it’s a significant variable to be considered. It also would provide more variety in results,
as well as more reliability to the results found. One of the articles included only females (Maguire, 2010). There was no research found that just had a male’s perception on the relationship. A lot of the studies were female dominated, so it would have made the information more valid if there were more male opinions studied was a great source of information and it illuminated a very interesting finding (Mietzner, 2005). When partners were asked what they learned about being in an LDRR, one of their answers was independence. They said they learned how “to live our own lives…” It would be interesting to take a poll of how many LDRR couples believe it to still be classified as a relationship if the individuals are living their own lives. Some may believe it is part of a relationship to be a part of each other’s lives, while of course some may believe it still to be a healthy relationship while on their own at times. It was posed as a positive aspect of LDRRs in the research but the question of relationship quality still remains.

Conclusion

Long-distance romantic relationships tend to have a bad reputation. It is understandable where that reputation comes from. There is a mixture of loneliness, trust issues, and jealousy more prevalent in LDRRs than in PRRs. If the couple lacks good communication skills and fails to deal with uncertainty about where they see the
relationship going, it could be fatal to the couple. However, through all the negativity that failing couples shared about their unsuccessful relationship, there are those who succeed in long-distance and would even do it again. Long-distance can be healthy for the relationship because it can show how much the couples are committed to being together. They can learn to be loyal, trusting, patient, and positive with the relationship. Many of the couples reported learning how to better communicate as well as manage their time. There are life lessons that can be learned from being in a LDRR and lead to a successful relationship, however, it all depends on the characteristics of the couple’s communication patterns.

Reviewed by Dr. Gwen Hullman

References


Notes
Outland
4 Ibid.
6 http://www.reddit.com/r/worldnews/comments/13uf4o/one_challenge_i_have_when_i_speak_about_north/, Accessed November 27, 2012.
8 Robinson, p. 126.
9 Ibid.
10 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/category/disunion/


18 Please note that I have copied and pasted all comments “as is” including typos and spelling errors, only changing double to single quotes within the comments for formatting clarity. All cited links are direct to the specific comments in the thread.

19 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/the-author-of-the-civil-war/?comments#permid=3

20 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/the-author-of-the-civil-war/?comments#permid=12

21 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/the-author-of-the-civil-war/?comments#permid=17


29 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/the-author-of-the-civil-war/?comments#permid=5


31 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/the-author-of-the-civil-war/?comments#permid=16


38 Kalogerakis/Risen email interview, 2012.


45 Robinson, p. 139.

46 Ibid, p. 137.

Hall

2 This can be seen, for example, in the attempts of so-called “third-wave feminists” to make their theories more intersectional (i.e. inclusive of other forms of struggle, such as post-colonial, anti-capitalist, etc.), so as not to reproduce the overt racism and classism of the “second-wave feminism” that dominated a lot of the feminist
politics of 60s-era counter culture movement. For an example of why intersectionality is important, and to see the type of discourse that surrounds intersectional feminism as it’s played out on the internet (a fertile ground for political thought today, as will be seen later in this essay) see: Dzidan, Flavia. “My Feminism Will Be Intersectional, Or It Will Be Bullshit!” Tiger Beatdown. Wordpress, 10 10 2011. Web. Web. 15 Jan. 2013. <http://tigerbeatdown.com/2011/10/10/my-feminism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit/>.


5 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_Order_(conspiracy_theory)#Illuminati for some basic information on this.

6 Much of what follows is based on speculation and personal experience, due to the difficulty of gaining information about those that use Tumblr: http://hautepop.tumblr.com/post/38101923148/reblogs-and-content-sharing-on-tumblr-a-personal


9 Unlike most blogs, where comments are made ‘subordinate’ to the main post (by using smaller fonts and other tactics), the specific form that Tumblr uses is unique in presenting comments as equal to the original post, and allowing one to make the original post “one’s own”.

10 http://pomocats.tumblr.com and http://this-is-not-native.tumblr.com, respectively


14 I would also include in this list what has come to be called Men's Right's Activists (MRA's). They’re the production of the same sort of logic as the rest of these terms for the most part, though they don’t originate from Tumblr, and thus haven’t been included explicitly here.

15 For a brief overview of the term ‘transgender’ and what it means, see the following: http://www.gaycenter.org/gip/transbasics/whatistrans

16 For a taste of this strangeness, see: http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/otherkin

17 Latour, Bruno. “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?”

18 Ibid. p. 228

19 Ibid. p. 228

20 Ibid. p. 227


22 ‘Flat’ ontologies are those that don’t privilege any entity over another one ontologically. For them, a table has the same ontological properties that a person or a corporation does. It doesn’t claim that those entities are equal in terms of politics though, nor does it claim that the existence of any entity is necessary (as some have claimed). Flat ontologies have become commonplace in the work of the Speculative Realists and the Object-
Oriented Philosophers. Graham Harman, a member of the latter group, has done work to bring Latour into this sphere as well.


25 Ibid. 67.

26 Ibid. 71.

27 Ibid. p. 72

28 Ibid. p. 72. Though Grosz’s account does seem to be somewhat cissexist here in its focus on “both sexes”, she is often willing to address how sexual difference isn’t just a difference between two sexes, but includes a host of differences between intersexual presentations.
Contributors

Ashleigh Angell: “Letters From Paris.” Ashleigh is studying English writing and theatre. She expects to graduate in 2016.

Danielle Cooke: “Cassie” Danielle is majoring in Photography. She expects to graduate in May of 2014.

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Haleigh Hoff: “At the Barre” Haleigh is studying Journalism and advertising. She expects to graduate in December of 2013.

Jessika Hughes: “Material Reality and Theology in Transalantic Discourse” Jessika is majoring in English Literature. She will be graduating Spring 2013.

Lisa Kasum: “Unbroken” Lisa is studying wrutubg,

Michelle Landry: “Hans Bellmer: The Garden of Hide and Seek Art.” Michelle is majoring in Art History. She is graduating in 2013.

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Erin Wohletz: “Center of the Universe” Erin is studying Art. She expects to graduate in 2016.