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# IMPACT: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning. Volume 8, Issue 1, Winter 2019

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*Boston University*

# IMPACT

THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING & LEARNING

er Is the Night  
Last Tycoon  
Great Gatsby



VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1, WINTER 2019

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## ABOUT US

*Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* is a peer-reviewed, biannual online journal that publishes scholarly and creative non-fiction essays about the theory, practice and assessment of interdisciplinary education. *Impact* is produced by the [Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning](https://citl.submittable.com/submit) at Boston University College of General Studies. *Impact* accepts submissions throughout the year and publishes issues in February and July. Please submit your essays for consideration at <https://citl.submittable.com/submit>.

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another issue of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning*. If I had to use one word to describe those of us who work at Boston University's College of General Studies as well as the scholars who contribute to this journal, I would say we are *engaged*. We are engaged with the project of interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and we are engaged with respect to the various ways we encounter our world.

In this issue of *Impact* you will find a humanities scholar deeply engaged with the arcing out of a new territory: the interdisciplinary study of the Grateful Dead. *Impact's* own Christopher Coffman's review essay should be required reading for scholars of popular music, performance studies and history. His review also serves as an important reference for those who aspire to teach a course on the Grateful Dead, as well as for those who wish to write review essays. In this issue we also hear from those who are engaged in teaching people who are incarcerated. Importantly, Stephanie Cage's essay looks to incarcerated people themselves to find out what they think about prison education. Peter Wakefield encourages us to see *The Great Gatsby* anew, in particular in the context of American racism and White supremacy. Wakefield's essay is important too because it had its genesis in [Writing, the State, and the Rise of Neo-Nationalism: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Concerns](#), a conference sponsored by the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning.

Our *Impact* reviewers inform us about everything from the newest scholarship on Shakespeare (hint: it has to do with cognitive science), to inroads into the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning, and to teaching traumatized students. Our final reviewer examines a book destined to be a significant contribution to or even a forerunner in studies of the intellectual and personal development of graduate students. One doesn't need to be especially engaged with the world to teach and learn in an interdisciplinary fashion, but as our winter 2019 contributors make clear, it sure does help!

Best,  
Megan

Megan Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS

**Stephanie Cage** is the associate director for the Lynne and Henry Turley Memphis Center at Rhodes College, where she oversees and evaluates the development of student fellowships and experiential learning opportunities in Memphis. She also teaches in the Urban Studies department at Rhodes College. As a native of Memphis, Tennessee, she completed her doctoral studies at the University of Memphis in Higher and Adult Education. She also holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management and a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from the University of Memphis. Her research interests include engaged learning, enrollment services, leadership, mass incarceration, and student success and retention. Her recent work focuses on incarcerated students' learning experiences.

**Christopher K. Coffman**, a senior lecturer in humanities at Boston University, serves as the book reviews editor for *Impact*. He is co-editor of *Framing Films: Critical Perspectives on Film History* (Kendall / Hunt, 2009) and *William T. Vollmann: A Critical Companion* (U Delaware, 2015). His latest book, *Rewriting Early America: The Prenatal Past in Postmodern Literature*, was published by Lehigh University Press in 2018.

**Harmony Jankowski** is a writer and editor for the Pervasive Technology Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington. She received her PhD in English language and literature from IU in 2014, where she taught courses in literature, composition, and dance studies. Recently, her essays have appeared in *Women and Performance* and *A Scattering Time: How Modernism Met Midwestern Culture*.

**Melissa Morrissey** is an Illinois Teacher of the Year Finalist. She has twenty years' experience teaching special education in settings ranging from self-contained to co-teaching, grades K-12. She is currently a director of special education at Hope Learning Academy.

**Shaun Stiemsma** received his PhD in English literature from the Catholic University of America in 2017. His dissertation explores the hybridity of form in the early modern English history play, and his research focuses on the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as the lyrical poetry of early modern England. He currently teaches composition at CUA, and he has also taught at the US Naval Academy and the University of Maryland-College Park.

**Peter W. Wakefield** has served since 2006 as professor of pedagogy and director of undergraduate studies at Emory University's interdisciplinary Institute for the Liberal Arts (ILA) in Atlanta, Ga. As such, he oversees a nationally recognized undergraduate program that helps students construct individualized interdisciplinary majors and that catalyzes discussions of the liberal arts across all majors. Drawing on his doctoral training in Platonic philosophy, he teaches core interdisciplinary courses, including one on evidence in the humanities that examines F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, whose troubled construction of American identity he articulates in this paper. Coincidentally, Peter was born and raised in Fitzgerald's own home town, St. Paul, Minn.

**Nicholas Wilson** is senior associate for research and evaluation at the Boston University Center for Teaching and Learning, where he runs the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Faculty Learning Community. He holds an EdD in learning technologies and has published original research on technology integration and collaborative learning.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### Latest Announcements

Please refer to CITL's website for our latest announcements: <http://www.bu.edu/cgs/citl/>.

## IMPACT ESSAY COMPETITION

Every December, the editors of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* invite submissions of scholarly and creative non-fiction essays between 1,000 and 5,000 words on any aspect of interdisciplinary teaching or research. The author of the winning essay will receive a \$250 award and publication in *Impact*.

Essays should be readable to a general, educated audience, and they should follow the documentation style most prevalent in the author's disciplinary field. Essays for this contest should be submitted by the first Monday in December to <http://CITL.submittable.com/submit>. See our general submission guidelines in Submittable.

CITL reserves the right to not publish a winner in any given year. Faculty and staff from the College of General Studies are not eligible to submit to this contest.



## ESSAYS

## Diagnosing the American Dream: Trouble in the Vibrations of *The Great Gatsby*

By Peter W. Wakefield, Emory University

Not an earthquake, but currents and vibrations: F. Scott Fitzgerald introduces Jay Gatsby as a seismograph—"[...] there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes thousands of miles away" (Fitzgerald 2). This paper explores those vibrations, finding in Jay Gatsby's geographic registration a diagnosis of tectonic fault lines in the American nation and in an American identity that are inseparable from the land and history of the American continent. My suggestion is that Fitzgerald's novel is disturbed by a darker version of failed American dreams than the usual school analysis of this classic novel dares broach. Specifically, I want to excavate issues of American racism and White supremacy in *The Great Gatsby* and relate these to lynchings and national anti-lynching debates that were contemporaneous to the composition of this novel and especially prominent in New York City, where Fitzgerald either lived or yearned to live during the time he wrote his most famous work.



Fitzgerald himself—vain and ambitious despite his eloquent insights—never articulated a political, let alone a racial, moral to his own story, but I want to argue that his art, as all great art, shook with the troubles of his time. Beneath the veneer of erotic passion, (White) jazz, and drunkenness, the corrupting politics of nostalgia drive *The Great Gatsby*. This nostalgia is specific: it pines for an impossibly un-racialized past, for an imagined European source, for an enchanted American cultural epicenter. The novel laughs defiantly at protagonist Tom Buchanan's pathetic and now too-familiar bloat, crude wealth, and social recklessness. In the portrayal of Tom we can find a caution for unrestrained American nationalism. But the novel's solutions to deep American traumas are more elusive. I end by hinting at two paths I find in *Gatsby*: first, an embrace of embodied limitations (in other words, an ever-hopeful love of an imperfect person); and, second, the constitution of a subtler public through literature itself.

The present-day White Bear Yacht Club, where Fitzgerald began work on *Gatsby* in 1922. Courtesy of Peter W. Wakefield

### Textual Tremors

I want to go socially and historically deeper into this novel than the interpretation that my students bring to the text from high school English, where this novel has, since the early 1960's, been part of the American canon. Let me capture their pat reading in five sentences, simultaneously recapping the novel for those of you who, yourselves, may have last read it in high school. First, it's about the green light, which symbolizes Jay Gatsby's obsessive love for Daisy and, by extension, symbolizes the American Dream. Airy, enticing, Daisy met Jay as a young enlisted man in Louisville, Kentucky, days before his departure for WWI, and something magical and dreamy happened between them. Five years later, Daisy is married to Tom Buchanan, whose sweltering commuter train takes him to "some woman in New York" (Fitzgerald 15), and regularly stops next to a vast valley of ashes. Gatsby's plan for winning Daisy back has been to get wildly rich (illegally, but whatever), in hopes to dazzle Daisy with Jazz-Age parties in his frosting-on-top mansion. But Gatsby's low-class roots tragically catch up with him and he is shot after a gory car accident. The famous eye glasses of a certain Dr. Eckleburg, representing God, gaze out from a billboard over the valley of ashes. In the end, Daisy picks Tom. (Okay, so that's seven sentences, but the last one is very short.)

While my students' standard interpretation mentions class immobility, it leaves out arguably more crucial issues for the American nation: namely, racial violence, immigration, sexism, and the cultural implications of

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

war—both civil and international. Near the beginning of Chapter 4, Gatsby takes narrator Nick Carraway on an automobile ride into the city. The scene is brief and easily glossed as an ornate narrative device that establishes hints of both Jay Gatsby's biography and of the shadiness of his story (and of Nick's narrative). Gatsby tells Nick about family money: "I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West—all dead now" (65). Nick asks *where* in the Middle West? Gatsby doesn't miss a beat: "San Francisco," he says. Gatsby thus simultaneously stretches his origin story from coast to coast, and impugns his own imagined geography. Narratively, the drive ends when Nick and Gatsby cross the Queensboro bridge to New York City, described with extravagant enchantment:

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. (68)

But this scene is not just about the modernity and magic of New York. Looking closer, we find salient, sharp contrasts to the "white heaps and sugar lumps" of the city. Fitzgerald, on the one hand, looks to the preceding century and the American nation's ties to foundational immigration:

We passed Port Roosevelt, where there was a glimpse of red-belted ocean-going ships, and sped along a cobbled slum lined with the dark, undeserted saloons of the faded-gilt nineteenth-hundreds. (68)

The people of this nation have come across the sea, and their recent past was guilded. On the other hand, Fitzgerald shocks modern readers (and students) by having Nick turn toward his contemporary immigrants with racist slurs of his time:

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blossoms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of south-eastern Europe [...] As we crossed Blackwell's Island, a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

"Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge," I thought; "anything at all...."  
Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder. (68-69)

To look past the dream of Gatsby, embodied in that last line, the threats to the American nation in this passage are embodied by tragic-eyed southeastern Europeans (whose "heaped" flowers echo the "white heaps" of New York), and by a carnivalesque role-reversal between Blacks and Whites. Anything can happen given this situation. Gatsby's possibility is the volatile possibility of a racial confrontation, a confrontation that Fitzgerald presciently laid at the heart of American identity in this novel. Though Fitzgerald himself likely embraced the racist slurs we see in his novels, he sensed, like Gatsby's seismograph, the symptoms of the defining social injustice of America.

Scholar and commentator Maureen Corrigan, in her 2014 study of *Gatsby*, insightfully explores the geographic significance of Queens in the early 1920's, roughly the date of Fitzgerald's composition:

These days, Blackwell's Island is called Roosevelt Island, [...] but in Fitzgerald's day it was a sinister place—home to a prison, a charity hospital, a smallpox hospital, and the Women's Lunatic Asylum of New York City. (Corrigan 93)

For Fitzgerald and his narrator, Nick, this island, beneath the Queensboro Bridge and close at hand with the immigrant neighborhoods of Queens, represents the margins that define the dreamy, modern city, and that, as the novel progresses, consume the energy that drives both Gatsby and Tom.

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Beyond this jarring and indigestible passage, I want to argue that racism, social injustice, and white supremacy frame this novel. In chapter one, Tom explodes over the otherwise desperate dinner party, pontificating about a book he has read, "by this man Goddard":

"Well these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at [Daisy] impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."

"We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously towards the fervent sun. [...]

"This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and—" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. (13)

Not only is Tom's violent vehemence played for a menacing laugh in this passage, we also gather, in Tom's astounding hesitation, that Daisy's inclusion in the Nordic category is questionable, at least to the supposedly expert judgement of her own husband. Daisy's dark hair and enticing voice thus become mute markers throughout the novel of questions about racial purity, neatly paired with Gatsby's twice-mentioned "tanned" skin. (Note also that *Tom* doesn't use slurs, like "bucks," to refer to black men. Nick's glaring phrases are thus thrown into higher relief.)

Further, chapter two's drunken party, which seethes with marital dissatisfaction, variously pins romantic problems on "kikes" and "Catholics" (Fitzgerald 33-34). After Nick and Gatsby get to lunch in New York in chapter four, we meet Meyer Wolfsheim, whose most distinctive fashion statement—cufflinks made from human molars—reinforces the anti-semitic trope. Amazingly for a novel composed in the early 1920s, Wolfsheim appears again in the novel's final chapter, where we learn that he runs a sham business called "The Swastika Holding Company" (170).

Finally, the climax of the novel's conflict gives the lie to students' easy interpretation that this is a story about romance hindered by differences in wealth and class. In chapter seven, in a stifling room on a steamy day at the Plaza Hotel, Gatsby tries to tell Tom that Daisy never loved him. Tom loses it, and, yes, attacks Gatsby's pink suit and his obscure family origins. But the prologue to Tom's rant reminds us that his rage is also about race: "Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white" (130).

### Vibrations of Fitzgerald's Nation

"When I sing 'Let My People Go,' I can feel sympathetic vibrations from my audience, whatever its nationality. It's no longer just a negro song. It is a symbol of those seeking freedom from the dungeon of fascism." (Paul Robeson, qtd. by Redmond)

My quick survey of *The Great Gatsby* raises the question of what rumblings of race and white nationalism might have been moving Fitzgerald as he composed his novel about the "extraordinary gift for hope" (2) that Gatsby derived from his connections to the American continent. The case I build now is admittedly circumstantial, but draws support from the extraordinary work of Shana Redmond, whose study of Paul Robeson describes a circuit that runs through social movement, artistic expression, national identity, and scientific questioning. Strikingly, given my emphasis on Gatsby's seismographic character, Redmond's suggestion is that *vibration* is the current that completes the circuit she discerns. Social movement, art, identity: These are terms that reflect the relationship between writing and the state, saliently posited by J. W. de Forest's 1868 call for a "Great American Novel."

(Incidentally, it's worth mentioning the work de Forest proposed as "the nearest approach to the desired phenomenon" [de Forest, 28]—i.e. as the closest thing to the great American novel: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—a novel about race if ever there was—a point I return to, below. Note further that I am not attempting to tie

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Fitzgerald's biographical position to any particular character in the novel, rather to explore the experiential backdrop against which Fitzgerald's work as a whole was presented, perhaps as an aspiration to become the Great American Novel that J. W. de Forest (1868) says was hitherto lacking.)

I briefly sketch a landscape of racial action marked by three moments coincidental with the composition of Fitzgerald's greatest novel—namely, the period of summer 1922-April 1925: 1) the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill, positively reported out of U.S. Senate subcommittee in July 1922; 2) a February 1924 rally in New York City supporting the Dyer bill and involving the musically accomplished and decorated 369th regiment, known as the Harlem Hell Fighters; 3) the lead-up to the re-publication, in 1927, of rally-organizer James Weldon Johnson's novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, originally released in 1912, which focuses on the lynching of a black man, and the passing of the main character as white. I submit that precisely these movements around lynching, jazz, and passing registered as inarticulate but prescient vibrations of American national identity in the seismographic record of *The Great Gatsby*.

### 1) Lynching

In mid-July, 1922, Fitzgerald, then 26 years old, in a letter written at the White Bear Yacht Club, Minnesota, makes first mention to Scribner's editor Max Perkins about the start of a new novel that was to become *The Great Gatsby* (Corrigan 106).

This timing coincides with the favorable reporting out of Senate Judiciary Committee of the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill, approved the preceding January by the House. This bill, proposed by Leonidas C. Dyer, Republican representative from Missouri, followed several other 20th century attempts to curb lynching, but was unique in that it provided for federal penalties up to \$5000 against local law enforcement who failed to protect lynching victims. The NAACP was to mount a major campaign to publicize and support the Dyer bill between 1922 and 1924, when it was finally halted by a filibuster in the Senate (NAACP).

On July 22, 1922, the day after the Senate committee approved the bill, fiction author, songwriter, and chief officer of the NAACP James Weldon Johnson published an open letter defending the bill's constitutionality in the *New York Tribune* and *New York Times* (Papers, 11). A mass lynching one month before, June 22, 1922, in Herrin, Illinois, is cited in some articles as influential in the passage out of committee of the Dyer bill. The July 5, 1922 *The Advertiser*, Montgomery, Alabama, ran an editorial that suggests that Illinois would have been forced into bankruptcy, if the Dyer Bill had been in effect, because of the number of crimes in Herrin (Papers).

Lynching, and the movement against lynching was vibrating through the American nation at precisely the time that Fitzgerald began his work on *Gatsby*, the work that would "register earthquakes" from across the continent. New York City was to become the epicenter of this anti-lynching movement. But the questions reverberated across the country. By the end of July 1922, the NAACP archives show editorials from around the country—Indianapolis, Lexington, St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit, etc., analyzing "lies that will be told" when the bill is debated by full Senate (Papers). My suggestion is that Fitzgerald, holed up at his country club outside St. Paul, Minnesota, and constitutionally, constantly projecting himself toward New York City, would have felt the shudders that lynching was causing across the nation.

Lynching, of course, is still causing us to shudder. It is worth noting that in April 2018, the *Montgomery Advertiser* ran a full-page, front-page apology for its early-twentieth-century coverage of lynching, which regularly faulted the victims. The reckoning with the paper's past coincided with the opening in Montgomery of The National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum, which commemorates victims of lynching ("Our Shame").

### 2) WWI and the Jazz Age

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Students learn to classify Fitzgerald as a "Jazz Age" author, a label Fitzgerald himself sometimes adopted. But, as supposedly representative of a term that is meant to convey a modernist anomie and abandon subsequent to the traumas of WWI and prescient of the traumas of the Great Depression that were to follow, *The Great Gatsby* is strikingly casual about both jazz and what narrator Nick Carraway calls "the Great War."

Nick says only that his enjoyment of the "counter-raid" made him "restless" (*Gatsby*, 3). Gatsby, who recognizes Nick from "some wet, gray little villages in France" (*Gatsby*, 47), mentions what must have been a harrowing two-day battle behind enemy lines, but only as a prelude to the proud display of his medal from "Little Montenegro" (*Gatsby*, 66).

The jazz and decadence of the novel, similarly, are superficial and decorative. Chapter three's most celebratory party at Gatsby's mansion features an entirely fictional jazz performance: Vladimir Tostoff's "*Jazz History of the World*" (*Gatsby*, 49). On scant evidence offered by the novel, we have to say that the jazz is performed by and for white people, without any sense of how the "history of the world" related to the formation of jazz as a genre. To understand Fitzgerald's invention of a spurious jazz title, we might compare the fact that Fitzgerald's epigram for *The Great Gatsby*, attributed to Thomas Parke d'Invilliers, is also spurious—part of a running inside joke of inventing pithy quotations among Fitzgerald's literary cronies (Corrigan 79).

To excavate the jazz vibes that Fitzgerald might actually have felt in New York City in the early 1920's, we must come back to race, WWI, and Paul Robeson. The 369th regiment of the U.S. Army was the first American unit ever to receive the *Croix de Guerre*, France's highest honor of wartime valor (*Men of Bronze*). The irony of this fact requires further context. The 369th was recruited as the first black (segregated) regiment in the U.S. army. But recruitment was initially difficult since prospective soldiers rightly feared poor treatment by the army of a racist United States. Hamilton Fish, who would later become a congressman and strong supporter of the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill was a white officer assigned to organize the 369th regiment. Fish early on secured the enlistment of a then-famous jazz orchestra leader, Jim Reese Europe. Subsequently, most of Reese Europe's black jazz orchestra enlisted because they wanted to play with the renowned conductor, and the 369th, among other accomplishments, was known for its jazz playing. Regarding waging of war, however, the U.S. Army gave the regiment wooden broomsticks for weapons and made the black soldiers work as stevedores in France, until the French government integrated them into a French unit. It was then that the 369th, who came to be known as the Harlem Hell Fighters, earned their decorations in Nick Carraway's "Great War."

Now the circuit begins to close. The 369th returned to New York City after WWI to a large parade and much fanfare. Fitzgerald, who himself enlisted to go to WWI, in part because of failing grades at Princeton, could easily have known about the Hellfighters and their jazz, not least because of their high-profile homecoming in Manhattan. Moreover, Hamilton Fish, by then a member of the U.S. Congress, agreed to be a main speaker at the February 10, 1924 rally in support of the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill. James Weldon Johnson appealed to Fish to invite the 369th to jazz up the rally, alongside Paul Robeson himself, who had also agreed to sing there (Papers).

Where was Fitzgerald on February 10, 1924, when he was putting the finishing touches on his manuscript? I have no evidence that he attended the large New York City rally, but biographers have established that Fitzgerald and Zelda lived from September 1922 through early spring 1924 in a cottage at Great Neck, Long Island, commonly taken as the real-world referent of *The Great Gatsby*'s East and West Eggs. My suggestion is that Fitzgerald's fascination with jazz and the City would have somehow registered the vibrations that Robeson refers to explicitly—vibrations of justice in the face of lynching and racism, which touched to the heart of one of the great jazz orchestras of the time.

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Robeson scholar Shana Redmond, expansively capturing the import of Paul Robeson's singing, picks up on the terminology of vibration, and supplies a theoretical framework for the relationship I see between Fitzgerald's composition and the political movements of his day:

The simplest kind of periodic motion is a harmonic motion, suggesting to those of us with ears and minds tuned towards organized noise that the simultaneity of pitches and chords constitutive of harmony are the most common, accessible, and therefore most revolutionary vibrations available. Robeson understood this. Vibration was a key feature in his creation of a movement science, in which he combined his exceptional technique with the new knowledge, new theories, new questions that [...] are generated by social movement collectives. (Redmond)

Like Robeson, Fitzgerald saw his art vibrating, in both a passive and an active, moral sense, with the social and scientific catastrophes of his time.

### 3) James Weldon Johnson's "*Autobiography*"

If James Weldon Johnson's prominent role in a major political rally of 1924 was not enough to raise him to the consciousness of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Johnson's literary fortunes might have been. Anonymously published first in 1912, Johnson's fictional (despite its title) *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* was taken up by Knopf publishers and re-issued in a modern edition of 1927, to which not only Johnson's name was added, but also a Europeanizing "u" in the spelling of "coloured."

Fitzgerald's correspondence of the period (including with Willa Cather, whose short stories were concurrently published by Knopf) conveys how keenly he was courting publishers and modernizing artists in and around New York City, including on Great Neck, where many of them apparently gathered (Corrigan 111). It seems likely that Weldon Johnson's literary success and circulation among publishers in the years prior to the 1927 re-issue of the *Autobiography* would have come to Fitzgerald's attention.

Moreover, while there are no direct parallels between the two works, the overlap of themes between *Gatsby* and the *Autobiography* is striking, especially when viewed through the lens of J.W. Forest's call for a Great American Novel. Like Forest, Johnson's unnamed main character focuses extensively on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, referring to it as a "fair and truthful panorama of slavery" (Johnson 24). One can speculate about the extent to which either James Weldon Johnson or F. Scott Fitzgerald were striving to respond to Forest's call for the defining work of the American nation. But Fitzgerald's attempt to register the vibrations of the nation is explicit, and he likely would have compared himself to others who were attempting the same task.

Again, the geographic sweep of Johnson's novel has much in common with Fitzgerald's. Specifically, Johnson's main character traverses the continent and Europe, in an explicit search for the defining character of the American South and North. Fitzgerald's short story "The Ice Castle," published shortly before *Gatsby*, an echo of Fitzgerald's own experience courting the southern belle who was Zelda, similarly attempts explicitly to encapsulate South and North in its characters. While the North-South divide is not explicit in *Gatsby*, Daisy's hometown of Louisville may supplement the Queensboro bridge scene as coded markers of the nation's race question.

Finally, there is Johnson's salient and well-wrought description of a magical New York City, which irresistibly invites comparison with Fitzgerald's "white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money" (Fitzgerald 68). Here is Johnson:

New York City is the most fatally fascinating thing in America. She sits like a great witch at the gate of the country, showing her alluring white face and hiding her crooked hands and feet under the folds of her wide garments—constantly enticing thousands from far within, and tempting those who come from across the seas to go no farther. (Johnson 48)

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

### Diagnosis of the American Dream

My circumstantial historical case suggests that the national vibrations picked up by Fitzgerald and distilled into a work that even he saw as "the very best I am capable of or even as I feel sometimes, much better than I am capable of" (qtd. in Corrigan 116) integrally involved race, migration, miscegenation, passing, even (implicitly) lynching. In this context, Gatsby's most haunting assertion sounds like a warning: "Can't repeat the past?" [Gatsby] cried incredulously. "Why of course you can" (Fitzgerald 111). I want to read Fitzgerald as darkly diagnosing the dangers of an American identity perennially tempted by a delusional nostalgia. Ambivalently, we are drawn to Gatsby's "extraordinary gift for hope" (2), and shocked by the grim outcome of his attempt to make him and Daisy "great again."

Fitzgerald himself was alternately too vain, ambitious, drunk, and obsessed with Zelda to articulate an easy political solution to America's abiding national and moral predicaments. But he was eloquent enough to shake up his readers. His fertile prose shakes up his readers and demands interpretation. He elicits a conspiracy of readership that recognizes this work as commensurate with a great nation, and, simultaneously, as indicative of the nation's necessary directions for moral justice. *The Great Gatsby* has been validated by public school systems across the U.S., but its greatness transcends what students are taught.

In a crucial passage, Gatsby realizes that he has a Platonic opportunity to transcend the grim, unjust world, to mount "to a secret place above the trees" (Fitzgerald 110). (Are we to think here of another purpose which trees served in the South?) But the condition of his release from "the old warm world" (161) would be renunciation of Daisy. Instead, he chooses to kiss her. "At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete" (111). I want to read Gatsby's embrace as a commitment to the incarnate world, in which, for all the frustrations of our beating "against the current" (180), we must preserve hope, reject illusions of a charmed past, and be attuned to the vibrations of injustice that the ground and the continent convey to us.

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## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### Incarcerated Students' Perceptions of Correctional Education

By Stephanie Cage, Rhodes College

#### Abstract

A qualitative case study was utilized to examine the lived educational experiences of seven incarcerated students through semi-structured interviews. Study findings revealed several barriers to education, ways students were motivated to take correctional education courses, and students' self-reflections.

#### Introduction

Lock him up! This has been America's primary response to social problems such as crime, mental illness, failing education systems, poverty, and racial and economic inequality. Thanks to mandatory minimum sentencing laws, the American criminal justice system has exacerbated social problems by means of incarceration. Mass incarceration is a temporary fix for societal problems, a fix that is beginning to come undone at the seams. If we want to truly tackle social issues, we have to provide more long-term solutions.

As stated by Former South African President, Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world..." (Mandela, 2003, para. 18). Education is significant in reducing poverty, helping people to maintain gainful employment and become more productive in society. Intelligence and aptitude for prosperity is directly dependent on the education of the population. Without ongoing learning, people can stagnate.

Research indicates that people who are incarcerated are less educated than the general population on average (Harlow, 2003; The United States Department of Education [DOE], 2009). Furthermore, most people in prison were unemployed or underemployed prior to incarceration (DOE, 2009). In addition to low educational attainment, incarcerated people often lack career related skills and a steady work history. The lack of education and job skills is significant because projections indicate that 95% of people imprisoned in the United States will eventually be released (DOE, 2009). Most jobs in the workforce now require (or at least prefer) some level of postsecondary education. Research indicates that incarceration has the ability to weaken an individual's aptitude for achieving gainful employment (DOE, 2009). Due to the lack of education and training, many people released from prison relapse into criminal activity. The constant cycle of being in and out of prison makes it difficult for the people to acquire meaningful education and work experience.

Correctional education programs offer a long-term solution toward yielding more educated citizens and lowering recidivism rates. Correctional education programs help to assist people in prison with finding gainful employment post-release, circumventing re-incarceration, and addressing issues of prison overcrowding caused by mandatory sentencing policies. While mounting research exists on the external impact of correctional education such as lowered crime and recidivism rates, there is a growing need for more research on the intrinsic impact of correctional education programs (Hall & Killackey, 2008; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006).

As a marginalized population, incarcerated students' voices are often unheard. I conducted a study with the primary purpose of hearing those silenced voices. In traditional adult education settings, direct student feedback is often used to improve institutional practices. This practice is less common in correctional education. For special populations such as incarcerated students, there is a limited amount of data which reports students' perceptions about their learning experiences. Incarcerated students have a vested interest in correctional education programs. As direct recipients of the educational programming, they should be able

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

to exercise their voices about the programs. With the rapid growth of the prison population, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the perspective of people who are incarcerated. Seven incarcerated students in Louisiana shared their lived educational experiences in the study. The findings from semi-structured interviews with those incarcerated students are described in this article.

### Background

The United States has alarmingly high incarceration and recidivism rates. Approximately 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the American criminal justice system (Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Many of those incarcerated are younger Black and Hispanic males (Edwards & LeBlanc, 2017; The United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). An overwhelming increase in prison expenditures and overcrowding is occurring (Chang, 2012b; Guetzkow & Schoon, 2015; Pew Charitable Trusts, 2011). The state of Louisiana imprisons more people per capita than anywhere else in the world and has been referred to as “the world’s prison capital” (Chang, 2012a). The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (2014) reported that 46% of adults released from prison in Louisiana in 2008 returned to prison within five years of release. With almost half of the Louisiana adult incarcerated population returning to prison, correctional education is a promising strategy.

Limited education and having a criminal record makes it difficult for some formerly incarcerated people to return to society. Re-incarceration rates can partially be attributed to formerly incarcerated people lacking the appropriate skills, knowledge, and training needed to successfully reintegrate into society. While some formerly incarcerated people have managed to successfully reintegrate into society by gaining employment, returning to school, and becoming productive citizens, others will commit new crimes and return to prison or jail. It is estimated that within three years, 40% of those incarcerated adults released from prison are expected to be re-incarcerated (Davis et al., 2013). Correctional education programs aim to reduce recidivism rates by providing people with education and training while in prison. Several studies have shown that rehabilitation programs such as correctional education have a significant impact on not only developing the person incarcerated but also positively impacting society by producing more productive citizens, rather than hindrances (Adams and Benneth, 1994; Jenkins, Steurer, & Pendry, 1995; Karpowitz & Kenner, 2003; Smith & Silverman, 1994; Vacca, 2004; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000).

The purpose of the study was to discover and understand the lived educational experiences of incarcerated students taking HiSET (high school equivalency exam preparation), adult basic education, and vocational courses in Louisiana. This study used qualitative research as a means to “hear silenced voices” and “empower individuals to share their stories” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Since incarcerated persons are essentially cut off from society, they are often treated as insignificant or powerless. This study sought to hear the marginalized voices of incarcerated students. This study aimed to empower incarcerated students to share their untold stories. The study emphasized student perceptions of the correctional education experience based on previous educational attainment, current educational involvement, and future expectations for post-release success. The study aimed to understand why people in prison chose to enroll in courses, the perceived benefits of taking courses while incarcerated, interactions with peers and correctional staff, and future career/employment expectations. By exploring the thoughts, emotions, and perspectives of incarcerated students enrolled in education programs, insight on the dynamic influences of correctional education were revealed.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this study identifies adult learning theories as they relate to the prison environment and correctional education. Since the purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of incarcerated student learning experiences through an individual perspective, the framework focuses on student motivation, learning, and persistence. The study also addresses how the external environment

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

impacts student learning outcomes. The theories presented relate to the impact prison education programs have on students' thoughts, feelings, environment, and motivation; attributes that can lead to positive learning outcomes, improved behavior and lower recidivism rates. Given that the goal of the study was to explore incarcerated student perspectives of their correctional education experience, the theoretical foundation for the study focuses on social learning theory, transformative learning, student integration and persistence, and self-determination theory.

Social learning theory suggests that behavior is learned by observing and mimicking others (Bandura, 1995). The theory also states that learning occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments for certain behaviors. The more a behavior is rewarded, the more likely a person is to exhibit that behavior. Conversely, the more a behavior is punished, the less likely a person is to display that behavior. An examination of incarcerated student educational attainment from the social learning theory standpoint indicates that lower levels of educational attainment exist among people in prison because individuals in their environment also have low levels of educational attainment. The social learning theory approach also implies that the more exposure people in prison have to educational settings, the more likely they are to behave like educated individuals. Self-efficacy is also a major component of Bandura's (1995) social learning theory. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own ability to yield a desired result based on their actions (Bandura, 1995). In an academic setting, self-efficacy can have a positive influence on academic success. However, for incarcerated students lower levels of self-efficacy can exist because of the prison environment and individual education experiences (Allred, et. al., 2013).

According to Jack Mezirow (1997), transformative learning theory is a change process that alters how individuals make meaning of their learning experiences. The process transforms frames of references (Mezirow, 1997). Frames of reference "selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings" (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). Transformative learning theory implies that individual behavior changes based on perception. For incarcerated students, the implication is that their perceptions about their correctional education experiences help to change behavior outcomes. A major element of transformative learning is a disorienting dilemma. A disorienting dilemma is a life event or a series of events that serve as a catalyst for a change in perspective (Mezirow, 1997). The dilemma causes individual reflection of experiences and beliefs. For example, incarceration could be considered a disorienting dilemma that causes challenges for individuals. Correctional education programs offer incarcerated students a deeper understanding of self, an opportunity for discovery, and influences transformative learning.

Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) developed an integration model of student persistence. Tinto proposed that two main factors serve as predictors of student persistence: academic and social integration. Although Tinto's work is based on the persistence of traditional, undergraduate students, studies have indicated that his findings are applicable to other types of students including adult students (Ashar & Skenes, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner (1985) presented a similar model for predicting student persistence for adult students. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model suggests that adult student persistence or departure is based on the following factors: 1) academic variables such as high school GPA, 2) student intent to leave or stay, 3) background and defining variables such as demographics, previous academic performance, and educational goals, and 4) environmental factors outside of institutional control. The models developed by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Bean and Metzner (1985) are suitable for examining incarcerated student integration and persistence as these students have similar experiences. Certain elements of the above mentioned models of student integration and persistence were applicable to the incarcerated students in this study.

Self-determination theory is a motivation theory that addresses goal-directed behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The theory explains that humans have innate psychological needs. Deci and Ryan (2000) note that humans have three basic needs: 1) autonomy, 2) competence, and 3) relatedness. Autonomy is the individual need to have control over choices and actions. Competence is the need to have a sense of mastery or a perception of being adept. Relatedness refers to the need for a sense of belonging through

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

positive relationships. The foundation of the theory is that people are motivated by interests that provide satisfaction of those three basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Self-determination theory is appropriate for examining incarcerated students' motivation for enrolling in correctional education programs. Deci and Ryan (2000) noted that the three basic needs are needed by all humans regardless of culture or background. If these innate psychological needs are not met, negative psychological consequences will result. The theory implies that when incarcerated students have all three basic psychological needs met, they become internally motivated which in turn increases academic performance.

### Methods

A qualitative, case study methodology was employed to study the lived experiences of seven incarcerated students. The primary participants were enrolled in GED, HiSET, and special education programs. Semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection. Students were asked to answer a brief profile questionnaire and a set of 18 open-ended questions related to their motivation to attend classes, educational goals, perspectives of the education program, and expectations post-release. Data was also collected from non-verbal observations, profile questionnaires, prison documents, interviews with correctional education staff and informal conversations. The study was conducted during the fall 2017 semester at a medium security correctional facility in Louisiana. A purposeful sampling procedure was used. Pre-determined inclusion criteria were also used in the study. The criteria for participating in the study were intended to obtain research participants with successful higher or adult education experiences during incarceration. The inclusion criteria for incarcerated student participants were as follows:

- Incarcerated males in Louisiana
- Must have enrolled in one or more courses through the correctional education program
- Must be able to read at a 6th grade level or higher
- Must be 18 years or older
- At least half of the sample must have the possibility of parole

The primary research question for the study was: How do incarcerated students perceive their correctional education experience? Interview questions in this study place emphasis on the lived experiences of people in prison and how their experiences impact educational decisions. Student perceptions about course offerings, classroom environments, and instructors were all taken into account. Lastly, interview questions aimed to gauge student perceptions on how correctional education program experiences translate to post-release success.

### Findings

Three student themes emerged from the data: 1) Barriers to Education, 2) Motivation, and 3) Self-Reflection. The first theme, "Barriers to Education", focuses on issues that hindered students from completing high school prior to incarceration. Students described various obstacles which lead to high school dropout. They described internal and external influences which prevented educational attainment. The second theme, "Motivation", refers to factors that influenced students to join the correctional education program. In addition, students also shared motivational factors that encouraged them to persist in the education program. Factors such as internal motivation and family served as encouragement to attend correctional education courses. The third theme, "Self-reflection", is based on students' thoughts and feelings about their educational experiences. Students critically reflected on their learning experiences from the past, their current experience, and future expectations. Each of the student themes addresses how students make meaning of their correctional education experience.

### Barriers to Education

All student participants lacked a high school diploma upon entry to prison. Participants shared their thoughts on factors that prevented them from achieving educational attainment prior to incarceration. Individual factors

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

related to students' backgrounds prevented them from obtaining a high school diploma prior to incarceration. Students reflected on internal and external factors which contributed to school dropout.

Internal influences included pride, lack of effort, self-doubt, anxiety, shame, and priorities. Participants spoke of these influences. Lou described his experience as an older student returning to adult education. He shared that he was apprehensive about returning to school after being out of school for almost 40 years. Lou recalled his first thoughts when starting the program: "I'm not going to be able to keep up. They gone be writing fast and I'm gone be writing slow." Bob discussed how his lack of effort created a barrier to educational attainment. Bob did not recognize the importance of an education until later in life. When he was younger, his focus was on other things. So, he put little to no effort into his school work. Bob says when he should have been focusing on school, he was: "...worrying about being a bad boy or chasing girls." He mentioned that he was always a "knuckle head" getting in trouble at school, but it was not until he was sent to prison that he realized he needed to get serious about his life direction. Jim indicated that he experienced difficulty with some of the classroom assignments. He recalled being very prideful and reluctant to ask for help. In this statement, he shares how he overcame issues of pride: "Now that I am taking math, I have to really study for it. I have to ask them to help me with it. If I don't apply myself, I'm not going to get it." Don noted that he was not initially motivated to learn. However, he was enthusiastic about receiving a completion certificate. When Don first enrolled in correctional education, he was more focused on the end result of the program as opposed to the required curriculum for completion. Don stated: "Now that I take classes, I try to get something out of it."

External influences primarily included people in the students' immediate environment such as family, friends, and teachers. As an example, some participants mentioned that they started selling drugs because they needed money to support themselves and their families. Drug money was a quick way to provide income for some of the participants. Other participants mentioned falling into the wrong crowd of friends who encouraged negative behaviors. Don stated that most of his friends were into the "drug life" and influenced him to sell drugs. He recalled struggling academically and not receiving support from his teachers. Instead of support, Don stated his teachers would speak negatively to him. He recalled interactions with his teachers in the past: "They (teachers) wasn't doing nothing...telling me I ain't gone be nothing." The combined impact of peer pressure and lack of instructor support ultimately led Don to drop out of high school. Jim also shared his experience with peers from high school. Jim shared that his friends were very supportive, maybe too supportive. Jim was very popular in school and he received a great deal of support from his friends. His friends would actually complete his homework for him. In this example, Jim had a very strong support system. However, it negatively impacted his educational experience because he was not learning important course material which ultimately led to academic failure. One of the primary reasons Lou stopped attending school was to help take care of his sick mother. He described how his mother, a single parent, became extremely ill and had to stop working. Lou dropped out of school when he was just in the eighth grade. He started working at a grocery store to help pay bills at home. As the oldest sibling, he took on a lot of adult responsibilities including being the primary caregiver for his mother and his two younger siblings.

### **Motivation**

Students in this study indicated several motivating factors for enrolling in the correctional education program. They addressed how they have been encouraged during their correctional education experience. Students were self-motivated and also noted being motivated by family, peers, and staff.

Participating in correctional education programs was voluntary at the facility. Attending classes was not a requirement of sentencing for any of the students in this study. Therefore, motivation stemmed from non-mandatory factors. All student participants indicated that they were motivated to participate in correctional education because of a need to improve their current situation. Ace spoke on why he chose to enroll in

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

classes: “I’m trying to better myself. You can’t be a [sic] offender all your life.” Similarly, Jim described his thoughts on why he enrolled in classes: “While I’m in here incarcerated, I’m just saying to myself I’m going to go ahead and get it (diploma)...I want to have this accomplishment. It (school) keeps me out of trouble.” The sentiments of Ace and Jim echoed the sentiments of all other students in this study. In this statement, Bob notes that in order for a person to truly get the most out of the education program, they have to be self-motivated: “You have to want this for yourself. Ain’t nobody gone do it for you.” Since attending class was not part of a mandatory sentencing for the students in this study, self-motivation played an important role.

Family ties had a significant impact on decision making for students in this study. The family member found to have the most influence on student decision making was the mother. Ace described why he was taking classes and will not fall into the trap of reincarceration: “My momma getting too old. I’ll break her heart if I did that again.” Likewise, Bob talked about his delinquent past and disappointing his mother: “I’ve been a mess-up all my life. My mom, she’s getting older and I messed up really big this time, so I want to give her something to be proud of.” Lou’s mother passed away while he was incarcerated. He noted that while she was living she wanted him to finish school so he is going back to school to honor his mother’s wishes. Other family members also had a significant influence on enrollment for students in this study. Pat initially had no intention of going back to school while incarcerated. Conversations with his uncle and cousin during a prison visit helped Pat make the decision to enroll. Both Pat and Lou noted that they also enrolled to set better examples for their grandchildren.

Peer support was influential in motivating students to not only enroll in correctional education classes, but to persist as well. More specifically, peer mentorship was an important component of the program for students. Many of the tutors in the correctional education program are incarcerated. Students reported that having peer-led instruction helped to motivate them and increase their self-esteem. Ken credits peer support for keeping him on track in school. He addresses the peer support from incarcerated tutors in the program: “My tutors, they incarcerated just like me. So if I do get distracted, they gone really tell me man, you messing up right now... they know how to make it to where you can really understand.” In this statement, Pat refers to the comradery amongst his peers: “The guys in class, we all get along good. We keep each other laughing and help out.” Lou, a 53-year old student in the GED program, stated it was his younger classmates who really supported him. Lou was ashamed when he first enrolled in correctional education courses because he was significantly older than all the other students in his class. Lou noted that his younger peers were extremely encouraging and their encouragement made him feel more comfortable participating in class.

Correctional education faculty, staff, and administrators influenced students’ decisions to persist in the correctional education program. Respect, appreciation, and admiration for faculty and administration in the correctional education program at the prison was evident amongst student participants. Bob said that his instructors were “awesome”. As a HiSET graduate, he provided feedback on administration, instructors, and the overall program: “As far as the way they running this place (the education program), they do a great job.” He specifically recalled an instructor who understood the state of incarceration: “He’s (instructor) really in tune with the reality of prison and how we live in here. He basically knows how the whole system runs inside and outside... He’s really genuinely concerned about these guys getting their education.” Don described his relationship with his instructors: “I like my teachers. Everybody loves me.” Don added: “They motivate me. They pressure me into doing better.” In discussing some of his academic challenges in the program, Ken indicated that his instructors were very helpful: “They give me a lot of help, one-on-one help.” Ace admits when he first entered the correctional education program, he did not have a favorable view of his instructors. He discussed one instructor who he felt spoke to students in a condescending manner. Ace said the instructor made negative assumptions about students’ academic abilities. At that time, Ace judged all his instructors based on his interactions with that one instructor. He even considered quitting the program. Now, he has a different perspective of his instructors: “At first I thought they were trying to fail us and treat us like children. But now, I like my teachers.”

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### Self-Reflection

Students were asked to reflect on their educational experiences over the years. They shared their thoughts and feelings regarding their experiences. Students discussed ways in which they matured, had an increase in self-esteem, and established goals for themselves.

Like many people who return to school as adults, the students in this study expressed regret for some of the choices they made earlier in life. The students discussed regret, life lessons, and how they have matured. Ace discussed how through the process of self-actualization, he realized just how far he had come along in the program. In this statement, Ace remarks on how he surprised himself by how much he has learned in the correctional education program: “I just really be surprised by how much stuff I really knew [sic] if I just sit down and do it.” Bob has learned that if he wants to be successful he has to put in the time and effort. In his statement, Bob explains that he had difficulty in school previously due to lack of commitment: “When I was in school back then, I couldn’t understand hardly. I didn’t take the time to learn. Now that I am here I have nothing but time.”

Participating in correctional education helped to boost students’ self-esteem. Ace was astonished to learn how much of the course material he remembered from when he was in school previously. The correctional education experience has caused him to learn more about himself. He’s interested in areas of academic study that he never thought he would be interested in before. Similarly, self-doubt was something that Don struggled with when he first started taking classes. He was unsure if he would be able to successfully complete his school assignments. Don has went from being functionally illiterate to reading every day. Don is now a mentor in a program that is geared towards outreach for young adults.

In addition to attending regular classes in the educational program, two study participants were routinely involved in service learning organizations. Service learning projects help to encourage moral development of students. Both students mentioned thoroughly enjoying the experience of learning outside the classroom. Service learning has the potential to shape the way students view and interpret the world. For example, Lou was having difficulty with his class readings. However, he noted that when he worked with the mission he was able to read and interpret the Bible fine. Lou was better able to connect to the biblical literature because it was something that grasped his interest. He discovered that he was not focusing on the class readings because the subjects did not interest him. He possessed the ability to read, but the desire was not there. In this case, service learning helped Lou make meaning of his reading experiences.

Post-release expectations varied among participants. However, all participants in this study were looking forward to being released from prison and rejoining their families. Immediate goals for all participants included completing their current educational program and being released from prison, but not necessarily in that order. Jim and Lou expected to be paroled within a year from the time the study was conducted. Both students indicated that if they do not complete their education during incarceration, they will sign up for GED/HiSET programs at schools in their respective hometowns. In this statement, Lou describes how he likes school, has become comfortable with learning, and plans to continue school: “If I don’t get my GED here, I’m not gone stop because I got used to getting to going in here.” Five of the study participants indicated that once they complete their current educational program, they were interested in attending college. Four of the five were interested in studying business. More specifically, management and real estate were of interest to participants. Other areas of academic interests included film, architecture, and nursing. Two students were interested in attending vocational school. Welding and brick masonry were the vocational interests.

### Discussion and Implications

The incarcerated students in the study perceived their participation in correctional education as a positive experience overall, though some students admitted to struggling in the beginning. Evidence in the data demonstrated that many of the participants were nervous about going back to school. They were unsure of their academic abilities. Research indicates that adult learners can feel uncertain about their learning

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

experiences in the beginning (Knowles, 1980). Self-efficacy, a component of social learning theory, refers to an individual's belief in themselves (Bandura, 1995). Researchers indicate that incarcerated students can have low levels of self-efficacy due to the nature of the prison environment (Allred, et. al., 2013). Now, students enjoy coming to school and appreciate the opportunity. Participant insights revealed that participation in the correctional education program made students feel good about themselves and their accomplishments. Self-determination theory suggests that people want to feel competent in their abilities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For some participants, attending classes has increased their confidence in their own academic abilities.

Students were thankful for the educational offerings and the opportunity to increase their educational attainment. On average, incarcerated people are less educated than the general population (Davis, et al., 2013). This means that when many incarcerated persons are released from prison, they will attempt to reintegrate into society less educated than their counterparts. Moreover, they will compete for jobs against more educated people without incarceration records. Educational offerings such as those at the institution in the study help to somewhat even the playing field for incarcerated individuals prior to release. Numerous studies suggest that correctional education programs aid in improving employment outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals (Center on Crime, Community, and Culture, 1997; Davis, et al., 2013; Hrabowski & Robbi, 2002; Hull et al., 2000; Jenkins, et al., 1995; Stana, 1993).

The findings illustrate that students perceived the correctional education program as a way to overcome personal and academic obstacles. Attending classes helped to keep students out of trouble. For instance, Don shared that he can now read, and he is no longer selling drugs. Although, there are negative happenings in the prison, the influence of the correctional education program encourages positive behaviors. Research suggests that academic and social integration influence learning outcomes and encourages student persistence (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1995). Social learning theory suggests that individuals are influenced by their environment (Bandura, 1995). Moreover, learning occurs through social interactions and observations of others. It is important to note that based on social learning theory, behaviors can either be positively or negatively influenced. Jim highlights the fact that there are several opportunities for him to become involved in negative happenings at the prison, but he chooses to take part in positive happenings like correctional education instead. Often in a setting like prison, learned behaviors are negative (Bandura, 1995; Allred, et. al., 2013). However, evidence in this study reveals that correctional education influences such as instructor behavior, peer mentorship, and the school environment have positively influenced students in this study. This implies that role modeling in the correctional education environment is important. Correctional education staff should demonstrate role model behaviors as well as pair students up with peer mentors who will set a positive example for students.

Study findings also signified that direct experience with service learning can foster transformative learning. Mezirow (1997) noted that service learning activities highlight the way students make meaning of their experience and can lead to transformative learning experiences. Moreover, self-determination theory suggests that service learning activities satisfy students' basic need to feel a sense of belong (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Correctional education instructors can enhance the learning experience by developing co-curricular activities and academic events outside the classroom that engage students academically and socially.

Planning a course of action is an important phase in the transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1997). Students in this study shared ways in which they plan to proceed after release from prison. Students' career and employment expectations after release varied among participants. Several of the study participants wanted to open their own businesses. Similar to students in this study, results in a previous study by Hall (2006) also found evidence that incarcerated students had aspirations of becoming entrepreneurs. Student participants in this study were interested in opening businesses in the following areas: clothing/shoe stores, a drug addiction support center, and a nighttime entertainment establishment. Other career interests were associated with the following fields of work: auto sales, concert promotion, nursing, public speaking, and real



## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

estate. Some participants were also interested in returning to fields of work in which they had previous experience such as brick masonry, framing houses, welding, and oil rig operation. In addition to career and employment expectations, some students in the study stated they were interested in attending college after release. Some were interested in attending universities while others were interested in trade school.

The incarcerated students in this study were motivated to enroll in the correctional education program in a variety of ways including but not limited to: self-motivation, family, peers, and staff impact. Study results indicated that students were self-motivated. According to self-determination theory, autonomous motivation is going to yield higher performance because motivation is not controlled by outside factors (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory also suggests that people have a need to be autonomous, a need to be skilled at a particular task, and a need for belonging. To improve the incarcerated student performance, educators could incorporate student choice into the classroom such as choice of essay topic. In addition, instructors can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they have learned such as class discussions or presentations. Lastly, creating a collaborative learning environment can help students have a sense of belonging.

### Conclusion

As previous research has suggested, correctional education programs have a demonstrated ability to aid in the rehabilitation of individuals. To better understand why incarcerated student perceptions are important, it is imperative to note how incarcerated student perceptions about correctional education programs relates to the larger picture for society. Student perceptions impact participation. Student participation in correctional educational programs has several benefits and can lead to transformative learning experiences, less prison overcrowding, restoration in families, more money in the United States economy, lower recidivism rates, increased labor force, fewer taxpayer dollars expended and better citizens. It is important for correctional education administrators to consider student perspectives when planning correctional education programs.

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## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### Review Essay: The Birth of an Interdisciplinary Area: Studying the Grateful Dead

By Christopher K. Coffman, Boston University

Connors, Peter. *Cornell '77: The Music, the Myth, and the Magnificence of the Grateful Dead's Concert at Barton Hall*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017. 223 pp. ISBN: 9781501708565.

Jackson, Blair, and David Gans. *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed: An Oral History of the Grateful Dead*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2016. xxiv + 486 pp. ISBN (paper): 9781250098160.

Olsson, Ulf. *Listening for the Secret: The Grateful Dead and the Politics of Improvisation*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. xii + 184 pp. ISBN (paper): 9780520286659.

Studies of popular music are inherently interdisciplinary, opening to simultaneous consideration ethnographic and anthropological concerns related to listeners, endless questions of a musicological nature, literary interpretations of song lyrics, technological matters pertinent to sound production and recording, and economic analyses of sales of recordings and other music industry trends, among many other topics. One nascent area of popular music studies is related to the American rock band the Grateful Dead, whose thirty-year career is especially storied, whose fans are uniquely devoted, and—perhaps most importantly to scholars—whose performances are remarkably well-documented. And, just as the Grateful Dead's performances won them an exceptional place in American popular music, so the study of the band and the culture that surrounded it has steadily matured into its own interdisciplinary field, Grateful Dead studies (see especially, for another perspective on the growth of the field, Nicholas Meriwether's Introduction to *Studying the Dead: The Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus, An Informal History* [Scarecrow, 2013]). Indeed, the birth of this field is an instructive example of how arguments that initially take shape in discrete disciplinary silos converge and cohere into a productive area of interdisciplinary scholarship.

Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the Grateful Dead have from the first been inspired by the band's own unification of diverse perspectives and enterprises, an enthusiastic synthesis that led concert promoter Bill Graham to declare, "They're not the best at what they do, they're the only ones [who] do what they do." As performers, they were remarkably eclectic, bringing several idioms of popular music (blues-based rock and roll, jug band, bluegrass, and folk) together in the context of a dedication to extended improvisation typically encountered only in the world of post-WWII jazz. Contemporary composition contributed its influence as well, in part because erstwhile band member Tom Constanten (and, to a lesser degree, founding member Phil Lesh) studied alongside Steve Reich and under such figures as Luciano Berio, Henri Pousseur, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, and corresponded with La Monte Young. Later pieces incorporated as well elements of disco, country and western, and reggae. On stage, the group was joined at times by a list of figures as catholic as the styles they engaged: Bob Dylan, author Ken Kesey, folk maven Joan Baez, blues singer Etta James, jazz legends like David Murray and Ornette Coleman, rock heroes including Mick Taylor and Bo Diddley, percussion masters Sikiru Adepoyu and Babatunde Olatunji, pop stars such as The Bangles and Huey Lewis—the list could be much extended. This wide-ranging set of influences, educations, and coconspirators resulted in performances that sounded a little bit like everything else, yet remained sui generis; hence, among the more popular slogans for fans' bumper stickers: "There is nothing like a Grateful Dead concert" (albeit that claim had much to do, for many, with elements that extended beyond the music itself).

That the band made improvisation central to its performance, and scorned repetition in set lists, meant that no one Grateful Dead concert was like any other Grateful Dead concert. One consequence was that Grateful Dead fans became invested not only in going to occasional concerts and buying records, but in going to

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every concert and securing recordings of every note played, an impulse that led to the growth of a live-concert taping (and tape-trading) culture, that was at first sub rosa and then, starting in 1984, officially permitted via “taper tickets” issued by the band to recording-gear-laden fans. This practice resulted in the generation of a record of the band’s aural history that remains unequalled in its extent. Too, a travelling community that followed the band from performance space to performance space grew simultaneously, and this nomadic community developed its own vocabulary, economy, and mores. Taken together, these factors allowed for listeners who are especially devoted and knowledgeable (one might say obsessive) about the band and its performance history, disputing minutiae with something of the fervor fans of Wagner might bring to conversations about the Bayreuth Festival if that event had also had its birth in the world of the Merry Prankster’s multi-media, psychedelia-drenched “Acid Tests.”

Furthermore, Graham’s aphorism holds true for the band’s extra-musical identity, as well. Grateful Dead, Inc., was remarkably inventive as a business entity, founding various enterprises, including its own record labels (Grateful Dead Records and Round Records), equipment and instrument design company (Alembic), performance spaces (the Carousel Ballroom), travel agency (Fly by Night), ticketing service, fan club, charity (the Rex Foundation), and publishing company (Ice Nine, a name inspired by Kurt Vonnegut’s *Cat’s Cradle*) as a means of supporting their work as musicians without needing to deal with unwelcome interference from the corporate music industry. In addition, the band members’ work as authors of memoirs, their involvement with film (especially *The Grateful Dead Movie*), their lyricists’ books of original and translated poetry, and their efforts in the visual arts resulted in something that is in some senses, and in spite of the music’s centrality, more fairly understood as an arts collective than as a simple rock band.

More to the point here, the group’s history has long been entwined with the world of higher education. While based in San Francisco, their most lucrative fanbase developed on the East Coast, including especially students at the string of prep schools, colleges, and universities that stretches between DC and New England. Their early national journeys in search of paying gigs essentially defined rock’s college touring circuit, a vein they continued to work until their popularity made many college- and university-sized performance spaces impractical. Along the way their venues included spaces at small colleges like Franklin and Marshall (04/10/71) and larger institutions such as American U (9/30/72), Boston U (11/21/70), Columbia (05/03/68), Cornell (first on 05/08/77), Dartmouth (05/05/78), Lehigh (09/25/81), MIT (first on 05/06/70), Princeton (04/17/71), and Yale (07/31/71). On the west coast, favorite venues included the Greek Theater at UC–Berkeley (first on 10/01/67) and the Frost Amphitheater at Stanford (first on 10/09/82). And, in reviewing the catalogue of appearances, one finds mixed among the musical performances events like the 1971 concert that led to one of the first peer-reviewed publications to mention the group (S. Krippner, C. Honorton, and M. Ullman’s “An experiment in dream telepathy with ‘The Grateful Dead’” [*Journal of the American Society of Psychosomatic Dentistry and Medicine* vol. 20, no. 1 {1973}, pp. 9–17]. The very first article to mention the Grateful Dead in a refereed journal appears to be George R. Gay, Robbie Elsenbaumer, and John A. Newmeyer’s “A Dash of M\*A\*S\*H, The Zep and the Dead: Head to Head” [*Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* vol. 5, no. 2 {1972}, pp. 193–203].) and the 1986 symposium at UC–Berkeley that brought band members Mickey Hart and Jerry Garcia into public conversation with such famed academics as mythographer (and appreciative listener) Joseph Campbell.

Book-length publication on the group began early in their career, with Hank Harrison’s 1973 *The Dead Book: A Social History of the Grateful Dead* (Harrison was a friend of the band, and father of rocker Courtney Love). Academics got more consistently involved as early as 1991, when Hart began publishing volumes co-written with UC–Santa Cruz musicologist Fred Lieberman, and academic publishers especially around the turn of the century, with the release of Robert G. Weiner’s *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead: Critical Writings* (Greenwood, 1999), and *The Grateful Dead Reader*, edited by David G. Dodd and Diana Spaulding (OUP, 2000). Publication of peer-reviewed articles blossomed around the same time, spurred by two journals, *Dead Letters* (2001–2009) and *Dead Studies* (2011–2013, on temporary hiatus as it moves to UC–Santa Cruz and gains an online presence). Activity at scholarly conferences has also been consistent for

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about two decades, and includes not only one-off symposia like those at UMass–Amherst in 2007 and San José State in 2014, but also a long-running presence at the Southwest regional Popular / American Culture Association’s annual meeting so consistently strong that it has become its own sub-entity—the Grateful Dead Scholars’ Caucus.

Additional growth of the aforementioned developments in scholarship on the band was encouraged by the events of 2015, which proved a banner year in terms of wider awareness of the group and of speculation about its import as a musical and cultural phenomenon. Although band members had performed together fairly regularly in various combinations since the death of Garcia in 1995, at which time the “Grateful Dead” moniker was retired, 2015 was marked by five heavily-promoted concerts that were somewhat misleadingly presented in the popular press as not only a fiftieth-anniversary celebration, but also a final reunion. In some senses the presentation of these concerts as the end of something is valid, as they were contractually the last times the “core four” of the six surviving performing members of the band would appear together on the same stage at the same time. However, official promotional materials generally dodged referring to the performing group of 2015 as the “Grateful Dead,” which made claims for a reunion somewhat dubious, and all four of the band members involved have continued to perform, and have done so both solo and together in various two- and three-person combinations, which makes it evident the “Fare Thee Well” concerts were more properly part of the journey, rather than its conclusion. In any case, the excitement among fans and the media coverage generated by these concerts set the stage for increased publication on the group, and this review essay considers first one of the best of the trade books to have appeared roughly concurrently with the resurgence of interest that the fiftieth-anniversary events fomented, Blair Jackson and David Gans’s *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed: An Oral History of the Grateful Dead*.

Jackson and Gans have strong credentials. Jackson penned several books on the band (*Grateful Dead: The Music Never Stopped* [Putnam, 1983], *Garcia: An American Life* [Penguin, 2000], *Grateful Dead Gear* [Backbeat, 2006]), co-produced the band’s compact-disc box set *So Many Roads* (2001), published a weekly blog on the official website (dead.net) for about two years, and wrote about the group extensively as a journalist for the rock music magazine *BAM* and for his own Grateful Dead fanzine, *The Golden Road*. Gans has hosted the nationally-syndicated radio show *The Grateful Dead Hour* for two decades, and has written or edited several books about the band, including *Conversations with the Dead: The Grateful Dead Interview Book* (Da Capo, 2002). Still, one may be inclined to wonder what *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed* can add to our understanding; there are, after all, quite a few histories of the group, including the official *A Long Strange Trip*, by Dennis McNally (Broadway, 2002), and other collections of interviews, like Gans’s own.

From the perspective of the interdisciplinary scholar, *This Is All a Dream We Dreamed* stands out in relation to much of the competition because of the authors’ decisions to reach far beyond the ranks of performing members of the band for material, and to quote directly, rather than to paraphrase, the many figures whose voices contribute to the book. Consequently, readers are offered first-hand insights from office staffers, equipment crewmembers, production company representatives, friends, fans, musicians, and others. Too, each of these quotations is relatively brief, which prevents any one voice or perspective from dominating. In this fashion, the story of the band opens into a conversation that offers a sense of how deeply this music is embedded in wider cultural practices. Some quotes are especially illuminating in this respect, as when manager Rock Scully, commenting on the degree to which the band enjoyed an almost iconographic status even in the 1960s, says of their appearance at the 1969 Woodstock Music and Arts Festival, “they really wanted us there and thought we should be there; even back then we were sort of a mythological, sociological movement rather than a musical one” (131). Given the ongoing interest in the music’s fans as an exemplary case of a late twentieth-century subculture (see, for example, the essays collected in *Deadhead Social Science*, edited by Rebecca G. Adams and Robert Sardiello [AltaMira, 2000]), remarks such as Scully’s are valuable for demonstrating the degree to which a dance band from San Francisco, or more properly Palo Alto, became within a very few years a nationally-famous emblem of a cultural phenomenon that was not at all limited to music. The diversity of voices in Jackson and Gans’s book also has the pleasant effect of enlivening

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the text. Even when histories of the band come in the form of illuminating insider tales, like Phil Lesh's *Searching for the Sound* (Back Bay, 2005) or Bill Kreutzmann's *Deal* (St. Martin's, 2016), readers cannot help but notice the monovocal treatment of what is very much a collective enterprise. For this music, in particular, an effort to harmonize many narrative voices is not only a historiographic method, but also a testament to the musicians' efforts to unify their many voices each time they entered into spaces of collective improvisation.

If Jackson and Gans's book is a model example of how one might compose a history that is at once likely to engage popular audiences and useful to the interdisciplinary researcher, Ulf Olsson's *Listening for the Secret: The Grateful Dead and the Politics of Improvisation* illustrates something else: how aspects of that history can be read as the subject of extended scholarly inquiry. As mentioned above, scholarly presses have been releasing books about the Grateful Dead for almost two decades, but Olsson's book is the first monograph about any aspect of the group issued by a university press, and it is likewise the first volume in the University of California Press's newly-launched Studies in the Grateful Dead series. The University of California is central to Grateful Dead studies in several senses, not least in that UC–Santa Cruz has, since 2008, housed the band's archive (excepting audio and video materials) under the curatorship of Nicholas Meriwether, who also serves as editor for this series. Olsson's book has much to recommend it, but this reviewer wants first to note what is perhaps the major difficulty it poses: as anyone with any knowledge of the band recalls, they adamantly disavowed any interest in or commitment to politics. They were at pains to establish that any causes they supported, with the possible exception of the Black Panthers, were apolitical. Those unfamiliar with the band may expect them to be of a piece with the 1960s left, but they found it tiresome at best, and often downright dangerous. Famed radical Jerry Rubin, for example, sounded to them nearly "fascistic" at points (McNally, *Long Strange Trip*, 179). At the same time, they professed no sympathy for the other end of the political spectrum: in their eyes, Reagan's America appeared "a rabid dog ... biting itself in the leg" (Olsson, 76). Indeed, Garcia repeatedly declared not only the band's distrust of authority, but also their unwillingness to take on the mantle of authority themselves, as when he stated, "Our trip has never been to go out and change the world," and continued with the question, "I mean what would we change it to?" (Olsson, 76). Because they resisted advocating for particular political positions, their social circles, coverage in media outlets, and fanbase were welcoming to all persuasions: one reads of them chatting with Huey P. Newton one day and hanging out with the Bohemian Club the next; likewise, ardent fans can be found at almost any point on the political spectrum, from Ann Coulter to Al Gore. To be fair, there are some exceptions: the sharply critical lyrics of "U. S. Blues," "Ship of Fools," and "Throwing Stones" come to mind, as does the monumental requiem for King Faisal of Egypt, "Blues for Allah." But, such songs are more the exception than the rule, and a book on the band's political identity needs to establish clearly and early how it will proceed given their declared disregard for the overtly political. Unfortunately, this difficulty is one that Olsson does not address until his second chapter, more than a third of the way into the book. The long delay leaves the reader wondering how the band's pronouncements can be reconciled with the intentions of the scholarly text at hand—a discomfort that should be alleviated much earlier.

Aside from this problem, which is basically just one of organization rather than a fundamental conceptual flaw or research error, the volume is strong. Olsson's argument is that the Dead are not at all apolitical, but practitioners of a politics that creates community on terms that are the equivalent of those governing musical improvisation—not entirely directionless or formless, but adaptable, continually renewable, and encouraging to unfamiliar voices. These qualities describe, Olsson contends, both the group and its fans, as a collective and as individual subjects. Consequently, the band's music does not merely articulate cultural conditions, but constructively negotiates, and often resists, the ideological and material dominants of their time. The argument unfolds across three long chapters. The first considers the "dialectic of tradition and avant-garde" in the music (21). While rock is a well-established and relatively limited idiom, the Grateful Dead's incorporation of unstructured or unconventionally structured components deriving from their familiarity with innovations of contemporary composers and the boundary-pushing playing of free jazz artists means that the unaccountably sublime finds a home in their work, in pieces like "Space," "Feedback," and the portions of songs like "Dark Star" and "Playing in the Band" that drift free of harmony and tonality. For Olsson, the tension in the Dead's

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music between the familiar conventions of popular music and the “dislocation and displacement” of free improvisation is a means to preserve opportunities for critique within the framework of mainstream music, paradoxically finding normative terms for staging anti-hegemonic positions that model and suggest the value of an unconventional political position.

Olsson’s second and third chapters look more closely at the nature of these anti-hegemonic positions. After a sensitive and complex consideration of the band in relation to late-twentieth-century drug culture—including not only mainstream culture’s attitudes to drugs, but also commentaries from an array of critical theorists—he proffers a most incisive insight that builds on a passage from Jacques Rancière: the Grateful Dead and the community that surround them translate aesthetic apprehension of freedom and equality into practical terms for social life (72). When turning more directly to the political import of improvisation, he draws heavily on Derek Bailey’s taxonomy of improvisational modes, focusing especially on the critical function of free improvisation. One of the strengths of Olsson’s book is his acknowledgement that later bands who practice advanced improvisation within the rock idiom share much with and can help illuminate the Dead’s work. This recognition allows him to situate his remarks on the value of improvisation within context provided by the always-articulate Kim Gordon (whose former Sonic Youth bandmate, Lee Renaldo, is a professed fan of the Grateful Dead), one of whose assertions cited by Olsson echoes Garcia’s interest in failure as a kind of beauty. Gordon, like Garcia before her, suggests that the presence of the imperfect in an improvised passage speaks to the power of destruction, which sets itself against the conventional in a fashion that threatens the coherence of all wholes, including especially that of the metaphysical subject. Building on these insights from Bailey, Garcia, and Gordon, Olsson argues that improvisation’s aversion to closure necessarily resists commodification: one sells products, not something in development, and, like all radical improvisation, the Grateful Dead’s music (like Sonic Youth’s) remains forever unfinished, self-critical, and outside capitalist production’s temporality of completion and conclusion.

Ultimately, then, Olsson’s argument advances a consideration of how an aesthetic activity proffers itself as a model for the political. As he asserts in his conclusion, this model is one that valorizes diversity and possibility, a politics of “*happening*” rather than one of self-replication (129). In this sense, Olsson’s study is not only an inspiring model of interdisciplinary research in that it brings together the political and aesthetic under the umbrella of critical cultural theory, but also in that he has selected a subject that interrogates itself, refusing, like any good interdisciplinary study, to accept that any one perspective will reveal anything resembling the best understanding.

While Olsson’s book undertakes an inquiry that demands he consider the Grateful Dead’s entire career, Peter Conners’s *Cornell ’77* takes the opposite approach, focusing on the significance of a single performance. On May 8, 1977, the Grateful Dead played a concert in Barton Hall, on the campus of Cornell University. Fan surveys have for many years ranked this among the greatest nights of their career, an assessment that was celebrated by the nation when it was added to the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress in 2012 and by the band when it was released as part of the *Get Shown the Light* box set in 2017 (the *Cornell ’77* book was packaged in the box with the audio recordings, but is also available separately). There are a host of reasons that this show has garnered plaudits, but Conners’s book is not just a collection of encomia. Rather, it supplements praise with a wide-ranging consideration of the performance’s context, demonstrating how one preternaturally good evening can be viewed as a microcosm of the Grateful Dead as a musical unit and cultural phenomenon. In so doing, it demonstrates one of the great virtues of interdisciplinary scholarship: the recognition that multiple approaches can illuminate a single object of study in mutually-reinforcing ways that yield a result greater than the sum of the parts.

After opening with a brief autobiographical narrative, Conners turns in one of his most insightful chapters to the strange presence of the Dead in the musical landscape of 1977. As he explains, their music was certainly not of a piece with the year’s pop pabulum, and it was in many ways the antithesis of punk. Other than punk, the primary underground alternative of the mid-1970s American music scene was disco, which had been



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growing in popularity for several years, but had largely been confined to loft parties in New York City (it would explode into national awareness late in 1977, upon the release of *Saturday Night Fever*). In many ways, the birth of disco was akin to that of the Dead: both subcultures foregrounded the use of psychedelics, made space for alternative lifestyles, and viewed dancing as central to their celebrations. Unlike the Dead, disco would soon go mainstream, in a manner Conners asserts is similar to the “code switching” that disco’s original fans—those marginalized due to sexual orientation or race—needed to practice in order to coexist with the rest of America in the 1970s (18–20). This is a provocative point, and one that the reader of *Cornell ’77* might want explored in more detail. The Grateful Dead would, after all, enjoy massive popular success in the late 1980s, and one wonders what makes their version of underground culture so different from that of disco parties during the early- and mid-1970s. Any listener can hear musical differences, or see contrasts in fans’ dress, speech, and dancing styles, but one feels here the lack of scholarly clarification of more fundamental cultural distinctions. Unfortunately, Conners ends his point without elaboration, simply asserting: “However, the Dead weren’t disco” (20).

In succeeding chapters, Conners looks at a variety of other factors in a more illuminating fashion, including local contexts for the May 8, 1977, concert, from the unusual weather (snow in May) to the shaky relations between the student-run Cornell Concert Commission and the university administration following destructive rioting at a CCC-organized concert by ZZ Top and Deep Purple in 1973. Another interesting section concerns the place the recording of the Cornell ’77 concert had in the collections of many fans. Because the quality of the recording was higher-than-usual and because it was widely disseminated among listeners, it was better known than many other shows that were musically strong but less available. Conners uses this observation as a way into consideration of recordings of the band, by fans and by the band itself. This inquiry allows something of a history lesson, stretching from the earliest days of experimentation with recording equipment to the massive “Wall of Sound” amplification system the band designed and used in 1974, through the performing hiatus of 1975 and the return to the stage of 1976 and 1977. It includes as well a chapter on Betty Cantor-Jackson, the recording engineer whose tapes of the band (the “Betty Boards”) are widely regarded as exceptionally superb recordings of live music, although the history of their preservation is one of nearly scandalous neglect. Yet another chapter summarizes assessments of the Cornell ’77 concert by many of the best-known writers on the band, such as McNally. At the heart of the book are two chapters that offer comment on each song played at the concert, illuminating their histories and particularly notable qualities on May 8, 1977.

For the interdisciplinary researcher, the many components of Conners’s book are collectively a strong example of how any rich object of study profits from examination from a variety of approaches. His synthesis of arguments regarding recording technologies, campus politics, pop-cultural history, and musicological aspects of the Cornell ’77 concert demonstrate not only its importance to the history of a rock band, but also the necessity of considering the way that the performance was shaped by the many contextual elements that have contributed to its legendary status. This broad consideration of so many factors also provides a more general lesson about how one concert can serve as a valid subject for apprehending the constellation of features that shape reception of aesthetic activities in general. In so doing, this book models the manner in which interdisciplinary research can facilitate what Wolfgang Krohn—following Wilhelm Windelband—asserts is a particular strength of interdisciplinarity: its potential to recognize the degree to which the “idiographic component” of an individual case implies certain knowledge at a more general, “nomothetic” level of validity (see Krohn’s “Interdisciplinary Cases and Disciplinary Knowledge: Epistemic Challenges of Interdisciplinary Research” in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* [OUP, 2017]). When taken in hand with the strongest non-academic publications on the Grateful Dead, and with other scholarly publications on the band, such as Olsson’s monograph, *Cornell ’77* serves in a similar but more extensive fashion: readers encounter in these books examples of the growth of interest in a particular subject matter, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the patterns that shape the first steps toward a new field of interdisciplinary inquiry.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Book Review: Booth, Michael. *Shakespeare and Conceptual Blending: Cognition, Creativity, Criticism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 257 pp. ISBN (hardcover): 978-3-319-62186-9.**

By Shaun Stiemsma, the Catholic University of America

Of all the interdisciplinary projects one could imagine undertaking, the union of Shakespeare studies and cognitive science might be one of the most natural. Indeed, critical fascination with Shakespeare's mind predates by centuries the existence of cognitive science as a field of study, so it makes sense not only that cognitive science can help us understand Shakespeare's works better, but also that Shakespeare's works can illuminate the cognitive processes implicit in both the shaping of meaning as a writer and the apprehending of meaning as a reader. Within cognitive science, Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's *conceptual blending*, the analysis of how the mind combines diverse elements to find new insights and fuller meaning, seems almost to be a description of the process of reading literature, so it is a particularly fruitful lens for examining Shakespeare. Michael Booth's *Shakespeare and Conceptual Blending* is, thus, itself a blend, using the insights, terminology, and methods of conceptual blending to explore the works and, to a lesser degree, the creative processes of Shakespeare. His project is ambitious in its aims and scope, covering all the plays—as well as many of the sonnets and other poems—in its three core chapters, all in the interest of pursuing “what is intellectually rewarding in [Shakespeare's] works ... to better understand the workings of thought in general, and vice versa” (230).

Rather than taking an approach that covers Shakespeare sequentially or in terms of specific aspects of conceptual blending, Booth arranges his material by loose designations of plot, wit, and poetry as distinct literary elements that evince conceptual blending in different ways. After an introduction explaining the terminology and framework of conceptual blending, Booth takes on Shakespeare's “stories,” which he rightly identifies as often underappreciated in literary studies other than source analysis. His work in this chapter serves as an engaging review of previous work on Shakespeare's source integration, with a new conceptual framework to consider how the plays' layers function for audiences. Booth's most in-depth analysis in the chapter is an exploration of how *Cymbeline* serves as a blend of all Shakespeare's own earlier blended plots, considering both the links that Shakespeare establishes and the cognitive demands that these make on audiences. Booth's exploration of the plot strands Shakespeare interwove in his plays is rich material, and the chapter should prompt other scholars to explore more deeply how concepts like *frame clash*, in which seemingly irreconcilable plot lines are conjoined, might throw new light on the plotting, audience experience, and dramaturgy of blended plays, such as both parts of *Henry IV*. In his next chapter, on Shakespeare's wit, Booth borrows terms from conceptual blending to provide a nuanced way to appreciate Shakespeare's verbal play in the ironies and malapropisms of his characters. Although dissecting the way a joke works is always a dangerous prospect, Booth's emphases on both verbal and physical humor—the use of objects and the bodily actions of performers—provide useful insights for performers as well as critics interested in how comedy works.

Perhaps Booth's most engaging work comes in his third focal point, which is also his most thorough and longest chapter. Under the heading of poetry, Booth explores the cognitive implications of everything from Shakespeare's use of classical schemes and tropes to the way in which rhyme produces cognitive connections and creates multiple frames of reference within the sonnets. In this chapter, Booth offers some of his most insightful close reading and his most effective blending, applying cognitive terminology to traditional literary terms in order not only to consider *how* literary elements work in the mind but also to provide a complex reading of the text itself. In his thoroughgoing exploration of a short passage from *The Tempest* in which Gonzalo reports with more optimism than honesty on Ferdinand's likely survival of the shipwreck, Booth considers the “richness of figuration” in the short speech. He finds and analyzes personification, hyperbaton, metaphor, paradox, metonymy, catachresis, and epithet, all traditional aspects

## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

of literary study that Booth suggests literature “teachers delight in applying ... with precision” (121). However, Booth insists that such labels are not ends in themselves, so he moves on to explore them as cognitive constructs, providing “a comprehensive account of the mental processes behind figuration” (121). In offering such a powerful and in-depth reading, Booth makes clear the promise of conceptual blending as a means of literary criticism, finding layers of characterization and imagery in the passage that create a whole that is both more complex and compelling than its intricate parts.

Passages such as this in Booth’s book indicate the great power and insight cognitive approaches might offer to literary study, but they also indicate how close his “new” approach to literary analysis using conceptual blending is to traditional literary studies. Booth’s critical emphases show a debt to less Theory-driven critics; in addition to his extensive use of the work of cognitive theorists Fauconnier and Turner, his common references to literary critics are figures like William Empson, Cleanth Brooks, Helen Vendler, and Frank Kermode. Booth is not ignorant of the proximity of his own approach to traditional close reading: he overtly addresses the issue in his concluding chapter. Although he is careful not to alienate historicists and post-structuralists, he claims that applying blend theory to literary criticism might inspire critics “more inclined to discuss metaphor, paradox, ambiguity, imagery etc., with a new confidence in the importance of such phenomena” (230). Although such critics may not feel that they need justification from cognitive theories, Booth’s work does, at least, provide another set of terminology to explore and appreciate the ways in which we process meaning in literary texts.

For all its potential in applying cognitive theory to Shakespeare, Booth’s book is not perfect. Booth occasionally treats the terminology of conceptual blending as its own end rather than using it to find new insight into Shakespeare’s works, and he sometimes errs in apparent uncertainty about whether he is writing a broad survey or a detailed analysis, leaving some sections of the book feeling simultaneously overly long and yet not fully developed. However, it is an engaging read that opens up what promises to be a rich interdisciplinary field not only for analysis by literary critics but also for consideration of cognition and reading as a whole. Thus, in his work in the book, Booth challenges readers and critics “not to exalt Shakespeare’s creativity above the reader’s, but to examine their interdependence” (13). It is this interdependence of author and reader that Booth succeeds in articulating in the work, and it provides an opening for much greater exploration, in Shakespeare studies and beyond.

## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

**Book Review: McKinney, Kathleen, ed. *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in and across the Disciplines*. Indiana University Press, 2013. 268 pages. ISBN (paperback): 9780253006769.**

By Nicholas C. Wilson, Boston University

Kathleen McKinney's edited volume *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in and across the Disciplines* (2013) examines the topic of interdisciplinarity within the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL spans the range of academic disciplines in higher education, and involves investigations of teaching and learning writ large. Undefined by any particular scope, ideology, methodology, or frame of analysis, SoTL invites anyone with a stake in higher education to study the practices of instruction and student learning, utilizing whichever approaches suit their research questions and contexts. This open invitation to reflect on university education helps to position SoTL as an inclusive, community-oriented pursuit, well-suited for interdisciplinary discourse and collaboration. It is fitting, then, that the contributors to this volume approach interdisciplinarity from a wide range of perspectives, with equally wide-ranging assumptions about the nature of teaching, learning, and research.

Yet, it is perhaps in spite of this unlocked gateway that SoTL research has, traditionally, focused on course-, instructor-, or discipline-specific issues. Indeed, different disciplines typically “do” SoTL differently—from experimental interventions to ethnographic descriptions of learning in situ. Many have hoped that the multidisciplinary of SoTL would lead to a “trading zone” (Mills & Huber, 2005) in which educators from all disciplines come to share their findings of effective teaching practice, but the fact remains that the siloization of higher education is just as present in the SoTL community as it is in the academe. This is well represented in the debates over what constitutes rigorous study, inquiry, and even research, found in the SoTL community. McKinney's volume is an exploration into these debates, as well as into the challenges and opportunities that are presented when scholars expand their teaching and learning research across disciplinary boundaries.

The volume consists of thirteen chapters, separated into two parts. Part 1, “SoTL in the Disciplines,” discusses the applicability of various research practices and findings to multiple, cross-disciplinary SoTL contexts. Each chapter in Part 1 is an attempt to expand the SoTL toolbox through reflection on our discipline-centric repertoires of inquiry, and what could be gained by incorporating outside perspectives to our teaching and learning research.

But while the tradition of discipline-centric SoTL has, arguably, made entry into the SoTL community more inclusive and less intimidating for aspiring SoTL scholars, several issues have resulted from this practice. One primary such concern is that despite our varying epistemologies about learning and research traditions, our assumptions often remain unstated in our SoTL work, leaving our findings wide open to critique and misinterpretation. As a result, certain research approaches have enjoyed elevated status, because of their perceived objectivism and generalizability. Research that relies on thick descriptions of context, such as ethnography or literary analysis—despite having strong and established traditions in the social sciences and humanities—have experienced particular difficulty establishing its legitimacy among fields that derive their SoTL methodologies from the natural sciences. For this reason, while SoTL aims to welcome inquiries of all methodologies and traditions, there are some members of the community who recognize the hegemony of particular disciplines in SoTL. McKinney's volume approaches these and other political SoTL issues head on.

In Chapter 1, Nancy Chick argues that dominance of experimentalism and randomized control trials in published (and grant-funded) academic research has led to the privileging of these methodologies in SoTL. According to Chick (and re-emphasized by Poole in Chapter 7), the privilege of the natural sciences is also apparent in SoTL journals, and in the studies presented at SoTL's own flagship conference. Chick argues that

## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

the lack of context-rich research has limited our understanding of “moments of thinking and learning ... and what may be called the student condition” (p.24), and a marginalizing of certain research traditions (e.g., humanities research) that could greatly benefit the field.

The chapter sets a political tone for the book, which few of the remaining chapters pick up so eloquently or passionately. Rather, each of the remaining chapters in Part 1 takes a decidedly less evocative stance towards the notion of interdisciplinarity, focusing instead on specific methodologies or approaches that teachers in alternative disciplines might find useful for improving student learning. While the overarching discussion raises some interesting points about the influence and utility of fields like cognitive science and social psychology (Gurung & Schwartz in Chapter 2), at the end of Part 1, the reader is left with a sense that our discipline-centric history has left the SoTL community somewhat blissfully unaware of decades of research from more established fields of educational research. The studies presented in Chapters 3 through 6 describe studies that span disciplinary traditions, but ultimately only seem to suggest that interdisciplinary SoTL may be a fruitful exercise in professional development, rather than contribute new knowledge to the educational research community.

Part 2, “SoTL across the Disciplines,” focuses less so on the exchange of SoTL methodologies between academic fields, and instead on the challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research. Each of the chapters addresses challenges related to interdisciplinary communication, conflicting epistemologies of learning, and defining the “big picture” of SoTL work. The intent seems to provide the reader with an alternative lens through which to consider interdisciplinarity, but in the end, the result is much the same as Part 1.

In Chapter 7, Poole picks up where Chick left the debate on power and privilege in SoTL. Poole’s chapter, entitled “What is Research,” weaves a philosophical tapestry of the meaning of research, and various practices of inquiry. Poole argues that our conflicting disciplinary ideologies about learning and research are a weakness, and threaten the importance of SoTL “as a movement for constructive change in higher education” (p. 136). Poole, like Chick, challenges the view that research must be generalizable and simplistic, arguing that “learning environments are neither generalizable nor simple” (p. 141).

Taking Poole’s lead, Grauerholz and Main, in Chapter 8, propose four “fallacies of SoTL,” dismantling the notions that (1) classroom-based research can employ control groups, (2) generalizability is possible in SoTL research, (3) popular assessment instruments adequately measure student learning, and (4) certain pedagogical approaches are somehow superior to others. But like in the first part of the book, this is where the evocative nature of Part 2 begins to wane; the remaining chapters, while interesting in their own right, offer a sort of meta-example of interdisciplinary SoTL, showing how mixed approaches and methodologies can be used to study instructional practice. To be sure, the political arguments of Chapters 1, 7, and 8 enliven the text. As the apparent flag bearers of SoTL, in this volume Chick, Poole, Grauerholz, and Main position SoTL as an instrument of educational reform and meaningful change to our experiences of teaching and learning. In these chapters, SoTL finds a home of its own, not as “pseudo-educational research,” but rather as a discipline unto itself, with a clear purpose to disrupt academic inequities in higher education. Perhaps this is the real power of interdisciplinary SoTL—its potential as a movement for reform. If anything, this is precisely what McKinney’s volume does best: reveal the power of SoTL research to change how higher education values teaching and interdisciplinary scholarship.

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## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

**Book Review: Rossen Eric and Robert Hull, editors. *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students: A Guide For School-Based Professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 313 pp. ISBN (paperback): 978-0-19-976652-9.**

By Melissa Morrissey, Hope Learning Academy, Springfield, IL

Professionals who work with children are identifying more and more children who have been affected by trauma. Schools and other social service agencies may feel overwhelmed by the aftereffects of trauma in children's lives. *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students* was designed with the harried educator in mind, the professional who is in need of resources to support traumatized students on a daily basis. The editors, Eric Rossen and Robert Hull, have gathered contributions from professionals in a range of disciplines, including classroom teachers, counselors, school psychologists, facility administrators, doctoral students, and university professors. The book, which is divided into three parts, addresses strategies for students whose life challenges are widely varied, such as homelessness, exposure to domestic violence, death of a loved one, the military deployment of a parent, the incarceration of a parent, and the devastation of natural disasters.

The editors recognize that their book is not a cure-all for every student who is experiencing traumatic stress. Rather, they write that their book is "intended to support and supplement empirically based interventions for traumatized students, for which there are several." Moreover, they hope "to *empower* educators who typically do not have the skills, training, or time in a school day to provide clinically oriented interventions" (p. ix, emphasis in original). The editors have accumulated wide-ranging experiences in a variety of clinical and academic settings. Eric Rossen holds a Ph.D. in School Psychology (University of Florida) and is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and licensed psychologist in Maryland. He has extensive experience working in public schools as well as in private practice. He has taught at both University of Missouri and Prince George's Community College. Robert Hull, EdS, MHS, has spent three decades working with students overseas and in school settings that range from rural to suburban to urban, including those with diverse populations. He has been a special education administrator and state-level administrator of school psychology, and currently teaches graduate courses at the University of Missouri at Columbia.

The first section of the book consists of three chapters that define the parameters of trauma and how it may affect children in a school setting. In Chapter 1, contributor Margaret E. Blaustein, for example, offers a useful "Framework for Intervention" after discussing in detail the prevalence of trauma among school-age children and how trauma can impact learning. She writes, "Despite these significant challenges, it is a tenet of this chapter—and of this text—that the addressing of trauma within school settings is not only feasible but also fully consistent with and supportive of the primary goals of academic programs" (p. 13).

Chapter 2 reviews research pertaining to trauma's impairment of cognition from a neurobiological perspective, and its authors stress the importance of self-care for teachers and others who interact with traumatized children on a daily basis. Ron Hertel and Mona M. Johnson write, "[M]uch like we are instructed to do while flying in a commercial airplane, we must first put our oxygen masks on before we attempt to put them on those for whom we have assumed responsibility. . . . Practicing self-care for educators is not only important; it is vital" (p. 33). Hertel and Johnson then provide a list of specific areas that should be addressed via self-care, including physical, financial, and spiritual.

The second section, by far the longest with 13 chapters, focuses on various sources of trauma in children's lives. Each chapter looks at a specific population of traumatized students, such as immigrant, homeless, neglected, and those who are suffering due to substance-abusing parents, incarcerated parents, deployed parents, the death of a loved one, and students who have been victims of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Each of the chapters in this middle section has essentially the same format, which facilitates easy use. They include a data-rich introduction, developmental considerations, cultural and religious considerations, strategies to support students, a brief conclusion, Web resources, and selected children's literature.

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At the same time, each chapter has subsections that are unique to a discussion of its particular population of students. Chapter 10, for instance, written by Jarena G. Fleischman, speaks to children who are anticipating the death of a loved one, and Fleischman includes subsections on coping strategies at each stage of illness and death. Also, the chapters include a vignette describing a student who is suffering from a specific traumatic situation. In Fleischman's chapter the vignette is a first-person account by a 15-year-old named Alyson who writes about her experiences with bereavement and mourning. Fleischman draws from Allyson's story, "This further supports the importance of not simply assuming a student's behavior is due to an underlying disability, problem with authority, or lack of motivation—instead, educators can benefit from understanding common reactions or signs of distress and using that to determine when to reach out to a student's family" (p. 141).

Other noteworthy highlights from the central section include Lyn Morland, Dina Birman, Burna L. Dunn, Myrna Ann Adkins, and Laura Gardner's discussion of immigrant children (Chapter 4): "A number of children arrive in this country with their education interrupted by war and migration, or who may never have had access to formal education for economic or cultural reasons. . . . These children have the additional burden of needing to make up for lost years of schooling" (p. 56). Another highlight is Dorothy Rohde-Collins's examination of students facing community violence (Chapter 6): "Caregivers also frequently have trouble making sense of the violence and may feel inadequate because they are unable to shelter their children or prevent them from witnessing violence and crime. Caregivers express a lack of trust of outsiders, including police, doctors, social service workers, and teachers, particularly in violent urban communities" (p. 96). And there is Courtney D. Carter's insights regarding children from military families (Chapter 12): "While leniency and understanding are important, it's equally important to maintain high expectations for a student's academic performance. . . . As a result of frequent deployment, the student of a military family may have experienced different curricula across schools, leading to gaps in education" (pp. 178-79).

The final section, with its three chapters, balances well with the opening section as it explores administrative and policy considerations which foster resiliency. In Chapter 17, Joel M. Ristuccia offers advice on creating safe and supportive school settings. He stresses that the effectiveness of a school depends in large part on how well trained the staff is when it comes to trauma-related issues. He encourages a variety of useful topics for staff workshops, and among them are setting limits and clear boundaries, reducing bullying, understanding the link between emotion and behavior, and building on students' strengths (p. 258). Ristuccia concludes, "Schools that are narrowly focused on academic achievement and student behavioral control to achieve safety and order do not provide a safe and supportive school, but instead have created an intolerant school culture" (p. 261).

The final chapter is devoted to equipping students to deal with trauma after they have left the school environment. Specifically, George S. Everly, Jr., and Rachel M. Firestone offer advice for developing resilience. They write, "Resiliency can be described within a three-point continuum: resistance, resiliency, and recovery. Each notion along this continuum is connected with a very specific meaning" (p. 290). They underscore in their conclusion developing resiliency is "a constant and dynamic process and is integral to preventative mental health care. . . . With children who have experienced trauma, we must legitimize the experiences and their effects while continuing to push children forward" (p. 296).

Overall, *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students* is thoughtfully organized, thorough in its scope, visually appealing, and carefully indexed. There is a professional consistency from chapter to chapter even though they have been collected from numerous contributors. The chapters are fully documented with notes and references, and taken together the book provides an impressive bibliography. Rossen and Hull have created a valuable resource for those who work with traumatized students—which is practically everyone in the field of education—and in the process have done a great service for children and young people suffering the devastating effects of trauma.

## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

**Cappello, Mary, James Morrison, and Jean Walton. *Buffalo Trace: A Threefold Vibration*. New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2018. 249 pp. ISBN (paperback): 978-1-947980-16-7.**

By Harmony Jankowski, Indiana University

*Buffalo Trace: A Threefold Vibration* collects memoirs by James Morrison, Jean Walton, and Mary Cappello in which the writers reflect on their shared time in the English graduate program at SUNY Buffalo in the early 1980s. As the writers acknowledge, the program was, at the time, a hotbed of theoretical inquiry, and we see them, as students, at once buzzing and grappling with the influence of this fecund intellectual space. However, as Walton warns, “if you seek in these pages an accurate portrait of the talented and influential professors who taught at SUNY Buffalo in the eighties, you will be disappointed, and maybe even disapproving” (111). *Buffalo Trace* provides, rather, a compelling and deftly woven account of the three scholars’ intellectual development through Morrison’s memories, Walton’s journals, and Cappello’s correspondence with a beloved teacher and colleague. In each memoir, the writer pairs academic work with the work of becoming, allowing textual exegesis to inform and share space with personal and intellectual excavation. The three pieces reflect the various shapes pedagogy takes during one’s graduate education—some expected, others less so—in these honest, humane accounts.

Though all three memoirs trace different ways of seeking out one’s teachers, the first, James Morrison’s “His Masters’ Voice,” engages most overtly with those he found at Buffalo. In vivid, amusing anecdotes, Morrison recounts his search for masters as part of the sometimes-harrowing professionalization process. The section on Morrison’s first semester of teaching hits all the right notes—we see him grappling with imposter syndrome, trying to glean value from his “Intro to Teaching” proseminar, dealing with the smart-aleck student, and eventually recognizing his own expertise—and would be a welcome addition within the kind of proseminar he describes. Teachers also emerge outside the classroom in conversations, at parties, through new forms of queer relationality, and sweetly awkward crushes as he seeks out “something else, something even deeper and yet to be explored that would blend...sensibility, spirit, sexuality...and integrate [his] life” (31). Morrison presents Buffalo, both program and city, as the kind of liminal space in which such integration might occur.

Jean Walton, in “Buffalo Trace,” eschews generic restrictions, throwing off the masters Morrison sought. She opens with a journal entry from 1982 that digs into the psychical thicket of her preoccupations with love, life, and an essay on Proust that she could also send as a letter to her grandmother. In these early pages she asks parenthetically, “what on earth is this wall I keep coming up against” (103), inviting the reader to imagine, or perhaps recall, this raw, but common, feeling. Frequent references to her journals remind the reader that these experiences are filtered through Walton’s thought and language, creating a vibrant affective portrait of a scholar seeking her voice. She notes early on that “something had to crumble, for something else to emerge in its place” (104); Walton’s mode of self-fashioning entails the breaking of the habitual through multiplicity—by allowing herself to shift in and out of identities, intimacies, locales, and historical periods, she makes dust of the wall and “become[s] the I that flows from my pen” (165). The reader meets two “I”s in “Buffalo Trace”—Jean/Jeannie/Djinn of the journals, and the authorial “I” interpreting those journals (the one I met as Professor Walton in the late 1990s). The interplay between the two creates a comforting counterpoint between the earnest worry of the student and the authoritative reassurance of the other “I” that recommends “Buffalo Trace” to anyone considering, in the midst of, or well beyond graduate school.

In “My Secret, Private Errand,” Mary Cappello inhabits the unwavering, confident voice of an experienced writer, one who sees in the past its undeniable value for the present. The memoir splices memories from Cappello’s time in Buffalo with her friend and teacher Marty Pops with passages from one of his cassette-recorded lectures and those from letters and emails they exchanged in the time leading up to Pops’s death in 2011. Cappello reminds, “like you, I have stolen and been robbed repeatedly” (185), an apt metaphor for the lessons students take in and for what is taken in return. In this way, Cappello presences Pops within the text through frequent citation and reminding the reader of the degree to which those whose thoughts intermingle



## BOOK REVIEWS—CONTINUED

with our own are never lost to us.

Though graduate programs offer students countless resources, those resources rarely present the academic labor with such blunt sincerity as one finds in *Buffalo Trace*. As Morrison aptly notes, “To go to grad school was always a kind of bid, a wager that things might actually work out” (29). The fact that the three writers have enjoyed successful careers—Cappello and Walton at University of Rhode Island, and Morrison at Claremont McKenna College—will reassure readers newer to the profession. For readers long-since out of graduate school, it offers the nostalgic pleasure of revisiting one’s earlier self during an intense time of self-discovery. And, for those who teach and advise graduate students, it offers a valuable reminder of how malleable their minds are, how mutable their affections and allegiances—to ideas, projects, and intimacies.

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