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Black, Red, and Gold

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Black, Red, Gold

A Novel

By

Amanda N. Clarke

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Thesis Advisor

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All that is included here are the first two and a half chapters. The full work is available to order in paperback through Amazon as “Black, Red, Gold,” by Amanda N. Clarke.

Abstract

My thesis takes the form of a creative historical/contemporary novel that gives a new perspective on a time often thought of simply as “Nazi Germany,” as well as the culture of Germany in a more modern setting. There are two plotlines that run throughout this work. The first plotline follows Sydney Baumann, a seventeen year old girl from Pendleton, Oregon, and her struggles with culture shock, the struggles of learning a new language, and the changes she makes as a person. The second plotline focuses on the character Audrey Baumann, between the years of 1938 and 1941, as she attempts to escape the NSDAP governed Germany at the start of World War II and the historical events she lives through. Themes present throughout this work include love, rebellion, growing up, and the importance of family. With this novel, I intended to give a new perspective on certain historical events that occurred within Germany and how it affected Germans, as well as inspiring/advocating for more interest in study abroad trips through the novel.

Blurb

In 2014 . . .

Sydney Baumann has suddenly come into possession of many letters. Hundreds of them, yellowed and written in her grandmother's neat cursive, stuffed in the ugly yellow suitcase given to her before she unhappily boards a plane to a country she hardly knows, and away from Victor—the man she loves.

However, when Sydney meets Markos, who looks eerily similar to a mysterious man in an old photograph mixed in with the letters, she is determined to find out just who the man is, and why he was so important to her grandmother.

In 1938 . . .

Sydney's Grandma, Audrey, living in 1930's Germany, is perfectly content with her life—until a sudden series of events leads her to worry about her and her family. Amid the reign of the Nazi party, Audrey's brother Ernest joins the Hitler Youth. As the Nazis begin to control more and more of everyday life, Audrey knows she must do whatever she can to get her family out of Germany before it is too late.

(Excerpt from the novel, *Black, Red, Gold*)

Chapter One: Sydney

August 2014

Pendleton, Oregon

"Wanna smoke?" The gravelly sound of Brooklyn's voice grated against Sydney's ears.

Brooklyn's cigarette hung from between her thin, pale fingers lazily, a light trail of smoke spiraling upward from it. She looked like she'd just emerged from some underground gothic gathering—dressed from head to toe in black, dark mascara, messy black hair, and bright red lipstick.

Sydney's gaze drifted from Brooklyn's pursed lips to Victor.

He was leaning on the wall of the nearby building, his hands sheltering the flame of his lighter as he ignited his cigarette. The fire casted an orange glow on his plaid blue shirt.

While his entire attention wasn't focused on them, Sydney was sure he was listening.

Sydney couldn't quite remember when she'd started to like Victor, but it had been a while. Sure, they'd had classes together in school before he had dropped out, but she didn't start seeing him around town again until she found herself getting into more and more trouble.

When she looked at her parents and found disappointment in their eyes, she had turned to Victor, and every time he'd listened to her as though she were the most important person in the world. She'd felt important, as though nothing could tear them apart.

At least, until Brooklyn came sauntering in to crash their parade several months earlier, complete with tattoos, more piercings than Sydney could count, and the stale smell of bad cigarettes clinging to her clothes.

"Yes," she replied confidently, meeting Brooklyn's mascara rimmed eyes, "I do."

She plucked the smoldering cigarette from between Brooklyn's fingers and pressed it to her own lips. Inhaled. She tried to suppress coughing as the smoke filled her lungs.

Glancing upward, Sydney could see mild interest in Victor's glance—but pure satisfaction in Brooklyn's smirk.

Brooklyn took the cigarette back from Sydney. "Say, Syd, it's been awhile since we've done anything fun." She took a long drag off the cigarette before giving Sydney a large grin. There was no warmth there.

Sydney grabbed for the cigarette in Brooklyn's hands, wishing she would stop calling her by that stupid nickname. Brooklyn's idea of fun usually ended with Brooklyn nowhere to be found, and Sydney getting stuffed into the back of a cop car and by now she knew the local officers by name.

Brooklyn held the cigarette up out of Sydney's reach. "Syd doesn't want to go have any fun?" she gasped in mock horror, "Maybe you'd rather have a sleepover with Becca?"

"No," Sydney disagreed, irritated. Brooklyn might have been Becca's older sister, but she didn't have a right to treat Sydney like she was still seven years old. She found it hard to believe her childhood friend's older sister had changed so much from the sweet, bubbly girl who had used to braid Sydney's hair when she'd spent the night.

She pushed some of her frizzy auburn hair from her face. When she'd grabbed for the cigarette, it had fallen into her eyes.

She had a feeling Victor was watching them argue, but he made no attempt to intervene.

He usually didn't.

"C'mon, Brooklyn," Sydney added as her irritation grew, "stop."

Brooklyn laughed a little before taking another drag off of the smoldering cigarette before knocking the ashes off the end. "Stop? Pshhh, Syd, you're so funny." She turned to Victor momentarily, and Sydney found that his gaze locked on Brooklyn's the moment she turned to face him. "Isn't this cute, Vic? She wants so badly to fit in with the adults."

Sydney frowned. "Fine," she agreed, hiding her irritation behind a thin smile, "Let's go have some fun."

She turned with Brooklyn at her heels, brushed past Victor and hurried towards Main Street, where the mayor's car was parked outside of a restaurant—the perfect target. A few weeks had passed since she'd added some unauthorized décor to the outside of the mayor's home with yellow and white spray paint—he hadn't liked the free paint job, so it was about time Sydney retaliated.

"You ever steal a car?" Sydney asked the older girl. Her strides were long and Brooklyn almost had to run to keep up with her.

"No."

Sydney smiled a little. Although Brooklyn was older than her, Sydney was more willing to risk getting caught—especially to impress Victor.

"Neither have I," Sydney muttered to herself. Her father hadn't let her near one after she'd been arrested trying to hotwire an old Chevelle.

They crossed the street, approaching the mayor's car—the black paint reflecting the yellow glow of the streetlight nearby. Sydney glanced around and found that Victor was following behind them at a distance, cigarette still hanging from his fingers. She was relieved to find they were the only ones on the street. It increased her odds of getting away with this heist.

Sydney approached the side of the mayor's car, careful to stay out of sight as she broke into the passenger's side. She slid in, the door open enough that Brooklyn could see her messing with wires underneath the dashboard.

Sydney clambered into the driver's seat as Brooklyn got in the car beside her. The motor of the car roared to life before them.

Sydney caught the surprised expression of the mayor in the restaurant window.

Her foot searched for the gas pedal and pressed it to the floor. As she swerved down the street with Brooklyn pulling at the wheel to keep her on the road, the mayor ran out from the restaurant, his shouts rippling through the night after them.

Sydney caught a glimpse of Victor in the rearview mirror. He flicked away ashes from the butt of his cigarette before waving at them and receding into the darkness of the alley they'd come from.

As they swayed down the road, somewhere close to the local high school, Brooklyn jerked the wheel to the side sharply to avoid hitting a dog that had run out into the road.

"Brakes! Hit the brakes!" Brooklyn shouted at Sydney, but Sydney couldn't find them as the car veered off into a chain-link fence.

Sydney braced herself, sure the air bags would deploy with the amount of force they'd hit the fence with, but with a few loud, scraping noises and a crack or two to the windshield, the car blew through the fence.

It hurtled down a slope and through a baseball course. Terrified, Sydney kept her hands glued to the wheel of the car. The lights on the dashboard flickered, and the car engine died.

"No!" Sydney hissed, glancing down momentarily at the tangle of wires. "Brooklyn, I need you to—"

Startled by a loud noise, she looked over and found the seat next to her empty. Brooklyn had bailed out when Sydney had needed her most. Typical.

Sydney searched for the brakes once more, but it didn't seem to matter as she smashed into yet another fence. She shielded her face with her hands as the chain link broke through the windshield, sending glass shards everywhere. She felt the sting of pain in her arms and knew she was bleeding.

Not wanting to stick around to find out where the car would take her, she gained enough courage to yank open the car door open. Just as she prepared to jump, the door was ripped off its hinges as the car sped by a tree.

"I'm going to die," Sydney whispered numbly, and noticed the dark, rapid current of the Umatilla River growing closer and closer.

The car plunged into the cold water, and Sydney scrambled from her seat, fighting against the cold and the current as she swam back to shore. As she pulled herself from the water, she wrapped her arms tightly around herself, still in shock she had survived.

The top of the car sank beneath the murky water, bubbles coming to the surface as air escaped it.

Sydney stood at the edge of the river. Her clothes were dripping wet and her hair somewhat straightened and dark with water. She shivered.

She could hear police sirens in the distance, and she turned, frowning. Her shoes squelched under her.

The red and blue lights were getting closer, and she squinted as their headlights blazed over the hill. She shuddered. Brooklyn had run off again, but Sydney didn't care. She was still dazed, still relieved to be alive.

One of the police cars stopped at the top of the hill, the headlights shining down through the trees, and Sydney saw the familiar silhouette of a policeman emerge. A light flashed in her eyes as they approached, and she tried to shield it with her hand.

She glanced back toward the dark of the river and shivered. Maybe if she was lucky, the police would give her a blanket to warm her up.

Chapter Two: Audrey

May 1938
Landau, Germany

Trumpets blasted outside Audrey's window—a stark contrast to the soothing sound of church bells and car tires on the cobblestone street below her that usually roused her from bed in the morning. It was likely yet another parade marching down the street. Another attempt to rally the locals to one of the many aspects of the NSDAP, she was sure.

Audrey listened carefully for the sounds of her mother bustling around downstairs, but she heard almost nothing.

The only thing she did hear was the murmurs of her brother and father's voices—a sign her mother had left with the ration card to get food.

She pulled herself from bed and got dressed. She grabbed a hat and a pair of shoes before hurrying downstairs, murmuring a quiet, "*Morgen*," to her father, who muttered something back from behind his *Zeitung*. There had been news about Hitler's visit to Italy in the last few days, and most of the local papers had been covering every bit of the political action they could get their hands on.

"Ernest, are you busy?" Audrey asked, her German words slurred by sleep. She sat at the table and poured herself some coffee.

"Not particularly," he said, and glanced up. "Why?"

"I was wondering if you might escort me to the library," Audrey said, before taking a sip of the hot, caffeinated liquid in her cup. As of late, the coffee had not had the same flavor it once held. Audrey suspected, like most of the foods she used to enjoy, some form of imitation coffee was being made somewhere in a factory—but not with coffee beans.

"I suppose," Ernest murmured, pulling her from her thoughts about the coffee she was swirling around in her cup. "How long will we be out? I'm going for a hike later."

"It shouldn't take long," Audrey promised, slipping on her shoes. She pinned her hat to her hair, knowing from experience the bushy red locks would fight to knock the hat from her head.

She left the house, and glanced down the street at the disappearing parade, trying to discern what it was for. She quickly averted her attention as Ernest cleared his throat.

"Father mentioned sending us up north to fetch *Tante* Birdie," he said.

"Why? Is she ill?"

Ernest shook his head before running a hand through his short, blond hair. "No, but with all of the tension, father is worried about her."

"Father is always worried about her," Audrey replied. "I'm sure she will be perfectly fine on her own."

Ernest hummed. "I think I agree with father," he said, after a moment. "It would be safer for us all to live in one place. Besides, the more people, the more rations we have."

They reached the library and Audrey wasted no time in finding the book she was searching for—a classic English play written by someone named Shakespeare.

Audrey's friends had much more time than she did to read books, and they had mentioned several in particular aside from the book she'd chosen.

She wanted to read some of them before she found herself piled with the responsibilities of an adult, and the lighthearted-sounding title of "Romeo und Juliet" was the perfect place to start. Her best friend, Clara, had read the book several years before, and tried to recommend it to Audrey every chance she got.

Ernest and Audrey caught a bus into the small town of Rhodt. Ernest didn't talk much on the ride over, which was fine with Audrey. She was enraptured by the book she'd chosen already—and although the writing was a bit difficult to decipher at times, she tried not to think any less of the book. It had, after all, been translated from English many years before.

Before long, Ernest cleared his throat and nudged Audrey. "Our stop," he said, as the bus came to a slow halt before an old cobblestone street.

They got off the bus and wandered down the street, towards a vineyard and a castle looming above the town a short walk away. With her book tucked under her arm, Audrey listened to Ernest talk about his *Wandervogel* group.

He'd been a member for several years, but it didn't stop his enthusiastic mention of it every time Audrey hadn't found a way to busy herself. She'd told him many times before she wasn't interested, but he never seemed to grasp the concept.

As he rambled on about the Wandervogel group, Audrey glanced over at the vineyard they walked by. The heavy grapes, not yet harvested, were pulling down the branches.

"The morals we have are beyond compare," Ernest added. "Why should young people be drinking anyways? There's no point in poisoning ourselves at such a young age."

Audrey plucked a few grapes from the vine and ate them. They were sour, and not entirely suitable for eating. Regardless, Audrey would have much rather eaten a whole bowl of sour grapes than listen to how adamantly Ernest was pushing his Wandervogel group.

Chapter Three: Sydney

August 2014
Pendleton, Oregon

"Officer Owens!" Sydney gave the police officer holding the flashlight a broad smile. She could make out his silhouette just barely when she shielded her eyes from the light. "How's your wife doing?"

"Sydney," the officer replied, sounding tired. "How many times are we going to have to arrest you before you stop causing problems around here?"

Sydney laughed a little. "C'mon," she said, "you can't tell me you haven't wondered what it would be like to drive a car into the river, now, could you?"

She grinned, knowing Brooklyn would never get away with the same type of banter she had with the police.

"Sydney, we're going to have to take you in again," Owens reminded her. He grabbed her wrists and put handcuffs on her.

Sydney rolled her eyes. She knew how it worked. They would take her in, question her, and when she insisted, as always, that Daphne was the driving force behind her decision, they would call her father and put her in the holding cell until he came to retrieve her.

She supposed her uncle being a police officer would have something to do with why she hadn't been tried as an adult yet, or sent to juvie, but she was sure eventually it would come down to it.

"Did you at least get the vomit smell out?" Sydney asked as Owens pushed her back toward the police car, "Seriously, you have got to have that thing detailed. I don't know what drunk you picked up, but it still smells like vomit back there. And you know, I'm sure that'll mix nicely with the river water dripping off of me."

Owens didn't reply, but opened the door for her. As soon as she got in, he shut the door behind her. He walked back toward the river.

Alone in the back of the car, Sydney let out a loud breath. It still smelled like vomit, even though she could see several air fresheners dangling from the rearview mirror. The first few times she'd been in the back of the police car, her stomach had twisted into knots of dread, knowing how disappointed her father would be.

Now, she didn't care. It seemed to be the only attention her parents would give to her now, between the farm and teaching her younger brother how to drive.

She glanced down and picked a few glass shards out of her arm. She hadn't said anything to Owens about it. No reason to cause any further trouble with her parents tonight—not when they'd already be picking her up later from the station.

After flicking tiny pieces of glass onto the carpet, she glanced out the window toward the river. The police had gathered at the waterfront. She could make out their flashlights scanning the top of the water, but the mayor's car had submerged completely.

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Twenty minutes later, Sydney sat in a small, concrete room, handcuffed to the table. They'd made a fuss about Sydney's cuts, and had taken some time removing the glass shards with a first aid kit Sydney was sure was at least ten years old. The bandages on her arms looked yellowed from time, and she resisted the urge to pick at a stray thread on the arm that was handcuffed to the table.

She'd been waiting alone in the room long enough that she had begun to tap her fingers against the table impatiently. After a few minutes, she began humming a tune softly, glancing around at the small area they'd put her in. She wasn't sure why they were taking so long to interrogate her.

The door behind her opened with a loud creak and Sydney turned to find Officer Owens and one of the other regulars, Officer Barry, walk into the room.

Officer Owens walked around the table slowly. Sydney could feel him staring at her, and she couldn't help the smile creeping up onto her face. They seemed to think they would eventually get to her, but nothing they'd tried had ever worked.

The chair across from Sydney screeched loudly across the concrete floor as Owens sat across from her.

Nearby, Barry leaned against the wall and crossed his arms.

Sydney focused on the cracks in the wall behind Owens to avoid the stare he was still giving her. She'd been in several different interrogation rooms before, but she hadn't ever seen the inside of the room she was currently in.

She caught her reflection in the two way mirror—her hair was already starting to dry, and it was frizzy. She frowned, wishing she had straight hair instead. She spent hours every morning trying desperately to straighten it. Fixing her hair was just another thing she would have to take care of when she got home—along with removing the bandages and dealing with the disappointment of her parents, again.

Owens cleared his throat, pulling Sydney from her self-guided tour around the interrogation room. His arms were crossed and he frowned at Sydney.

"Nice décor," Sydney murmured, nodding a little at a particularly large crack by the ceiling. If she looked close enough, she was sure she could see a tiny spider crawling around it.

"So," Owens said after a moment. "Stealing the mayor's car. Driving it into the lake. Why is it that we keep seeing you in here?" He sounded as though he were tired of seeing her.

"Daphne White," Sydney answered simply.

Owens sighed. "Sydney, the mayor's daughter is in Washington D.C., and she has been for the last two months. I'm sure she had nothing to do with you stealing the mayor's car."

Sydney shrugged, bringing her handcuffed hand up on to the table. The cold metal dug into her wrist a little, but it didn't hurt nearly as much as the cuts on her arms did. She suppressed a grimace, not wanting either of the officers to know how much pain she was really in. "You asked me why I did it. So there you go. Daphne White."

Owens ran a hand through what little hair he had left. He had rapidly started to go bald since Sydney had first met him. He shook his head as though he couldn't believe what she had said. "We've called your father," he finally said.

"Yeah." Sydney knew they'd called already. If she was lucky, she would be in the holding cell long enough for her to scratch something obscene into the wall. There was a loose nail hidden under the bench in the holding cell she had discovered a few months back. She'd used it to carve her name out on one of the walls, although it was painstakingly hard work. At least she could try to make her mark somewhere.

"I don't want to see you in here again," Owens continued, "The mayor wants you to spend time behind bars. You violated the restraining order."

Sydney rolled her eyes. "Empty threats," she said, then held up the wrist handcuffed to the table. "Are you gonna let me out, or do you expect me to Houdini my way out of these things?"

"We expect you to stop causing problems," Owens said. "We can't keep letting you off the hook like this."

Sydney shrugged. She was certain she'd be back within a month, and like always, they'd let her off the hook, thanks to her uncle, who had been an officer since before she was born.

Officer Barry came forward, pulling a key from one of his pockets, and unlocked the handcuffs.

"Your father is waiting in the lobby," Owens said, and stood to open the door for Sydney.

Sure enough, as Owens followed her into the lobby, her father was sitting there.

As Sydney stood before him, he finished filling out the paperwork the front desk had given to him.

Sydney gauged his anger on how long it took him to acknowledge her. Usually, three or four minutes of ignorance was normal when he'd been woken in the middle of the night to pick her up from jail—but Sydney was sure it had been at least seven or eight minutes since Owens had brought her out to the front, and she began to feel nervous.

She wondered if she'd finally drawn the line. She wondered what her punishment for the night's actions would be. Considering how long he'd remained silent, Sydney wouldn't put it past him to kick her out of the house. She was okay with the idea, even though it scared her some. She was sure Becca would let her stay over for a while, or at least until she worked up the courage to ask Victor if she could stay with him.

Her father didn't look at her, simply got up and handed the paperwork back to the secretary at the desk.

"Come on," he muttered, and Sydney followed him out to his old farm pickup.

Sydney had her fair share of long silences before, but sitting in the car with her father, the silence between them felt much tenser than it usually did when he picked her up from the station.

Her father's tanned, calloused hands—toughened from years working in wheat fields—had a tight grip on the steering wheel. A frown seemed permanently etched onto his face, although his gaze remained on the road before him.

Sydney looked at her own hands, clasped together in her lap. The bright blue nail polish she could see on her thumbnail was chipped, and she picked at it a little.

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I am extremely grateful for Katherine Schmidt, who helped me to outline, brainstorm, edit, and review the entirety of my work. If it weren't for her questions, suggestions, and enthusiasm, this novel would have been lacking in conflict, characterization, and overall plot.

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I also want to extend every bit of thanks I possibly can to my family: to my mom—who was willing to look over some of my work before it was revised; my dad—who supported my decision to write a novel despite the amount of work it entailed; my younger brother—who often made sure I took breaks; and my grandma, whose conversations about her youth helped to shape some of the characters and historical points within my novel.

I cannot thank you all enough for your continued support, help, and encouragement.

Reflection

Why Writing?

My passion for writing began when I was in elementary school. I had a very active imagination as a child and would often spend afternoons on the playground writing short stories about animals or about discovering new and exciting places. My elementary school—composed of 48 students—did not have a large library—which meant the selection of books to read was minimal. This didn't deter my love of reading, though, and I would come home from the public library with stacks of books to read.

Once I learned how to read, I read almost any book I could get my hands on. I spent many of my early elementary years reading both picture books and chapter books—some which were a much higher reading level than suggested for my age, such as Sue Grafton and Clive Cussler novels—until I ran out of things to read at home. Then, I turned to the elementary school library.

My love of reading fueled my passion for writing. While in elementary school, I realized that if there were more books, students like me, who loved to read, would be able to read more stories—but someone would have to write those books. So I made the decision that I would take it upon myself to write stories for people to read—and although I didn't finish any of the stories in elementary school, it sparked my passion for writing.

Over the years, I would spend almost every minute I could spare from anything else (such as classes, homework, weekend choir and outdoor activities) and I would handwrite stories. Some were written on sheets of paper and illustrated in colored pencils, while others were written in small journals. Between elementary and middle school alone, I filled up dozens

of journals with stories in what little free time I found on bus rides to and from school, during classes, during lunch, and almost all the time on the weekends.

In November of 2007, I joined an online annual writing challenge suggested to me by a family friend. The challenge was called "NaNoWriMo,"—or "National Novel Writing Month," and the goal was to write 50,000 words in a single month. The first year I participated in the challenge, I was underprepared and unfortunately did not make the goal. I didn't make the goal the second year, either, after breaking my arm—and only ended it with around 17,000 words. Despite my inability to meet the goal the first two years I participated, I continued to participate every year that followed—and met or exceeded the goal of 50,000 words every time. I also used the challenge to further develop my writing skills, one step at a time. One year, I outlined my entire novel in order to create rising conflict. Another, I focused on character development—and along the way I worked on descriptions, dialogue, and other small things to push my writing skills to the next level.

In the meantime, I wrote short stories on the side that continued to develop my writing skills of dialogue, description, and plot. I shared some of these stories with my peers throughout middle and high school. Some of them loved the stories I wrote, whereas others did not, and gave me criticism that wasn't exactly constructive. I read books that helped me to understand differences in genre, and I rewrote older stories that felt too childish when I read back on them. My passion for writing grew, as I loved being able to tell stories no one else had told before.

The first class I took in high school that focused on creative writing gave me inspiration to continue to write, regardless of criticism some of my writing received over the years from my peers. Most of the stories I wrote up through high school fell into the Fantasy or Science Fiction genre, which I found much more exciting than any mainstream,

contemporary plotline. As my love for both of these genres, both in writing and in reading, grew, so did my experiences outside of the academic realm.

My sophomore year in high school, one of my writing assignments caught my teacher's attention, and they called me back to their desk to talk about what I had written. They could hardly believe how developed my writing was for a fifteen year old. Even though it was only a short story based off of a character, setting, time, and conflict prompt, the encouragement and awe from my teacher helped me to realize that over the years my writing skill had continued to develop.

My passion for writing was not the only thing to shape my writing experience and skills. In August of 2012, I flew over to Germany and spent a year there, studying in the Rhineland as an exchange student. Through this opportunity, I learned German and experienced the culture through various program organized trips and day-to-day life. The year I spent in Germany did not help to develop my writing skills much (in fact, when I returned to the states and began to read through some of my old stories, I found some of my English vocabulary had deteriorated), but it did give me a new perspective, and it gave me a path to take with my future. My exchange played a large role in my decision to attend Western Oregon University after graduating from high school, because of the German classes offered and the close-knit community within the area.

My time at WOU did not always allow me time to write like I had gotten used to in middle and high school. I was able to participate in NaNoWriMo every November, but aside from the dash to reach the goal of the challenge once a year, I did not have enough time to pursue any further writing projects. Many of the projects I had set aside with the intention to work on later were forgotten, and I felt as though my writing skills plateaued some during the first few years of my college experience. I found with many of my pieces that the description

I wrote felt stale, and I was unable to find any new things to challenge myself to do. I felt frustrated and stuck, and found that I did not spend as much of my free time writing as I used to.

Regardless, I continued to take classes that fed my interest in German and Germany, and classes that helped to develop my writing skills. Several of the writing classes I took focused on the specifics of writing, while others focused on the broader picture. The fiction workshop classes I took gave me the most prominent feeling that my writing skills had plateaued, and I asked my thesis advisor to give me challenges in order to push my writing skills and to hopefully further develop them.

The idea to write a historical novel blossomed from one of the German classes I took, in which I had to write up a summary of my entire exchange. Looking at all of the things I experienced while overseas made me realize how much I had learned in the year I spent there, and how much I could teach others about the rich culture and history of Germany—instead of the stereotypical history I had learned in high school.

While my literary interests did not always lie within the historical fiction genre, the idea of writing a historical fiction was appealing to me. I had toyed with the idea of writing about someone visiting another country for several years, but hadn't had enough motivation or interest to pursue the idea until I had tied in a historical aspect.

Most historical novels I ran across in the past, such as "All Quiet on the Western Front," and "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," focused on a time period that I looked to cover within my thesis, although those novels did not always catch my interest. However, the German history classes I took while at WOU piqued my interest and gave me ample information to draw from. Many of the places mentioned within the history classes were places that I visited while on my exchange, and I realized that with both the personal experience I

had gained from traveling there, and the historical context of the locations, the possibility of writing a novel about another culture—specifically Germany—felt much more realistic.

Themes and Inspiration

While the plot of the story is original, there are some underlying themes, structural ideas, and references to other materials made within the novel. Some of these materials were books read in classes I took, or themes talked about within classes; some were books I read outside of classes; and some were people I knew or looked up to. These other materials, as well as people around me, and classes I took while at Western, inspired me to organize my thesis and the themes within my thesis a certain way.

The first of these materials is the "Phantom Tollbooth" by Norton Juster. This book was mentioned by name within the first few chapters of my thesis. While this story works well as a book the boy on the plane next to Sydney can read, it also has some underlying themes that tie into the modern plotline. One of the larger themes in the Phantom Tollbooth is the appreciation of the smaller things in everyday life, as explained on Sparknotes.com. Sydney parallels learning this lesson throughout the story, as she transforms from wanting something big and exciting to happen to her, to realizing how the smaller things in life can be just as exciting.

Romeo and Juliet is subtly mentioned within the first few historical chapters of my thesis in order to establish a loose foreshadow of what occurs in the plot later with Mateo and Audrey. While this is not directly mentioned within the prose, several references to it are made, and the overall subplot of the historical chapters between Audrey and Mateo takes on a similar arc to the play.

In relation to the original Romeo and Juliet play was the structural set-up of the chapters within the novel "Juliet" by Ann Fortier. This novel takes on a similar historical/modern split within the plot, which made sense to use within my thesis due to the two related plotlines that connected with one another later on in the novel.

Another book that gave me inspiration to write my thesis the way it was written was "The Thief Lord," by Cornelia Funke. Although I had not read it in years when I started to write my thesis, I remembered the amount of detail about Venice and the amount of Italian words used throughout the story. This story prompted me to write a few characters who were not from Germany or the United States, in order to get both cultural and historical diversity within both sections of the novel.

Inspiration from others around me include the novel that one of my closest friends, Erika Fitzpartick, wrote for her thesis. Her excitement for her thesis inspired and helped to convince me that I could write a novel for my thesis. I watched as her novel, *Saving All That Remains*, emerged from the work she had put into her thesis. Her passion for tigers and for compelling plotlines merged to create an outstanding final product that propelled me forward in my motivation to pursue the idea of writing a novel for my own thesis.

Classes that I took for my writing minor also helped to inspire me to write a novel as my thesis, including WR 230 (Introduction to Writing Studies), WR 360 (Fiction Workshop), WR 450 (Writing for Publication), and WR 460 (Advanced Fiction Workshop). These classes helped me to further develop my writing skills with both academic papers and narratives. Within both of the fiction workshop classes, I learned how to tighten my prose and how to vary my writing style depending on the type of story I was writing. The Writing for Publication class taught me how to write stories with the intention to publish them, and how to best focus

on writing stories with publication in mind, and helped me to understand how to organize a story in order to maximize the plot and conflict throughout the story.

The classes I took for my German major, HST 422 (Germany: 19th Century), HST 423 (Germany: 1914-1945), and HST 424 (Postwar German History) also inspired me to write this thesis as a creative historical novel. These classes, while all history classes, opened my eyes to the amount of German history left widely unknown in the shadow of the Nazis, the Cold War, and the Stasi. It also helped me to understand the culture of the country much better, and gave plenty of historical context to the places I visited while on my exchange in high school. In turn, this history created an easily comprehensive foundation for my thesis idea—and later helped when I changed the plot of my thesis to a more contemporary approach with the historical portions scattered throughout.

The Process

I spent a good amount of time during the fall of 2016 collecting more information to draw from through researching the atmosphere of the country during the 1920's, the 1930's, and early 1940's. This research included deeper study into both German and American history—through reading texts, watching movies, and spending many nights in the library scouring peer reviewed articles and history websites for pertinent information.

At first, I intended to completely write my thesis within the historical timeframe just before the Nazi rise to power, in order to show people who read the novel that Germany was not simply made up of Nazis, concentration camps, Gestappo, and Stasi. My original idea was to include historical ideas within a narrative that would not focus directly on the events that occurred during the time period, but instead on the perspective on an outsider within the

country. The plotline would focus on the main character during her stay abroad—and I planned on ending the novel after she departed again for the states.

I spent most of the 2016-2017 academic year focusing on researching, outlining, and writing portions of the novel I planned to be historical. The historic aspect of my thesis was added for two reasons: the twist on the thesis would help me to dig deeper into the history of Germany and better understand what life was like during the chosen time period, and the German History classes I took while in college inspired me to want to learn more because the information I learned from them was fascinating. At first, I had been unsure which time period of the German history to pick, simply because the German history felt so rich with excitement to me. However, following much debate, I decided on the time period of the 1930's, because I would be able to explore how the NSDAP's rise to power affected the citizens of the country.

The original plotline of the novel was drafted before I came to a decision on who I wanted my main character to be. After researching common names within the timeframe I had chosen for the novel, I decided on Audrey Grace Baumann, a seventeen-year old girl from Pendleton, who comes from a family of four, and had grown up on a farm. The inspiration for my main character came mostly from the stories my mother used to tell me about her grandmother, and so I based my main character off of some of those stories.

The outline of the novel had originally contained twelve chapters, planned with historical context, cultural context, research used and where each chapter would take place. Each of these chapters encompassed about a month's worth of time. However, after I started to write the actual novel, I realized that it would not be able for me to encompass everything within twelve chapters alone. I then decided that each month would have chapters under them, in order to keep each month separate and keep part of the original organization.

In order to focus on the characterization and setting in a clearer way, I started several sections over as pieces of flash fiction, in order to make the prose concise and descriptive. After having written some of the novel pieces, I drafted a second, more detailed outline in spring of 2017, which focused on splitting each chapter of the novel up into shorter chunks—each of which I had listed as a separate plot point.

However, a complete overhaul of the plot took place just before spring term of 2017 ended, following several discussions with my thesis advisor. We decided it would be better for me to pursue a more contemporary setting for my novel so that I could focus more on the plot of the story, instead of spending most of my time researching history in order to make the historical references accurate. I spent the last few weeks of the term working on creating a new outline for a more contemporary novel. This meant that the historical outline, the characters I had been working on, and the research I had gathered no longer contributed to the actual writing of the thesis. I selected a new main character—Sydney Allison Baumann, a seventeen-year old girl from Pendleton, who came from a family of four, and had grown up on a farm. While the background concept of the main character stayed the same, I varied Sydney's personality from Audrey's in order to reflect stories I had collected from friends and family about some of the wild escapades they had taken part in.

I spent most of my summer working on the more contemporary plotline. Through fall and winter term of the 2017-2018 academic year, I continued to write the novel until I had completed a first draft of the thesis. In January and February of 2018, I began to go through the novel and edit the chapters I had written for clarity and to fix any mistakes I may have made within the prose. This editing process involved double checking my research—which included looking at maps to gauge distance and time to travel to locations, locating more information through both websites and print books to be sure the prose was accurate, and

getting very specific information from about things like how much damage a chain link fence would do to a car—followed by concerned messages from friends asking if my car was okay. Each revision of the draft included both a written and oral reading of the draft to be sure the writing was error and plot hole free.

At the end of February, I sent the draft to my thesis advisor, who suggested I add some historical parts of the novel back in. This took several weeks to outline, write, and edit for clarity and content. By mid-April, I had re-edited the work and had resent the draft to my thesis advisor to look at.

Historical versus Modern

The title of the piece, "Black, Red, Gold," was chosen to represent the colors of the German flag. Because both portions of the novel had heavy roots within Germany, referencing the colors of the flag representing the country felt appropriate.

I had originally intended for the novel to take place in the 1930's, I had two sets of characters. The first set—from the original, historical novel—returned in the novel within the historical parts.

The main characters of the historical portion were Audrey, Ernest, Mateo, Tante Birdie, and Clara. Audrey was the main character, although I changed her background from an American citizen to a German citizen, during the time frame of 1938 to 1941. Her younger brother, Ernest, and she live with her parents in Landau in der Pfalz. Tante Birdie is another prominent character, as through the event of traveling to Berlin to retrieve their Aunt, Audrey and Ernest meet Mateo. Mateo is an Italian citizen who had traveled to Germany in search of work (and to escape the government created under Mussolini).

I wanted two separate plotlines within the novel, and decided for Audrey's plotline to reflect the idea of escaping Germany during the NSDAP reign of power during the late '30's and early '40's. Instead of creating a plotline that focused entirely around the elements that tied into the modern plotline, I integrated those elements into the plot in order to give it depth. I also chose specific dates and places to touch on events that took place during the timeframe I had chosen for the historical part of the novel; however, not all of the events within the historical part are actual events that occurred.

While there are far less prominent characters within the historical plotline, the historical plotline does tie in with the modern plotline. The main characters within the modern plotline include Sydney; Klaus, Leonie, and Ida Werner; Grete; Johanna and Marie; Brooklyn and Victor; Markos; Florian; and Daphne White.

Klaus, Sonja, and Ida Werner are the first host family that Sydney stays with while in Germany. I portrayed Klaus, the father, as a nice man, a fun-loving father, and an accommodating host. Leonie is the jealous, egocentric sister within the family, who doesn't like Sydney much and does what she can to make Sydney's stay with them fairly miserable. I portrayed her character similar to a character who had given Sydney problems in the past—Daphne—in order to cause Sydney to resent her. However, her character arc has her sent down the same path of bad decisions that had led Sydney's parents to send her overseas. Ida is the strict mother who complicates Sydney's stay in Germany later in the novel.

Grete was the family friend of the Werners, who was portrayed as strict in order to test how much Sydney was willing to go through in order to get back home. As Sydney's character arc progressed, I wanted to give her setbacks in both her quest to gain more knowledge about her grandmother's letters, and her desire to return home. By making Grete

strict (and sometimes pushy), it created a good conflict for Sydney to overcome in order to achieve both of her goals.

Marie and Johanna are the two friends Sydney makes while in Landau. Marie is a character similar to Sydney's best friend in Pendleton, Becca, who helps Sydney to make good choices. Johanna is a character similar to another friend back home, Brooklyn, who caused Sydney to make bad choices in the past. As Sydney begins to realize she had continued down the same path of bad choices while with Johanna, she turns to Marie, which I wanted to have symbolize as Sydney not only rejecting the bad choices she had made in the past, but also Brooklyn and Victor's influences on her.

Brooklyn and Victor are the two people Sydney considers friends back in Pendleton. Brooklyn is the older sister of Becca, who Sydney has been friends with since elementary school. Both Brooklyn and Victor dropped out of high school, and while Brooklyn is clingy, pushy, and causes Sydney to get into all sorts of trouble, Victor is quiet, mysterious, and understanding—which makes Sydney want to impress him. However, as the plot moves forward, Sydney realizes how little Brooklyn and Victor truly cared about her, and she starts to make different decisions.

Markos is the friend and love interest within the novel that Sydney meets early on, and acts as a complication to her returning to the United States at the end of the novel. He is also the character that ties both plotlines together, as his appearance piques Sydney's interest in her grandmother's letters. I chose to make both him and Mateo Italian because it tied in the Italian history and gave me an opportunity to expand on some of the other places within Europe I had visited while on my exchange.

Florian is an acquaintance Sydney makes while at a party with Leonie—who is later revealed to have been in a relationship with. Leonie treats Sydney badly throughout most of

the plot due to her assumption that Sydney is interested in Florian—which is not the case. While Grete strongly urges Sydney to associate herself with Florian as he is a better influence than any of the friends Sydney has made while in Germany, Sydney tries to avoid him because of her interest in Markos.

Landau in der Pfalz was chosen for the main location in Germany because it was the city I was most familiar with in Germany. In addition to spending my exchange year in the city, I was able to use historical research to construct chapters set in the 1930's and 1940's set within the city. By adding in a version of the Edelweiss Pirates to Landau, I was able to thicken the plot within the historical chapters and link the city to the larger youth resistance to the NSDAP within Germany.

The main location chosen for the United States was Pendleton because, while I did not grow up there, many of my family members did. By choosing Pendleton as the town Sydney grows up in, I was able to research the history and the layout of the town a bit more and construct a realistic interpretation of the town. I also chose Pendleton because the change from a town based around the rodeo activities in the middle of the desert to a city in Germany surrounded by valleys of vineyards that focused entirely on wine contrasted one another. This contrast could be interpreted to have helped Sydney eventually choose a different path—although the contrast is not directly noted within the prose, and therefore is not very prominent.

Looking Forward

My intentions for this work have not ended, even though my time at WOU has. I intend to self-publish this work over the summer, in order to not only incorporate my use of the businesses classes I took while at WOU, but also to incorporate some of the things I

learned within one of the writing classes I took—Writing for Publication. This process will include finding a cover that will accurately reflect the novel, and converting it to both a kindle and paperback version, which would be available on multiple platforms such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and iTunes.

I intend to keep writing in the future. I consider writing both a skill I can continue to hone, and a fun way to express my creativity. Because of the active imagination I had as a child, and my motivation to write stories in my free time, I gained experience and skills with writing both narrative and academic papers throughout the years. While I would like to someday write bestselling novels, I intend to also find work within the Teaching English as a Foreign Language field, so I can use my expertise in linguistics and my experience with learning a foreign language to help others English language skills.

An idea I have tossed around for some time is to continue to write stories similar to my thesis. These stories would serve two purposes: to help educate readers about the history and culture of the location within the stories; and to give readers entertainment. I would look at other places throughout the world—and possibly travel there to get a better sense of the culture—so that I could accurately portray the location within the writing.

While this thesis has finished one of the ideas I was originally unsure whether or not to pursue, there are many other writing projects I have not had the chance to expand on. Over the next few years, I plan to focus on the other projects in order to continue growing my skills as a writer, and continue to keep pursuing one of my childhood goals—to write books for other people to eventually read.

Overall, when my passion for writing had started, I could never have imagined what the future would hold for me, and what exciting things I could do with the writing skills I would gain over the years. I hope in the future to explore different genres and to continue to

write both short stories and novels so I can improve my writing skills, and give the world more stories to read.

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