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PRISM

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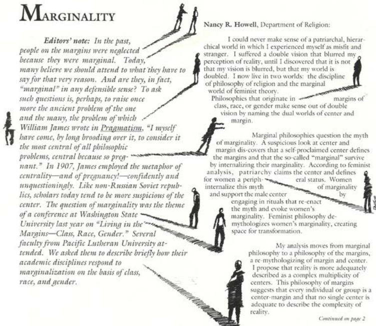
MARGINALITY



Editors' note: *In the past, people on the margins were neglected because they were marginal. Today, many believe we should attend to what they have to say for that very reason. And are they, in fact, "marginal" in any defensible sense? To ask such questions is, perhaps, to raise once more the ancient problem of the one and the many, the problem of which William James wrote in* Pragmatism, *"I myself have come, by long brooding over it, to consider it the most central of all philosophic problems, central because so pregnant." In 1907, James employed the metaphor of centrality—and of pregnancy!—confidently and unquestioningly. Like non-Russian Soviet republics, scholars today tend to be more suspicious of the center. The question of marginality was the theme of a conference at Washington State University last year on "Living in the Margins—Class, Race, Gender." Several faculty from Pacific Lutheran University attended. We asked them to describe briefly how their academic disciplines respond to marginalization on the basis of class, race, and gender.*

Nancy R. Howell, Department of Religion:

I could never make sense of a patriarchal, hierarchical world in which I experienced myself as misfit and stranger. I suffered a double vision that blurred my perception of reality, until I discovered that it is not that my vision is blurred, but that my world is doubled. I now live in two worlds: the discipline of philosophy of religion and the marginal world of feminist theory.

Philosophies that originate in margins of class, race, or gender make sense out of double vision by naming the dual worlds of center and margin.

Marginal philosophies question the myth of marginality. A suspicious look at center and margin dis-covers that a self-proclaimed center defines the margins and that the so-called "marginal" survive by internalizing their marginality. According to feminist analysis, patriarchy claims the center and defines for women a peripheral status. Women internalize this myth of marginality and support the male center by engaging in rituals that re-enact the myth and evoke women's marginality. Feminist philosophy demythologizes women's marginality, creating space for transformation.

My analysis moves from marginal philosophy to a philosophy of the margins, a re-mythologizing of margin and center. I propose that reality is more adequately described as a complex multiplicity of centers. This philosophy of margins suggests that every individual or group is a center-margin and that no single center is adequate to describe the complexity of reality.

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THROUGH THE PRISM

Since the issue of Prism last spring, the Division of Humanities at PLU has seen a major change. We were sorry to learn in May of the resignation of Dean and Professor of Scandanavian Languages, Janet Rasmussen. We congratulate her on her new position as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Nebraska Wesleyan University. As a result of her departure, I was elected by division faculty to fill out the remaining year of Janet's term. I thank my colleagues for their confidence and only hope that I can do the job that Janet performed so well the past five years.

In this issue, the humanities are revealed as directly engaged in controversies about marginality and the influence of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual preference. The humanities are proud to explore in theoretical and practical ways the creative power of multiple human perspectives. Humanists are engaged with these realities and transformed by them. Yet we also grasp for some transcendence of historical particularity—or as Paul Benton says in this issue, for a *pause*. Both dimensions contribute to what I believe to be the great aspiration of the humanities and of liberal education: to understand a variety of ideas and points of view, freeing us for deeper meaning.

Paul T. Menzel, *Dean* ■

Marginality
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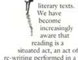
Thomas Campbell, Department of English:

It seems to me that, within English departments, the question of marginality has helped to problematize the central business of the profession, that is, the act of reading.

Issues of marginality force us to face two of the most important questions concerning canon formation: what do we read, and why do we read it? To ask these questions is to expose the Eurocentric, racist, misogynist, and homophobic assumptions that, arguably, have informed the construction of the hierarchical network of privileged texts to which students are introduced and from which they derive their standard of the "literary." At the very least, to scrutinize with Gerald Graff and others the process by which certain texts and figures are installed at the cultural center calls attention to the exclusion of certain marginal groups—indeed, defines them as marginal. Women, the poor, people of color, lesbians and gays all lose the power to control the representations of their lives. Beyond opening the canon to question, it seems to me that another result has been to introduce a clear political element into English studies, and, more important, into English classrooms.

This consciousness of marginality has also given additional force to another question: how do we read literature? It has triggered a demand for and theoretical formulations of the politics of reading and interpreting



literary texts. We have become increasingly aware that reading is a situated act, an act of re-writing performed in a particular context, proceeding from a particular set of values and enacting a particular ideological point of view in the reader. Students and instructors alike are beginning to confront their own racial, class, and gendered subjectivity, recognizing that the classroom is itself a politicized space—a space where systems of thought and cultural values are affirmed, eclipsed, or reproduced. Increasingly, in journals and in the classroom, conflicts about canon, margins and centers, and the politics of reading are being addressed as the *subject* of English studies.

Roberta Brown, Department of Languages:

Traditional undergraduate disciplines are themselves becoming marginalized. And areas once considered borderline are moving to the center. In French literature, for example, the study of women's epistolary works is enjoying wide scholarly appeal. But it is also important to note that advocates of these new areas, many of whom were once marginalized themselves for reasons of race, class, or gender, are refusing to enter a fixed sphere of disciplinary specialization. Instead, they find themselves integrating margins from other disciplines into cutting-edge and ever-transforming centers, which reflect the social and political engagements of their creators.

This new orientation is unsettling the traditional literary canon. An example is found in the once stodgy and implicitly misogynist area of seventeenth-century French literature. Heading the canon list of this disciplinary bastion is Molière, the Woody Allen of his age. Yet several of his most widely known plays, including Les précieuses ridicules, and Les femmes savantes, ridicule women who succeed in becoming a part of intellectual life. And one of the very few women writers included in this canon is Mme de Sévigné, whose insipid and gossipy letters portray an acceptable position for women in the male-centered life at court.

Recognition of such implicit messages leads the teacher to seek works that are not necessarily within the canon of a traditional discipline, and which can, in fact, be of greater relevance to contemporary interpretations of an epoch. Examples include the letters of St. Jeanne de Chantal, a little recognized spiritual leader in early seventeenth century France, or — at the other end of the historical spectrum — Sembene Ousmane's epic French novel of striking black workers on the Dakar-Niger railway. These are works of engagement, works that matter, and works that help disciplinary margins to merge into creative scholarship.

Patricia O'Connell Killen, Department of Religion:

In religious studies, including Biblical studies, theology, church history, and history of religions, I have noticed three intertwined responses to marginalization based on class, race, and gender. First, the margin, as the boundary space of culture, is a place of potential closeness to the divine. As such, it is both dangerous and a source of wisdom and power. Until the modern period, as Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out, religious traditions constructed rituals which moved individuals and groups to the cultural margin in order to put them in touch with the forces of life and death, and then carried them safely back again to the center of culture.

Second, theology holds that the act of using class, race, or gender to marginalize other human beings diminishes them as full members in God's community of creation. This cannot be justified theologically or ethically. Black theologians like James Cone, and feminist theologians like Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza forcefully represent this position.

Third, religious studies is interested in how social location shapes religious experiences and theological expression. Since H. Richard Niebuhr's 1929 classic, The Social Sources of Denominationalism, religious studies has had to face the fact that every theological system privileges some and disprivileges others. Recognizing that every theology is unavoidably ideological, the question becomes how religious communities can relate to their heritage and their social worlds in non-self-deceptive ways. Juan Luis Segundo explores this issue in The Liberation of Theology. Recent studies of how Blacks, Hispanics, women, and other marginalized groups employ both a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of retrieval on the Christian tradition in order to undercut its use to justify their oppression, and to fund their ability to creatively resist that oppression, offer clues to the answer.

Laura Klein, Department of Anthropology:

Is there a positive side to being marginal? James Clifton in Being and Becoming Indian (1989) analyzes the lives of individuals who claimed both Native American and Euro-American ethnicity. Being on the margins of two ways of life propelled these people who know both lifestyles to make creative choices in developing new strategies for living. Anthropologist Malcolm McFee earlier labeled acculturated Blackfeet as "150% men" who were not less for their marginality, but more.

How does this reflect on our understanding of gender? Women in Euro-American culture are marginal in the sense of being defined as distant from the male (read societal) center of power. Areas of the arts, politics, and economics that have been associated with women have been marginalized themselves as crafts, domestic control, and auxiliary economic spheres. Also it is more acceptable for women to learn "men's skills" and live "men's lives" than for men to take on "women's skills and lives." Women know far more about living in the defined male domain than men know about living in the female domain. As anthropologists know, specialization is inherently dangerous in a changing environment and knowledge is potent in times of rapid change.

> To hold power over others means that the powerful is permitted a kind of short-cut through the complexity of human personality. He does not have to enter intuitively into the souls of the powerless, or to hear what they are saying in their many languages, including the language of silence. Colonialism exists by virtue of this short-cut—how else could so few live among so many and understand so little? (Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born)

At the revolution the people who needed to know only one way are the last to understand why it happened and are astounded that it happened to them.

Elizabeth Brusco, Department of Anthropology:

The concept of marginality is in itself marginalizing: we see people as marginal when we look at them from outside, and when we valorize the domains from which they have been excluded. We need always to keep in mind the situated nature of our understandings, and hence the limits on the power of our generalizations.

I see three ways in which the concept of "marginality" has been used to situate the subject matter of anthropology: in social or structural terms, in relation to power, and in the realm of ideas.

The subject matter of cultural anthropology has long been remote, "exotic" peoples, far from the hub of

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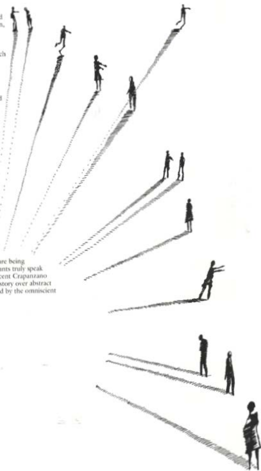
intellectual discourse. The field method of the discipline, participant-observation, aims at approaching an "emic," or insider's view of the culture. When we describe social groups as marginal, we imply a viewpoint from the center, which is, by definition, incompatible with the anthropological approach.

Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Autonomous small-scale societies have been increasingly affected by colonization and neocolonial economic expansion. As we strive to understand how the societies we study are positioned within structures of power extending far beyond the local community, the term "marginalization" is applied. Even this usage is rapidly challenged in anthropological work like James Scott's which details peasant uprisings and resistance, and the complex interplay between informal power and the recognized, formal political structures.

Marginality in the realm of ideas relates to the question, "Who defines reality?" and "Whose reality is silenced, or rendered invisible?" An area of intense interest in anthropology right now is the topic of ethnographic writing. New forms are being proposed which would let our informants truly speak through us. Anthropologists like Vincent Crapanzano prefer first-person narrative and life history over abstract summaries of culture patterns observed by the omniscient ethnographer. ■



THE WOODS ARE LOVELY, DARK AND DEEP: Notes Toward a Defense of the Old New Criticism

Paul Benton,
Department of English

As August rolls around and I once again prepare my American literature syllabus, I find myself pausing over poems I love, letting familiar fragments linger in my mind.

For Occupation— This—
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise—

. . . . . .

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always—

. . . . . .

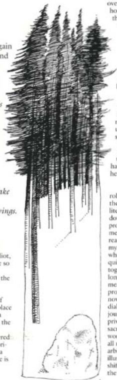
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

. . . . . .

The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

I slowly relish these phrases from Dickinson, Eliot, Stevens, Frost, feeling them bone-deep as they dance so delicately in their rich harmonies of consonants and vowels, watching as their keen images shimmer with the unseen.

But mostly I linger because these qualities of sound and rhythm and imagined sight help hold in place so much to think about. Though beautifully lucid in themselves, most of their meaning is "outside" — in the whole poems they epitomize, in the muse-touched authors whose presence they evoke, in half-remembered moments whose nuances they recollect for me, in horizons they open up as I contemplate the world. It is a wonderful paradox: the interior of each simple phrase is so deep that it enfolds range after range of exterior reference. These fragments magically condense so much in so little, drawing-in to open-out — as the eye draws together the universe, said Whitman, echoing Emerson, who in turn was echoing centuries of mystics and poets. The poem is like a vortex, said Pound, like a whirlpool of language, remembering that the whirlpool is not the water but the "patterned energy made visible by the water" (Kenner, The Pound Era).

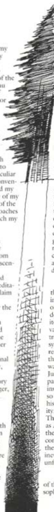


My pleasure in such lingering over fragments is tempered, however, by the sad realization that such moments are not widely shared in contemporary America. My neighbors, like Frost's horse, would probably consider this pausing rather odd. Even some of my students would probably be content to mark such passages as likely suspects for the "identify and comment" section of the final exam. I'm a teacher, of course, and in that role my lament gives me a sense of purpose, even urgency, as I prepare my syllabus. If I do well, I'd like to think, those texts won't be discarded at the end of the term but will be kept close at hand, on the shelf and in the heart, as essential tools for life.

But in another of my roles, as an expert reader, as a theorist of language and literature, I feel a sweaty tingle down my spine: what if other professors consider me sentimental, old-fashioned, even reactionary? I'm thinking not of my colleagues at PLU, with whom it's easy to imagine a quiet evening spent weaving together familiar fragments with long, thoughtful silences. I mean instead the professional professors whose voices I hear now and then in the à la mode dialect of our trend setting journals. To them, I suppose, I privilege the literary text as a sacred object that transcends the world, failing to recognize that all meaning in all texts is equally arbitrary, nothing more than the illusion of stasis in the ever-shifting alignment of pieces in the ubiquitous board game

called "Language." And worse: they'd say I impose my privileged texts as ideological straitjackets, lending my weight (slight as it is) to the crushingly repressive hegemony of white-male-European-Christian-liberal-literate culture while neglecting the central purpose of the discipline of English, which is not, to those who are au courant, to preserve and enrich our understanding of texts, but to provide a platform for social critique — or for an exhilarating bungee dive into the abyss.

Even as I write this mock indictment of myself, however, my defensiveness opens out into a more complex, more ambivalent mood. At one level I find myself half-amused, half-depressed by the chic jargon and the heavy, agglutinative syntax. At another, however, I recall that by pushing on through this muggy verbal mist I've often discovered paths into the complexities of language and culture, into the peculiar fusions of power and decay, insight and blindness, convention and carnival; Derrida and Bakhtin have deepened my lingering, and for that I'm grateful. But on the edge of my gratitude I feel regret that so many of the advocates of the new "Theory" seem to harmonize their various approaches only in a common rejection of the old theory on which my love of texts was first nurtured and is still grounded.



This rejection sometimes takes the form of a casual debunking of the old "New Critics" as priestly pedagogues who deliberately isolated literary texts from their historical contexts, bestowing on them the transcendent universality of sacred icons. The charge is not wholly unwarranted, of course; the lingering I learned from the New Critics does have a trans-historical, meditative quality. But in its usual unexamined form, the claim that the New Critics evaded history is a misleading distortion that impoverishes the act of reading under the guise of liberating it. This is, to be sure, only one among the many issues that emerge from the tension between my love of texts and my interest in advanced theory. And it's probably not the deepest crux: at the moment I'd reserve that spot for the question whether language (and hence literature) floats free on the currents of history, blown this way and that by personal whim and vested interests, or whether it is ultimately, somehow, grounded and centered. But perhaps a clarification of the New Critics' attitude toward history will take us a bit closer to comprehension of that larger, deeper issue.

Who were these New Critics, to whose defense I feel myself rising? In terms of personal encounters I think first of those mentors at Whitworth College in the early 1960s whose patient provocation first opened my eyes to the green shade of Marvell's garden, the abyss below Dickinson's pain, the bright wings brooding over Hopkins's dappled world. More objectively, I suppose Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren are at the center of my mental map of the New Criticism, since their introductory literature texts (especially Understanding Poetry) were dominant in American colleges for a couple of decades after the war. In the immediate background are Eliot with his sense of an eternally contemporaneous past and Empson with his exquisite sensitivity to levels of implication, while the periphery is staked out by the agrarian traditionalism of Ransom and Tate in one direction and by the cosmopolitan erudition of Blackmur and Wimsatt and Wellek in another.

This heterogeneous group was held together conceptually by the desire to concentrate on the literary text, treating it as an achievement with inherent value and power rather than as a bit of evidence from which we could draw conclusions about an author, genre, or historical period, or about the power structures of the world — political, economic, ideological. This emphasis on the text-in-itself is of course the origin of the less-than-half-truth that the New Critics were ahistorical. In fact, however, the New Critics resisted not history but two particularly virulent forms of historicism, that is, two critical approaches that subordinated literature to history. Most directly they rejected the sort of academic historicism that encased literary texts in dusty museum displays as illustrations of old conventions or once great ideas. Less overtly but more profoundly they resisted the political historicisms of the Left that commandeered some texts for revolutionary service and dissected others to expose the duplicity and delusions of the oppressor.

What provoked the New Critics was not the historicists' claim that literature and history are inextricably woven together. On the contrary, most of the New Critics were Burkean traditionalists who defended an organic culture deeply rooted in inherited values. Rather they parted company with the various historicisms because they saw the folly of treating literary texts as "nothing but" products or symptoms or tools of historical cultures; against this reductiveness they tried to show how literature pushes through history into the larger context of history, in ways of knowing parallel to those of other disciplines. Just as anthropology and philosophy and theology use particular historical entities (events, customs, ideas, institutions, texts) to illuminate the human condition, so a great poem or novel or drama uses particular historical moments to open a window on our historicity, on the human experience of being in the world. The implicit theory of the New Critics was thus as old as Aristotle and as contemporary as Heidegger; to them the literary work was a function not of history narrowly conceived, but of "Dasein," of our human "being-there" in a world that at once massively precedes us, inevitably encloses us in our finiteness, yet is forever unfolding under the warmth of our resolution and care.

In short, history as a theme was a central concern of the New Critics, though they approached it philosophically, even theologically, rather than through the

historicist methods they considered reductive. Consider, for example, Warren's All the King's Men (1946), a meditative political novel based on the rise and fall of Louisiana's notorious Huey Long. At the end its narrator, the historian-turned-political-hack Jack Burden, glimpses a bit of the intricate web that binds together the personal, the public, and the universal. After evading history, after sinking into it, after failing to control it, Jack finally sees that we are led "out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time." "Out of history into history": the odd phrase suggests that "history" is a multivalent term, referring now to that into which we are thrown, now to that which we shape through our choices and commitments; it is both that which defines us and that which accepts our definitions.

Or take Frost's "Stopping By Woods," probably the most familiar great poem in American English. In an utterly typical New Critical essay of 1954, Warren argued that what seems at first a celebration of nature "may really be a poem about a man defining himself by resisting the pull into nature." (Selected Essays 124) For Warren the poem is not, finally, about nature or beauty or death, but about "the man who is greatly concerned with the flux of things, with the texture of the world, with, even, the dark 'natural' places of man's soul" (125). It's about being human, about being a point of consciousness in and of the world, about being the world's potential for sensitivity as well as courage and concern.

That's what I learned from the New Critics back in my callow youth. Of course I have learned a little bit more in the last thirty years. My vision and language have been shaped by my reading of Heidegger and Steiner, Gadamer and Ricoeur. I've even been influenced by the trends whose excesses I resist. It matters to me now, for example, that Frost's "little horse" momentarily became a "she" at one stage of revision, as if Frost considered (then rejected) associating the animal's simplicity with feminine pragmatism as a contrastive background for the human/masculine capacity for (or vulnerability to) deep contemplation. I also pay more attention to Frost's explanation that he ended the poem with a repeated line in order to escape his recursive rhyme scheme, as if motivated only by a self-imposed language game. I even toy with deconstructing the poem, noticing, for example, that the speaker effectively if unintentionally undercuts his ostensible commitment to "promises" by leaving us readers behind, still mesmerized by "the sweep/ Of easy wind and downy flake."

But all of this deepens and extends the close reading the New Critics taught, further unfolding the poem's wonderful condensation of the complexities of world and self, time and nature, beauty and obligation. And that remains for me the central purpose and value of encountering, again and again, those illuminating and in that sense liberating texts that privilege us, not we them, by being always already there.

We are a consumer society, of course, in the academy as well as at the mall. As scholars and shoppers we acquire stuff in order to use it up or show it off. Some texts we gulp down quickly to pass the time; others we play with, parading our theoretical savvy and dexterity. But I like to think that some texts will always resist our most assiduous exploitation, that despite our pulverizing them in our ever-more-powerful mills of academic theory and political cause, they will emerge again and again to offer us perennial awe and wonder.

Thinking of "God's grandeur," Hopkins wrote that beneath the earth flattened by our heavy plodding "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things." Putting aside Hopkins's theology (that's another issue, for another day), I find his phrase aptly describes the energy I feel in Frost's lovely woods, the woods of his poem, of all great poems. They are dark and deep, but not deadly or detached. They offer not an escape from the journey of history but a pause in which we sense the ungraspable, inextinguishable vitality in which history and its obligations are grounded and contained. ■

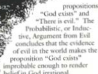
The Problem of Evil: Philosophical Puzzle or Existential Outcry?

James F. Sennett,
Department of Philosophy

The problem of evil is as old as Epicurus and as new as the most recent issues of many philosophical and theological journals. Noted philosopher Alvin Plantinga has called it "the most impressive argument of natural atheology." Theologian Hans Küng has labeled it "the rock of atheism." In short, the problem of evil is the fact that there seems to be a serious conflict between the claim that an all-knowing, all-powerful, morally perfect God exists and the obvious fact that the world contains many instances of suffering, pain, and other kinds of evil. It has seemed virtually undeniable to many throughout history that the existence of God is incompatible with the existence of evil.

While the problem of evil is a venerable philosophical and theological subject, it has received a great deal of renewed attention lately. Much of this attention has come from the so-called "analytic" school of philosophy — that approach concerned with clarifying and solving philosophical problems by explicit analysis of concepts and the logical consequences deriving from them. Theists and atheists alike have applied this philosophical method to the problem of evil with intriguing results. I have spent much of my recent life studying these applications and their results, and have come to two conclusions. First, the analytic evidence is that there is no insurmountable philosophical problem with accepting the existence of both God and evil. Second, this conclusion does very little to solve the real problem of evil.

Philosophers most often present the problem of evil in the form of an argument — the Argument from Evil — with the conclusion that the evil in the world constitutes formidable evidence that God does not exist. The argument has generally taken two forms. The Logical, or Deductive Argument from Evil concludes that there is a logical inconsistency between the propositions "God exists" and "There is evil." The Probabilistic, or Inductive, Argument from Evil concludes that the evidence of evil in the world makes the proposition "God exists" improbable enough to render belief in God irrational.



However, recent work has shown that formulating a workable Argument from Evil, either deductive or inductive, is by no means an easy task. Theistic philosophers of the last generation have articulated well-developed philosophical responses to such arguments. Plantinga, for example has virtually decimated John Mackie's brilliant formulation of the Deductive Argument from Evil. It is widely accepted, even among atheistic philosophers, that this response to Mackie constitutes the final death blow to the Logical Argument, which was thought by many just a generation ago to be an indestructible weapon in the atheological arsenal.

Analytical investigation into an Inductive Argument from Evil is a fairly new enterprise, though there have been some inductive arguments offered recently that possess a great deal of intuitive plausibility. However, Plantinga and other theistic philosophers have also developed surprisingly strong cases against these. And, in my estimation, the current state of the discussion suggests that it is only a matter of time before it becomes apparent that there can be no Inductive Argument from Evil that conclusively settles the question of God's existence. So neither Deductive nor Inductive Arguments from Evil have been able to make explicit what the problem of evil suggests — that if God existed, he would not allow the evil we see all around us. In short, as an analytic tool for atheism, the problem of evil has promised far more than it seems capable of delivering.

Nevertheless, when the analytical dust settles over this issue, there is still a twinge of dissatisfaction. There is the feeling that what has gone on is so much sophistry. All technical tinkering aside, it seems quite clear that the presence of evil is a problem for theism. Certainly anyone who is even remotely aware of the deplorable evil permeating this world will have some sympathy for this response.

Such residual frustration brings to light the distinction between the analytical and the existential problems of evil. The analytical problem is that addressed in the Deductive and Inductive Arguments from Evil: the incongruity that seems to be created by faith in an all-powerful, all-knowing, morally perfect God in a world of great evil. The assessment of this issue I have suggested is that the prima facie problem melts away under analysis, and from the analytical perspective there is no problem ultima facie.

The existential problem of evil, however, is not so easily disposed of. It is a problem that defies attempts at adequate expression in words or arguments. It is a problem that weighs like an albatross on the minds and hearts of all who have witnessed or experienced the evil of which this world's inhabitants are capable and to which they are vulnerable. It is a problem more adequately expressed through tears and anguished cries that through defined terms and rules of inference. It is the angst of Auschwitz, Alzheimer's, and AIDS. And to many the idea of an all-powerful, all-knowing, morally perfect God overseeing a world with such evil is unthinkable. "If there is a God," to recall an infamous word on the subject, "he must be the Devil."

The analytic manipulation of concepts related to the debate has done nothing to remove the burden of suffering or the perplexity of its causes. But this is not the purpose of such endeavors. When the gripping emotional turmoil that is the existential problem of evil is expressed in words, in an attempt to capture the truth behind the experience, it becomes the concern of philosophers. If, on this level, the consternation is revealed to have little rational basis, that hardly serves to relieve the anxiety.

The fact of the matter is that the emotions have a logic of their own. Pain and suffering are very naturally accompanied by sorrow, anxiety, and doubt. If these emotional responses cannot be captured in propositional arguments that meet the logical demands of rational discourse — or even if there is good argument against their conclusions — this does not impugn their justification or diminish their phenomenological force. What it does do is separate out analytic philosophical problems from existential ones.

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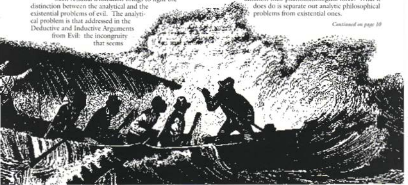

Such existential problems do not require analytical inquiry so much as they do pastoral intervention and loving presence. They call — in a word — for ministry. When experienced or witnessed pain calls forth from us anguish at the senselessness of the suffering, we are not seeking "answers." When "Why?" is uttered through tears, it is seldom a request for explanation, but instead a cry for help. Even if there were an explanation, it would not help. Knowing why does not make the pain go away. It does not heal the hurt. It does not supply what is needed and desired — a loving, caring intervention that points the way to healthy recovery and offers companionship for the dark, threatening journey through grief. When we hurt, we do not want an answer; we want a friend. We do not need a judgment; we need a nonjudgmental companion. We do not require philosophy or theology; we require assurance that the world — our world — is not falling apart.

Why shouldn't we hurt? We, or those we care for, have suffered loss. It is only natural, only logical, to respond to loss with pain. Why shouldn't we be perplexed? We face a situation we deeply fail to understand. Again, a perfectly natural, perfectly logical response. Like any child whose parents make decisions that thwart her wishes, desires, and views of the good, we wonder how God could love us and allow such tragedy. A student of mine wrote recently, "If there is a God, I'm disappointed." Any feeling person can own the pathos in this embittered complaint.

The philosophers may tell us that the prospects for formulating the problem of evil into rational argument are bleak at best. But that does not stop the pain. Nor should it. The emotions indeed have a logic of their own. We delude ourselves by supposing that answers, even very good answers, would ease the pain. And we do ourselves a human disservice when we deride ourselves or others for continuing to hurt after explanations are available. Reason may be satisfied, but pain, grief, and recovery must be given their due. The fact that there is this completely human dimension remaining after the problem of evil has been neutralized analytically cannot be used as ammunition against the soundness of such attacks on the problem. It can only serve to show what has always been known by those who realistically evaluate the parameters of philosophy — it cannot resolve every human dilemma. ■

Recent Humanities Publications

Suzanne Rahn, Department of English

"It Would Be Awful Not to Know Greek": Rediscovering Geoffrey Trease," The Lion and the Unicorn, XIV.1 (1990), 23-52.

Historians of children's literature know Geoffrey Trease for having single-handedly liberated the British historical novel from late Victorian imperialism. In 1930 war was still portrayed as glorious, the aristocracy as the side to root for, and British boys as naturally superior—particularly to foreigners with dark skins. Trease's Marxist interpretation of the Robin Hood legend, Bows Against the Barons (1934), stood the old value system on its head. Its protagonist was a peasant boy, its Robin Hood a revolutionary leading a lower-class uprising against the aristocracy.

But Trease's later—and much better—historical novels deserve as much attention as that unabashed propaganda piece. This article analyzes Trease's growth as a writer, what he drew from childhood experience, and his struggle to reconcile artistic integrity and a commitment to social justice. His later heroes dedicate themselves not only to democracy and humanism, but to their own callings as musician, painter, playwright, or journalist. Adventure leads them to a long lost manuscript, an Athenian drama festival, or the first performance of Romeo and Juliet. Their staunch allies are spirited, intelligent, daring girls with talents and ambitions of their own. "It would be awful not to know Greek!" exclaims Trease's Renaissance girl, Angela. For Trease came to see great art not as "elitist," but as a heritage that everyone—including children—should enjoy. ■

Robert L. Stivers, Department of Religion

"Evangelicals in Transition," *Theological Education*, *XXVII.2 (Spring 1990), 33-50.*

For students who consider themselves religious liberals, being asked to do a study of Conservative Baptists can be daunting. Such was the case when the Association of Theological Schools requested a study of globalization at Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary as part of a larger study of six theological schools. Among moderates in the evangelical tradition amazing things are going on. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy is largely over. Evangelicals are opening themselves to non-literal forms of biblical interpretation and the voices of the marginalized in missionary settings. Traditionally evangelicals have seen missionary work as planting Christianity in new settings. Thinking they were sowing the seeds of a universal Christianity, more often then not they merely transplanted Western, male-dominated trees. That Denver Seminary is participating in the movement for globalization signals a change from imposition to dialogue and even to the championing of indigenous leadership in mission churches. Just as significant, it signals a shift from an exclusive focus on individual salvation to a more balanced perspective which includes a concern for social justice. The chief impediment is the lingering belief that Denver's tradition is still the universal expression of Christianity. ■

Barbara Temple-Thurston,
Department of English

"The Reader as Absentminded Beggar: Recovering South Africa in Ulysses," *James Joyce Quarterly*, *XXVIII.1 (Fall 1990), 247-56.*

James Joyce has clearly been established as a political novelist, yet considerations of his politics stop short of his extensive and consistent references to South African events throughout Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. That critics like Richard Ellmann and Manganiello have missed the significant role played by South African events such as the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) is symptomatic of how these crucial events have disappeared from the modern consciousness. My essay helps to recreate the interpretive community of 1904 so that today's changed audience understands how significantly South African events influenced Joyce's views on politics.

Joyce was clearly interested in and informed about the bitter struggle in South Africa. He avidly read the Irish Times, a newspaper brimming with news of the Boer war; he asked his friend Frank Budgen to send him Conan Doyle's History of the South African War; and he studied in Dublin at a time of frequent pro-Boer rallies. Most significantly, Joyce's obsession with Parnell spurred his interest in South African politics, since Parnell was embroiled in South African issues both during his time in British Parliament and during his fall from power.

Familiarity with South African affairs, then, provided Joyce with multifaceted, varying metaphors for his broader political concerns. His metaphors focus his themes of imperialism/nationalism and the materialism they breed; materialism that leads to discrimination, betrayal, political violence, cheapened sexuality, and lovelessness.

There are direct references to South Africa in eleven of the eighteen episodes of Ulysses, and all of the episodes are linked indirectly to the South African metaphors Joyce establishes. Joyce plants his metaphors carefully, and what may seem incidental allusions early on develop progressively into metaphors of increasing complexity and significance.

A passing reference to the Zulus in the first episode, for example, expands from a comment on British greed to encompass metaphorically Joyce's views on prejudice, racism, and violence. In "Lestrygonians" Joyce aligns the Boer cause with the Irish nationalist cause, yet later expands this metaphor to expose the Irish nationalists as bigots, intolerant of any nation other than their own.

South African allusions are centered in the consciousness of the three main characters: Bloom, Stephen, and Molly. All three reject the violence and intolerance bred by nationalism and imperialism. Joyce moves us from the political arena that Bloom and Stephen inhabit, to the intimate and personal world of Molly, demonstrating that ideologies and material greed destroy personal as well as universal love and humanity. It is through Molly's earthy and vibrant sexual reminiscences of a young Boer War soldier that Joyce affirms his commitment to life. For Joyce, the Anglo-Boer War stands as a reminder of the folly of hate and war, making his affirmation of life and love that much more powerful. ■

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