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Mission Statement

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing continuously for the duration of each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, short films, and screenplays.

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Contents

Essay

C. Auguste Dupin: Sociopath Megan Burr	1
--	---

Commentary

Finding God at the Movies David Chapman	11
---	----

Behind the Scenes at the Davis Lecture Jason Wallace	15
--	----

The Trouble with Canonicity Taylor Burgess	18
--	----

Fifth Annual <i>Foreign Language Film Conference</i> Mary McCullough	20
--	----

Review

The Rise of Rome: The Making of the World's Greatest Empire Shannon Flynt	23
--	----

Poetry

Blossom-Yellow Carlson Coogler	26
--	----

Megan Burr

C. Auguste Dupin: Sociopath

Edgar Allan Poe is considered the creator of detective fiction, and his detective, C. Auguste Dupin, served as the archetype for virtually all detective characters, including Carolyn Keene's Nancy Drew, Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, and, most notably, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. Contemporary TV shows, such as *The Mentalist*, *Psych*, and *Elementary*, show society's constant obsession with crime and detective television, but all of this can be traced back to Edgar Allan Poe's protagonist, C. Auguste Dupin. *The Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* goes so far as to say that Dupin is "the model for virtually every cerebral crime solver that followed [him]" (qtd. in Klinger 43). Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, one of the most famous detective fiction authors of all time, refers to Edgar Allan Poe as "the father of the detective tale" (qtd. in Freeland par. 1). C. Auguste Dupin's personality differs greatly from what readers would normally consider attractive in a fictional character: he has a sense of callousness for the dead and a lack of morality in regards to the crimes committed, he relentlessly manipulates the narrator and the police, and he keeps up false pretenses about himself and his actions. These and other traits of Dupin's personality suggest that he is not only an archetypal detective but also a sociopathic one.

Edgar Allen Poe's short stories often deal with the idiosyncrasies of the mind, and the Dupin trilogy of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter" is no different. Dupin's way of thinking within the short stories displays a lack of sympathy or even human compassion for the dead. According to Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, this apparent callousness of Dupin continues to expose itself in "The Mystery of Marie Roget." Despite Poe's supposed transcendentalist leanings, he "approaches and represents [Marie Roget's] dead body with a distance and disinterest drastically opposed to transcendent and sentimental modes of interpreting death" (Miller 173). Several parallels exist between Poe and his detective, including "aristocratic origins, superior intellects, and alienated personalities" (Dameron 160). These parallels support the notion that Dupin had some form of mental disorder, and Dupin's disinterest in the murders suggests the possibility that his disorder is sociopathy.

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, sociopathy, or Antisocial Personality Disorder (hereon referred to as APD),

has a variety of conditions that must be met before diagnosis can be determined: the subject must be at least eighteen years of age, he or she must have a history of juvenile delinquency by the age of fifteen, and the subject must exhibit at least three of the following symptoms:

- a. Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviors [. . .]
- b. Deceitfulness, as indicated by repeated lying [. . .] or conning others for personal profit or pleasure.
- c. Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead
- d. Irritability and aggressiveness [. . .]
- e. Reckless disregard for safety of self or others
- f. Consistent irresponsibility [. . .]
- g. Lack of remorse [. . .] (Amer. Psychiatric Assoc. 706)

In addition to these symptoms, Dr. Martha Stout writes in her book, *The Sociopath Next Door*, that other signs of sociopathy may include: superficial charm, proneness to boredom, a predisposition toward parasitic relationships, a lack of empathy, and a grandiose sense of self (Stout 7).

Although the symptoms of sociopathy appear to have entirely negative connotations, sociopathy typically manifests in one of two personalities, the violent and the nonviolent (Stout 2). The first personality is prone to violence and tends to be more antagonistic towards society and themselves. John R. Lion writes that the nonviolent personality leans more towards “the good of society and their own welfare” (Lion 137). Those with the latter form of APD tend to be more capable of living among other people than the former and can even cohabit with others while still having the various symptoms of APD (Lion 137). Dupin’s nature appears to fall into the antiviolent category because of his sense of justice and his ability to cohabit with the narrator. Throughout “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” and “The Purloined Letter,” Dupin displays the following characteristics of sociopathy: superficial charm, a grandiose sense of self, deceitfulness and pathological lying, a lack of remorse or empathy, proneness to boredom, impulsivity, an overall failure to conform to societal norms in regards to the law, juvenile delinquency, and parasitic tendencies.

Although Dupin generally acts in a socially acceptable manner, the detective exposes his superficial charm when he deduces. The narrator’s comment in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” about Dupin’s attitude makes his façade clear. Dupin’s normal personality disappears, and he becomes “frigid and abstract; his eyes [are] vacant in expression” (Poe 571). This, along with the change in Dupin’s voice from a “rich tenor” to a near-petulant sounding treble (Poe 571), represents a break in the front he normally uses to fool people into trusting him. The narrator believes that Dupin has a bipart soul, which he refers to as a “double Dupin” (Poe 571), but this complete change in characterization suggests something else. While analyzing, Dupin focuses all his energy on the case, and he allows his false persona to drop, revealing his inner sociopath.

Dupin’s inner personality includes a grandiose sense of self, particularly in regards to Dupin’s view of the police’s intellect versus his own. Dupin’s contempt toward the French police is obvious throughout the three short stories, but in “The Purloined Letter” he spends nearly an entire page of his deductions verbally abusing the police and G— for their incompetence. Dupin claims their search of Minister G—’s home was nothing but “an exaggeration of the application of the one principle [. . .] of search, which are based upon [. . .] one set of notions regarding ingenuity” (Poe 172; Poe’s emphasis). Dupin ridicules the police for using only one method to search and for failing while he easily located the letter necessary for solving the case. He also sees himself as superior to the police. In “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” when he claims they should look at evidence as “analogous with that *intuition* which is the idiosyncrasy of the individual man of genius” (Poe 128; Poe’s emphasis), he clearly means himself. And in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Dupin tells the narrator of his past “with all the candour which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is his theme” (Poe 569-570). Both of these quotations display Dupin’s substantial ego in regards to both his intellect and himself, and throughout the three short stories, Dupin “exults [. . .] at competitively establishing his mental superiority over men” (Church 410).

C. Auguste Dupin’s interactions with the police and G— reveal Dupin’s grandiose sense of self in all three of the short stories, but “The Purloined Letter” clearly demonstrates his manipulation of the police and G—. He convinces police prefect G— to inspect the home of the suspected minister even though the police have already done so thoroughly. G— follows Dupin’s suggestion, but Dupin still claims that G— has not “exerted [himself] to the utmost in this matter,” moments before Dupin discloses that he already had the letter in his possession (Poe 169). Dupin’s deception reveals his manipulative nature, and the police’s reaction to Dupin’s duplicity implies that this is neither the first nor the last time Dupin will utilize such a trick. Poe characterizes Dupin in the short stories as someone with “deceptions and dubious motives” (Gruesser 6), and although Dupin appears at first glance to be a simple vehicle for Poe’s manipulation of the readers, Dupin proves to be more than that through his pathological deceit.

This deceit primarily uncovers itself through Dupin’s relationship with the narrator. Dupin’s elaborate retelling of the narrator’s thoughts in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” seems fantastic, but it appears as though Dupin created the trail of thought instead of deducing the narrator’s thoughts. The narrator, in shock from Dupin’s apparent telepathy, cannot actually remember what he was thinking. Instead of attempting to recall his actual thoughts, the narrator easily bends to Dupin, saying, “I [the narrator] could not help acknowledging that [Dupin] had spoken the truth” (Poe 573), which suggests, at the very least, a vague sense of manipulation on Dupin’s part. John Gruesser believes that the narrator, instead of ever questioning Dupin’s methods, “treats Dupin as a miracle worker who should be regarded with awe,” emphasizing Dupin’s manipulation (Gruesser 7-8). The

narrator's unflinching belief in Dupin and his methods reveals him to be a puppet of Dupin's whims, and Dupin does not hesitate to use this to his advantage, particularly when he grows tired of feigning feeling for others.

Dupin shows his utter lack of remorse or empathy in "The Mystery of Marie Roget." Although Marie Roget's murder is "emotionally significant to the Parisian public," it is "mere paid labour to Dupin" (Miller 179). Dupin's interest firmly rests in getting paid, and he completely ignores the morality of the crime. When told of the murder, the narrator notes that Dupin "wore spectacles, during the whole interview; and an occasional glance beneath their green glasses, sufficed to convince [him] that [Dupin] slept not the less soundly" (Poe 102). Additionally, in the Dupin stories, "Poe's interest centers on the processes of detection, leaving the moral issues of the crimes [...] largely unaddressed" (Cleman 623). Dupin's sleeping through the briefing of the case shows both Dupin's and Poe's callousness in regards to the brutality of murder.

Dupin's proneness to boredom emphasizes his callousness. Dupin's original purpose in taking the Rue Morgue case was to provide "some amusement" for himself, a statement that characterizes his proneness to boredom (Poe 582). But by the time of "The Mystery of Marie Roget," which takes place less than a year later, Dupin considers the horrific murders he was once enthralled by as "a topic whose interest to himself had long ceased" (Poe 99). Additionally, Dupin falls asleep during the briefing of Marie Roget's murder, seemingly because he grew bored of the conversation. This apathetic attitude further displays Dupin's need for excitement and mental activity.

Dupin's constant need for intellectual stimulus ties in to his impulsivity. The detective clearly shows his spontaneity through his many whims. These whims are best seen in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." The narrator claims that Dupin's "whims [...] were manifold," and the narrator refers to himself as "giving up [...] to [Dupin's] wild whims with a perfect abandon" (Poe 583, 571; Poe's emphasis). Dupin's search of a crime scene solely because he thought it would provide amusement is a prime example of his impulsive nature. Furthermore, Dupin manipulates the narrator into entertaining his impulses as well. After the crime scene search, Dupin decides, without notice, to avoid speaking about the murder for almost a day. The narrator states that Dupin asks about the murder scene "suddenly," as if to emphasize the abruptness of the moment (Poe 583). The narrator, having completely surrendered to Dupin's methods, does not question him. He describes his manner of dealing with Dupin as "Fe les menageais: --for this phrase there is no English equivalent" (Poe 570). The phrase is a French colloquialism meaning, "to treat with delicacy and consideration," commonly used in reference to a domestic relationship (Rhoads 17). The narrator seems to believe that his submission to Dupin was a choice, but Joseph Church, psychology professor and author, states, "Dupin, cheerful castrator of the Prefect, [would permit] no other relation" (Church 416). Dupin appears to allow only people subordinate to

him and his whims into his acquaintance.

The detective’s actions show his disdain for the police, but “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Purloined Letter,” in particular, expose his inability to conform to societal norms in regards to the law. In “The Purloined Letter,” Dupin openly lies to the police and G— solely for his own amusement when he persuades them to reexamine a room in which there is no evidence. Additionally, in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” he openly mocks G— and his methods while inside the police precinct, saying, “Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle” (Poe 602). The offense of insulting a police officer would normally result in, at the very least, a reprimand, but Dupin operates so far outside of the norms of the legal system that no one even acknowledges the slight against G—.

The final two symptoms of APD that Dupin suffers from primarily show themselves in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” The two remaining traits, juvenile delinquency and leading a parasitic lifestyle, require information about Dupin’s background, something explored only in Poe’s first story about him. The narrator, providing Dupin’s backstory, says that although he was from “an illustrious family,” through “a variety of untoward events, [Dupin] had been reduced to [...] poverty” (Poe 569). The story does not say that the Dupin family lost its wealth; only Dupin himself has been reduced to this state. It is possible that Dupin committed a series of acts in his youth that led him to being either cut off or disowned by his family, but this is unclear. He maintains “a small remnant of his patrimony” (Poe 569) and does not make any attempts to regain his fortune, preferring to live “a materially impoverished life” (Church 411). If Dupin’s possible juvenile delinquency was the cause of his fall to poverty, then his lack of drive toward regaining his wealth could be because of his inability to apologize.

C. Auguste Dupin’s parasitic lifestyle mainly unfolds in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” The narrator, upon moving into Dupin’s apartment, takes over the responsibility of paying for the “renting and furnishing” (Poe 570). Dupin’s ability to pay is obvious because of the earlier remark in the short story about Dupin being capable of “[procuring] the necessities of life” (Poe 569), which would include lodging. However, he does not aid the narrator in paying for either of the expenses. Furthermore, the narrator claims he was “permitted” (Poe 570) to pay for the expenses, an unusual choice of words that displays the level of control Dupin had over him even before they started cohabitating. Additionally, in “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” when Dupin needs extra information on the case, he “sends his companion out [...] to secure a full report of the evidence from the police and to obtain a copy of every newspaper containing any information relating to the case” while Dupin stays in the comfort of the apartment (Gruesser 10). Dupin luxuriates in his control over the narrator while the narrator, completely unaware of the parasitic nature of his relationship with Dupin, happily searches for any clue that could assist Dupin in the case.

Dupin's sociopathic personality serves as the template for many of literary and filmic culture's detectives. Sherlock Holmes, one of the most adapted characters of all time, is an excellent example of how Dupin's personality has translated to other characters. Holmes has a grandiose sense of self that rivals Dupin's. In Doyle's first novel *A Study in Scarlet*, Dr. John Watson off-handedly compares Holmes to Dupin, and Holmes responds, "In my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow" (Doyle 42), which raises himself above the detective that inspired Holmes's very character. Moreover, Holmes's way of inferring echoes Dupin's method. While deducing "[Holmes's] eyes wore the same far-away expression which [Watson had] already remarked upon" (Doyle 57), which shows that, like Dupin, Holmes allows his inner self to emerge only while he analyzes.

Holmes also exhibits several other sociopathic characteristics, including proneness to boredom, as well as an inability to conform to social norms in regards to the law. Holmes's addiction to cocaine originates from his inability to stop thinking. When explaining his drug use to Watson in *The Sign of Four*, Holmes claims that he "[abhors] the dull routine of existence" (Doyle 217), and that he "cannot live without brainwork" (Doyle 224). Holmes exposes his trouble with the law in *A Study in Scarlet*. Holmes finds no remorse in disrespecting the police or vice versa because he "will be even with them in the long run" (Doyle 89). This behavior again expresses Sherlock Holmes's many similarities to C. Auguste Dupin.

One of Sherlock Holmes' many incarnations, Dr. Gregory House of the television series *House*, shows some of the more overtly negative aspects of sociopathy including pathological lying and lack of empathy. House's mantra "Everybody lies" becomes a prominent theme throughout *House*, and this theme is proven time and time again through both the various patients and House himself. House's lack of remorse reveals itself in nearly every episode, but the best example of this comes in the form of his laissez-faire attitude towards treating patients, seen when he makes comments like, "If it works, we're right. If he dies, it was something else" (1:2; "Honeymoon"). House sometimes defends his remarks by claiming that not caring saves more patients and that he has simply "been cursed with the ability to do the math" (1:11; "Detox"), but the DSM-IV-TR explains that those with APD often "provide a superficial rationalization for having hurt, mistreated, or stole from someone" (Amer. Psychiatric Assoc. 702), making House's reasoning more difficult to accept.

Sam Spade, the Dashiell Hammett detective best known for his role in *The Maltese Falcon*, also shows tendencies towards the more negative side of sociopathy, namely a lack of remorse or empathy, superficial charm, and pathological manipulation. Upon learning that his partner, Miles Archer, has been killed, Spade reacts with remarkable coldness. On being questioned about his reaction, Spade remarks: "That fellow's dead. [...] Getting touchy, huh?" (Hammett 491), which shows Spade's utter lack of care for the man that was his partner. Even when Spade expresses emotion, the reader is left uncertain as to whether Spade actually

means it. He grins “wolfishly” (Hammett 397, 430), gives “ingratiating smiles and nods and assurances” (Hammett 394) to create a false sense of security, and, multiple times, he is described as consciously shaping his face to show emotion: for example, he “[makes] his eyes dull with boredom” (Hammett 406). All of these examples contribute to the idea that Spade puts forth a front of sorts while interacting with other people.

Spade’s manipulation of his client, Brigid O’Shaughnessy, shows his superficial charm. Hammett suggests that Spade’s sole reason for entering into a relationship with O’Shaughnessy is to gain her trust. He exclaims, “How in hell are we going to get [the Falcon] if I don’t play along with her?” (Hammett 473), and through this Hammett divulges that Spade has no hesitation in playing with O’Shaughnessy’s emotions as long as he can get to the Falcon in the end. Spade’s interactions with the variety of characters in *The Maltese Falcon* show him to be a remorseless man who is relentlessly manipulative.

While the final three popular detectives assessed in this paper all have Dupin’s sociopathic personality template, they also have the characteristic that makes Dupin so lasting a character: charisma. Shawn Spencer of the television series *Psych* is a pathological liar and narcissist, but he is charismatic enough that, for whatever reason, the police allow him to work with them. Spencer exposes his pathological lying throughout the course of *Psych*, primarily through the show’s main premise: Shawn Spencer pretends to be a psychic so he can work with the police. Spencer manipulates situations and people to his advantage on a regular basis, even to the point of drugging his partner, Gus (“I may have dropped six allergy pills in your frosty” [1:7; “Who Ya Gonna Call?”]) to get what he wants. Furthermore, in episode 6.6, “Shawn, Interrupted,” the detective is diagnosed as having Narcissistic Personality Disorder, a disorder commonly associated with APD. Spencer responds, “I’m a veritable cornucopia of high-octane maladies, such as Outrageous Intelligence syndrome. And a little Obsessive Successful Disorder” (6:6; “Shawn, Interrupted”), clearly playing his enormous ego. Despite these sociopathic tendencies, Shawn Spencer appears to be the most likable character on the show, primarily because of his charismatic nature.

Even children’s detectives are not exempt from Dupin’s archetype. Carolyn Keene’s famous teen detective, Nancy Drew, exhibits both manipulation and superficial charm while maintaining a magnetism that draws both the readers and the other characters to her side. In *The Hidden Staircase*, the police ask Nancy to interrogate a suspect for them. Nancy protests, but Captain Rossland insists that Nancy is “a very persuasive woman” (Keene 156) and convinces her to question the alleged kidnapper. Despite the fact that the police had already been interrogating this man for at least an hour, Nancy convinces the suspect to tell all to the police within minutes (Keene 158), plainly showing Nancy Drew’s manipulative abilities. Nancy Drew’s superficial charm lies in her skill in disguising her true emotions. In regards to her popularity in *The Secret of the Old Clock*, Nancy’s

housekeeper, Hannah, remarks, “In school Nancy had been very popular and had made many friends” (Keene 21), but, later on, Nancy openly questions, “Why can’t all people be nice like this scenery and not make trouble?” (Keene 34). The implication of these two conflicting statements is that, although Nancy Drew may appear to be simply kind and charismatic, she may be concealing a deeper desire to control her peers.

Patrick Jane—of the television series *The Mentalist*—is by far the best representation of how C. Auguste Dupin continues to influence other detective figures. Within the show, the CBI chief evaluates Jane’s personality using Robert D. Hare’s psychopathy checklist and determines Jane to be a “clinical psychopath” (4:4; “Ring Around the Rosie”). While Jane proves this diagnosis is accurate on many occasions—mainly through the manipulation of his fellow characters—Jane’s analysis of a fellow liar provides an excellent insight into his own mind: “Most people subconsciously signal dishonesty, but you? There’s nothing. No inner conflict. Usually, that’s the mark of what shrinks like to call a sociopath” (2:4; “Red Menace”). Jane recognizes a good liar because he is a good liar. In the same way, Jane recognizes a sociopathic figure because he is a sociopath. Despite this, Jane is easily the most charismatic detective discussed in this essay. His former career as a con artist provides an easy way to read people and manipulate them accordingly.

Why then, if they are sociopaths, are Dupin and his many different incarnations so tremendously popular? One would think that they are admired despite the sociopathic tendencies, but it is more likely that the characters are well liked and lasting because of the disorder. Stout writes that sociopaths are charismatic because they appear “more spontaneous, or more intense, or somehow more ‘complex,’ or sexier, or more entertaining than everyone else” (Stout 7). Sociopaths are more appealing than the average person because they take risks; they flaunt authority, they do reckless things, and they simply seem more interesting. Perhaps, then, the lasting nature of Dupin’s influence is because of the charismatic nature of the nonviolent sociopath and their lifestyle. If this is an accurate assessment, Dupin’s archetypal nature is not due to his intelligence or perceptive nature, nor is it in spite of his occasionally harsh treatment of his peers. The ever-increasing number of characters with Dupin’s vocation and personality template can owe their existence to two factors: sociopaths and their personalities.

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David W. Chapman

Finding God at the Movies

As a boy growing up in the 1950s and 60s, there were few greater joys than being told we were going to the movies. Television was still in its infancy, and there was no comparison between the blurry, black-and-white images projected from a cathode-ray tube and the grand spectacles played out on the giant screen in blazing Technicolor. It was the age of Heston and Huston and both the Hepburns. One could see Moses part the Red Sea, Cleopatra paraded into Rome, and Ahab chase the White Whale. Even wretched science-fiction movies, with their iguana monsters and tinfoil aliens, could still strike fear into the hearts of our cinematically innocent generation.

Going to the drive-in for us did not mean a trip to some suburban mall with \$4.00 Milk Duds and \$5.50 soft drinks. Instead, we loaded up the old Ford station wagon with a cooler full of bottled Pepsi, a grocery sack of homemade popcorn, and a few assorted pillows and blankets for when we fell asleep. Children under ten got in at half price, and I remember my dad made my brother kneel on the floorboard and cover his knees with a blanket in order to get the discount until he was nearly a teenager.

This was also an age of tremendous religious fervor. No one had coined the term “televangelist,” but Billy Graham was drawing vast crowds to his open-air crusades that were broadcast to large audiences on television and radio. Local church broadcasts also became standard fare on Sunday morning television during this era, and even before the main feature was shown, ecumenical advertisements encouraged patrons to attend their local house of worship.

It is not surprising, then, that films were often filled with religious themes. Biblical epics were extremely popular, and Cecil B. DeMille became a household name for directing blockbusters such as *The Ten Commandments* and *Samson and Delilah*. By today’s standards, these films seem amateurish and overacted. Anne Baxter gushing, “Oh, Moses, Moses, you stubborn, splendid, adorable fool!” comes across as pure melodrama, but the contemporary audiences loved it. Indeed, *The Ten Commandments* still ranks among the top box office hits of all time if you adjust for inflation (and teenagers passing for children at the drive in!).

Of course, in the world of Doris Day and Rock Hudson, every biblical story had to find or to manufacture a romantic interest: Gregory Peck lusting after Susan

Hayward in *David and Bathsheba* (1951), the besotted Richard Burton (in the movie as in real life) paired with Jean Simmons in *The Robe* (1953), and Yul Brynner and Gina Lollobrigida infamously heating up the screen in *Solomon and Sheba* (1959). Directors of religious films sometimes stretched the limits of family viewing under the premise of “If it’s in the Bible, it can’t be bad.”

Many of the films had only a tangential connection to anything in the Bible (e.g., the soldiers casting lots for the clothing of Jesus is the premise for *The Robe*), and the post-Bible-movie textual critique was a staple in many households. If the films strayed too far, pastors and youth leaders would condemn the movies for scriptural inaccuracy, moral indelicacy, or both. But in many homes where the Bible was more revered than read—including my own—these biblical epics often substituted for the real thing. (I still expect Moses to look like Charlton Heston when I get to heaven.)

An often unstated political theme ran through these films. Joseph McCarthy had brought the prejudices and fears of the nation to a fever pitch during the Cold War, and Hollywood writers and actors were a favorite target of the right-wing extremists. Although biblical epics would seem to be a safe haven from charges of anti-Americanism and communist agitation, producers often took extraordinary measures to make the good guys into lovers of democracy and the American way. Rome, with its barbarism and tyranny, was often the allegorical equivalent of a communist dictatorship. The plots in these epics often turned on the hope of liberation, whether it was Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, Ben Hur earning his freedom after being a galley slave, or Spartacus leading the fight against the Roman legions. Interestingly, although *Spartacus* is not an overtly religious movie, the opening lines pronounce: “In the last century before the birth of the new faith called Christianity, which was destined to overthrow the pagan tyranny of Rome and bring about a new society, the Roman Republic stood at the very center of the civilized world.” Christianity and liberty were nearly inseparable in the Cold War conception of “the good society.”

To their credit, films promoted religious diversity in twentieth-century America. Anti-Catholicism was still an undercurrent in the 1960 election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, and people commonly whispered that if Kennedy were to become president, he would take his instructions from the Pope in Rome. What fewer people remember is that Nixon was also from a frequently denounced religious faith, the Quakers, or Society of Friends. Because Quakers were pacifists, they were often ridiculed for being disloyal and cowardly, but films during the 1950s played an important part in legitimizing the Quaker tradition in the country. *Friendly Persuasion*, a 1956 film about Indiana Quakers who must decide whether to defend themselves during the Civil War, provided a much more positive view of Quaker beliefs, including Dorothy McGuire as a strong female leader of the Quaker assembly. Gary Cooper played the role of McGuire’s loving, but less dogmatic, husband. In what was almost a reprise of his role in the 1941 film *Sergeant York*,

Cooper plays a pacifist that ultimately goes to war. In both films, Cooper provides a sensitive and thoughtful treatment of pacifism as a legitimate response to Christ’s teachings.

What Gary Cooper did for Quaker beliefs, Bing Crosby accomplished with a song and a smile for Catholicism. In *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Bells of St. Mary’s* (1945), Crosby plays an unconventional priest who cares more about people than protocol. Crosby followed in the footsteps of other pro-Catholic films, such as *Boys Town* (1938)—with Spencer Tracy playing the loveable Father Flanagan—and *Knute Rockne, All American* (1940), which made George Gipp (played by a young Ronald Reagan) into a football saint at Notre Dame. These films were instrumental in lessening the suspicions that many Protestants harbored towards Catholics well into the twentieth century.

One other cinematic style that flourished during the Cold War era was the missionary biography. In one of her last major films, *The Inn of Sixth Happiness* (1958), Ingrid Bergman played Gladys Aylward, a determined English housemaid who, after being rejected by the mission board, strikes out on her own to spread the gospel in China. Her work culminates in rescuing a large group of Chinese orphans who are fleeing the Japanese occupation of their city. Gregory Peck also played a missionary to China in one of his earliest films, as Father Francis Chisholm in *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1944). Unlike Bing Crosby—the happy-go-lucky, singing priest—Peck struggles with many obstacles: persecution of Catholics in his native land, a mediocre academic record, a failed romance, threats from the local authorities in China, and even rivalries within the church. Both of these films are much more nuanced depictions of missionary life than those found in recent Christian films.

Beginning in the 1970s, religious films were often produced by independent Christian film companies. Troubled by the adult themes and language that were prevalent in so many movies, as well as overtly antireligious themes, Christian films became a separate genre. This was an age when Christian bookstores were beginning to spring up everywhere, and Christian radio stations began to broadcast “contemporary Christian music.” These Christian film companies began to produce low-budget films for youth groups and Christian camps. A few of these films, such as *The Cross and the Switchblade* (1970), attracted a mass audience, but they seldom enjoyed any critical success, and even some Christians confessed they were going only to show their support for such movies. Occasionally, a serious film such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981) or *The Mission* (1986) would appear to the delight of theologians and film critics alike, but, overall, the great age of religious movies had passed. Certainly, religious films were the victim of rapidly changing social and religious values in post-Vietnam America, but they were also marginalized by Christian viewers who seemed to want little more than a sermon on film. Indeed, some of the Billy Graham films were pretenses to air an actual sermon from Graham. To this day, many Christians are scandalized by films that attempt realistic portrayals of contemporary social problems. Indeed, the presentation of sensitive topics on

film seems to prompt more condemnation from some Christians than the actual violence, poverty, and racism experienced by many members of our society.

We are unlikely to see in the near future anything like the outpouring of biblical drama that characterized the 1950s. For better or worse, Christian films will continue to be produced primarily by independent filmmakers who are considered outside of the mainstream (and for many critics, inferior to that mainstream). For all their faults, the religious movies of the Golden Age of cinema were seen by great masses of Americans and had a profound influence on their views of Christianity and religious diversity. But as these movies gradually lose their appeal to the more technically sophisticated productions of our time, from *Batman* to *Avatar*, will we also see a decline in the “cultural literacy” of the Bible? “Oh, Moses, Moses, you stubborn, splendid, adorable fool!”...Who will bear your likeness for the next generation?

Jason Wallace

Behind the Scenes at the Davis Lecture

As a rule, I try to avoid the company of smart, talented, and accomplished people. Once a year, however, usually in October—when the air cannot decide whether it wants to be humid or dry, when tired acorns let go and pop on grey sidewalks, and when afternoon light pushes long shadows over red-bricked piazzas—I set aside my suspicion of aptitude and consort with the gifted. Leaving the pleasure of darkness and shadows for the pain of heat and light is, as Plato warned, not for everyone. But the Davis Lecture, the premier Arts and Sciences event on Samford’s campus, made my journey from *sensus* to *intellectus* easier. During my time hosting the event, I have come to appreciate the companionship of scholars and writers with flourishing careers. Davis Lecture speakers are an impressive lot. Many times—too many to count—I have been approached by students, colleagues, and even strangers wanting to know what it is like to direct the Davis Lecture. “How do you do it?” they ask. “How do you pull it off?” “What is it like to rub elbows with experts on genomes, Abraham Lincoln, gladiators, and Martin Luther King, Jr.?” “Do you think heaven will be a conversation about these topics?” Well, no more need for speculation.

Early in the year, I contact the speaker or an agent through a series of emails and a phone call or two. Their names catch my eye in book reviews and literary journals—a *New York Times* Sunday editorial, a comment in the *New Republic*, an aside in the *New Criterion*. Priority goes to the sellable, whatever ties in to an anniversary, or whatever lifts an eyebrow. How much will they cost? Too much. Try again. Email and phone calls continue until the price is right. Next, I contact relevant administrators and explain what the *New York Times*, the *New Republic*, and the *New Criterion* are. (Note to self: apologize for not considering suggestions to invite a local missionary poet full of homespun humor and a love of justice, a sand artist, and a self-published relative.) More emails and phone calls. Next, work out the travel kinks. “What’s that, Dr. Fagan? You thought you would be in Libya on the day of the lecture, but now that the country is experiencing a revolution you can make it. Great!”

Next, preview advertising information for posters and brochures. Make sure spelling is correct. Make sure my name and important title are clearly visible. Make sure images are not sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, pornographic, distasteful,

ugly, short, brutish, nasty, or insulting. Make sure the speaker's photo is not so goofy as to make people laugh. Make sure Rod Davis's 1999 photo has not been updated. More emails and phone calls. Check alumni mailing list for signs of life. Update website. Notify catering to prepare heavy *hors d'oeuvres* for forty people. Daydream about the pickled shrimp to come. Wait on the big day.

I meet our speaker at the airport. Once I made a sign that said, "Samford Davis Lecture," but I threw it away out of concern that there might be a passenger named Samford Davis Lecture. After a long wait by the bathroom, minimal conversation at the baggage claim, forgetting where my car is in the parking deck, and explaining why the passenger door is broken and I cannot afford to have it fixed (yes, all four happen every time), we are off. Time to discuss Birmingham's rich history. Next, describe Samford. "It is like the Shire in *The Hobbit*, only fewer wizards and more Baptists—Oh look, Vulcan!" Finally, the hotel. "Good night, my new friend. Look forward to tomorrow. Remember, no one in your audience has read your book. Seriously, I mean no one. Don't sweat the details. Connect the topic to aliens or football, and you will do just fine. Sleep well."

On the morning of the lecture I treat our speaker to a cafeteria breakfast. Only once did I have a problem. Our speaker liked yogurt, and the Caf yogurt machine proved a little too enticing. He went back five times. Chocolate first. Then vanilla. Then, the chocolate and vanilla combo. Wait, he did not see the toppings on the first three visits. We were late to our first appointment, but he was happy. Routinely, our speakers address the University Fellows later in the morning. No one really knows the origins of this tradition. Then again, no one really knows why they live in two rooms in Brooks Hall until their junior year. Lunch is off campus, sometimes with an administrator. By the time we eat lunch, the speaker and I are tired of talking, and this gives the administrator a chance to tell the speaker how he/she read about his/her book in the *New York Times* book review, the *New Republic*, or the *New Criterion*. After lunch, I take the speaker to an interview with the campus radio station, WVSU. The interview is taped and broadcast later wherever smooth jazz lovers congregate all over Birmingham. If you are ever in an elevator in late October, listen for it.

Our dinner is in the Rotunda of the Nursing School. No, this is not a health hazard. We are upstairs; the medical waste is downstairs. As a rule, I do not touch anything in the building, and, though I probably look silly wearing latex gloves throughout the reception, most guests assume this is simply fashion forward or perhaps a southern thing. After stuffing our speaker full of finger food, we head to the Wright Center. Showtime. Here, the local media meets us backstage for a quick interview. "So, you wrote a book on the Human Genome Project. Who do you think should be in the BCS title game?" Back off, fearless defenders of the first amendment. Our speaker needs some downtime before addressing seven hundred coerced freshmen. I head for a seat, sit back, and wait for the magic.

When it is all over, after the screaming fans have returned to their dorm rooms

and communal showers to count their Convo credits, after the speaker has flown home, it is just me and my nightcap of hot cocoa, or something. Time to think. I am tired—but proud. Maybe, just maybe, important ideas are worth the effort. They tell us about our priorities, and they illuminate the sometimes confusing, but always important, relationship between past choices, present realities, and future possibilities. Ideas matter. We are not always conscious of them in the trials and triumphs of day-to-day existence. Nor should we be. We work that we may rest and play in leisure. There are, however, moments when we should use our leisure to reflect, when leisure serves a higher purpose than the pursuit of rest or pleasure. Higher education should always keep the noble pursuits of leisure in view, and quality speakers on campus help us to achieve this goal.

Maybe, just maybe, Samford’s commitment to the liberal arts will survive to fight another year. We are one of very few universities in the Deep South that require a “great books” course sequence of all our graduates. This is a noble commitment in an age of professionalization, online education, and identity politics. Having acclaimed public intellectuals on campus greatly enhances the connections with perennial themes of human nature, nature, religion, and political community that the faculty work so hard to make in class.

The lecture series is named in honor of J. Roderick Davis, a graduate of Samford University (then Howard College) and later the dean of the Howard College of Arts and Sciences. Maybe, just maybe, Dr. Davis’s legacy to the college—his belief in the power of ideas, his love of learning, his commitment to free inquiry, and the gentlemanly winsomeness he shows even to those with whom he disagrees—is somehow modeled to our students. I like to think so.

Taylor Burgess

The Trouble with Canonicity

Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* was publicly released fifty-four years ago. It was recently declared "the best film of all time" by the 2012 *Sight & Sound* poll, the consensus of "more than 1,000 critics, programmers, academics, distributors, writers and other cinephiles" (<http://explore.bfi.org.uk/sightandsoundpolls/2012>). Through such polls we clearly retain, safeguard, and even force its place in cultural circulation. But why? This question must be asked of all classic films if we are to grasp the extent of their influence.

This film, however, transcends even classic status, if such a thing is possible. Critics have expended immense intellectual energy discussing the film and its significance. Yet, the highly lauded position the film holds in culture is ironic: we are obsessed with a film that explores the psyches and fates of obsessed characters.

I was "in for a treat," or so at least three people told me before the Film Club's September 27th screening of the film. This was only the second Hitchcock film I had seen—the first being *The Birds*, albeit at a much younger age—so I was unfamiliar with the work of a director who I had been repeatedly assured was one of the greats, the auteurs, the pioneers, the progenitors.

Objectivity seemed virtually impossible for me. The mention of a discussion that would take place after the screening turned me into a critic: I would now be compulsively scrutinizing symbols, motifs, shot composition, etc. These elements are surely present, notable, and worthy of exhaustive study. However, this was my first viewing, in which I ideally wish to play a less active critical role. I prefer to set aside my preconceptions and simply let the film work on me as it will. I put myself in the director's skilled hands, and, for two hours, I trust the film. Admittedly, this approach is somewhat naive and fails often; I have seen many an awful film through to the end, deliberately ignoring my better judgment. But I do this for the pleasure of a few worthwhile experiences: personal trips unencumbered by the minutiae of the film or critical context and expectations I normally consider while watching a film analytically. Initially, I want to be entertained. I will think about it and place it later. Serious, cerebral evaluation is as important to me as pleasure.

With *Vertigo*, I found such an experience elusive. It was not, as I have indicated, wholly the fault of the people at the screening: I had already predisposed myself to a state of hypercriticism. There is a scene early in the film when John "Scotty" Ferguson, Jimmy Stewart's character, mounts a stepladder in an attempt to

demonstrate mastery over his vertigo. I watched each close shot on each increasingly higher step and did not feel the tension, the suspense, that Hitchcock was apparently so masterfully building. Detached, I observed the technique used to craft the suspense, looking for traces of genius instead of allowing the genius to do his work.

This particular genius was clever enough to anticipate this obsessive, excessive dissection, and so integrates it into the fabric of the film. After all, Stewart plays an ex-police officer, a man who deals in mysteries and detection, eventually focusing his obsessive tendencies on Madeleine Elster, Kim Novak’s character. He pulls her identity apart, forcing her to become the woman he expects or imagines. We, the audience, begin to mimic Scotty’s fixations, but apply them to the film we are watching instead of a woman. We try to understand a film that already understands us, that pulls our strings and moves us down a narrative path of which we, unaware, believe we can already anticipate the conclusion.

In the film’s final minute, Hitchcock shocked me with a sequence I did not anticipate. The nun emerges from the shadows, Novak’s character falls to her death, and the bell tolls. The sudden end. There was a collective gasp in the audience, a few shouted profanities. In the climax, both Scotty and the audience simultaneously realize that they have strayed and that their obsession proves completely futile. Then I knew how I should have been watching the film from the beginning. I should have embraced the suspense and simply enjoyed myself. *Vertigo* is a film, and, like every other film, is fundamentally a composition of sequenced frames and contains no inherent value besides that which we assign. It can be viewed purely for pleasure or dissected and discussed. The high critical standing we have granted *Vertigo* precludes neither approach.

Nevertheless, I am still conflicted about the concept of canonization transparently evident in lists such as the *Sight & Sound* poll. *Vertigo* is one of Hitchcock’s finest works, one worth watching and watching again. Keeping it in critical discourse will ensure immortality, allowing it to be experienced by new generations. But is not all this praise, when taken too far—unavoidable now that the film is, as previously mentioned, the “best of all time”—just another form of obsession? Undoubtedly. However, such obsession is exactly what Hitchcock intended: he wished to be idealized, just as Madeleine is by Scotty. Maintaining a high level of control over his productions, many of which he literally inserted himself into as an extra, Hitchcock crafted a public persona as iconic as his work. He desired our praise and so he evinces calculated self-consciousness through a film intently focused on obsession, be it his or ours.

When the lights lifted, I sat up and tried not to think too much. I stayed for the discussion, which covered—among other fascinating topics—recurring spirals, the significance of the San Francisco setting, and Hitchcock’s notorious use and abuse of blondes. But what lingers most vividly, even months later, is the shared shock, the wide-eyed, knowing exchanges over the film’s climax, all seeming to affirm, yes—yes, he really got us with that one.

Mary McCullough

Fifth Annual Foreign Language Film Conference

The Fifth Annual *Foreign Language Film Conference* took place at the University of Alabama-Birmingham from November 1st through November 4th, 2012. The topic of the conference was “Rights and Representations.” It was the first event in a series commemorating the “Year of Birmingham” (2013), the fiftieth anniversary of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing on September 15, 1963.

Unfortunately, Hurricane Sandy impacted the travel itineraries of presenters traveling from Europe and the East Coast. Besides several academics, two film directors—French-Algerian Merzak Allouache (*The Repentant*, 2012) and Italian Stefano Savona (*Tahrir: Liberation Square*, 2012)—were not able to attend to present their films. The third director, Sarah Maldoror (*Aimé Césaire*, 2009), from France, was present. Despite the absences, all three films were shown. They all were within the scope of the question that the conference theme asked: “How has international film represented the need for civil and human rights?”

The Repentant (a narrative feature filmed in Algeria) dealt with the legacy of the Algerian Civil war (1991-2002) and featured one of the former guerillas who had allegedly repented from his murderous acts. He was granted amnesty and was allowed to enter into society by taking a job with help from the local police (albeit under surveillance). The film’s unambiguous ending affirms that the young men trained to be violent and to kill are not able to be reintegrated into society because their thirst for bribery, corruption, and blood cannot be repressed. *The Repentant* also shows the tragic impact of the war on family relations: how couples can be torn apart by the abduction and murder of their children; how a mother can knowingly hide her murderous son; and how one’s reactions to blackmail, kidnapping, and demands for ransom are always complicated.

Aimé Césaire, a documentary on the life of the eponymous Martinican poet (1913-2008)—a political figure and founding member of the Négritude movement—consisted of interviews with the poet himself, his family, and his close friends; it also included footage of events Césaire attended (such as conferences on Négritude and human rights) and of the landscape and people of Martinique. The shots of untamed bodies of flowing water mimic the poet’s claims that the African diaspora is connected through its (voluntary and forced) voyages and that its multiple identities possess roots back to its continent. The film ended with former French president

Nicola Sarkozy giving a eulogy and requesting a moment of silence at Césaire’s funeral in 2008 and with the inhabitants of Martinique rejoicing when Barack Obama became the first African-American elected president of the United States.

Tahrir: Liberation Square, a documentary on the recent political upheaval in Egypt, recounted how the people of Egypt overthrew their long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak in 2011. It chronicled two weeks in the lives of three Egyptians (a woman and two men) and their struggle for fair elections. Street protests and the Internet (amongst other technologies) all contributed to the political scene of this modern country, proud of its ancient history, as it fought for freedom and democracy. A message of hope emerges as the viewer witnesses the activism of Egypt’s ordinary citizens.

Aside from the screening of the three films, there were papers presented on every aspect of human and civil rights in film (both fictional and documentary) from all areas of the globe, from the mid-twentieth century to the present day. More difficult, but necessary, presentations included sessions on terror, torture, and violence. For example, Allison Rittmayer from the University of Florida presented “Broken Bodies: Film, Ethics, and State Violence,” which focused on dehumanization in the rhetoric of torture and on the state/official suppression of violence/torture in historical, political, and popular narratives. She analyzed the extreme close-ups of the subject being tortured in Costa-Gavras’ 1973 film *Etat de siege (State of Siege)* and the split between the (tortured) body and the self in Juanita Wilson’s 2010 film on the Bosnian war of the 1990s, *As if I Am Not There*. The polemic in depicting torture is that the spectator can see only what the director wants him/her to see; the viewing disrupts the viewer from a passive state, yet removes the viewer from violence arranged through editing. In both cases, the (tortured) subject ceases to be human—a dangerous undertaking, especially as torture is a pretense for cruelty and, as an interrogation technique, is ineffective.

Samford University’s Heather West presented on “The Struggle for Sovereignty: Pierre Falardeau’s Representation of Violence in *Octobre* and *Speak White*.” Her paper focused on the discrimination against and repression of Francophone Canadians and how cinema and poetry, as counter-hegemonic spaces, become imagined communities. The “textes de combat” (combat texts), mixing French and English, as well as colloquial and eloquent speech, show how the *Révolution Tranquille* (Quiet Revolution) of the 1960s was a necessary step towards the desired autonomy of the *Québécois*.

Other sessions and papers focused on terrorism and the struggle for power: fantasy, surrealism, and afterlife in Hispanophone cinema; femicide/suicide; women and violence; and representations of State Terror in Argentine Cinema. The uneasy, difficult necessity of exposing violations of civil and human rights through film (and their subsequent analyses) shows that, while they are common to all countries and political regimes, these abuses need to be exposed, defied, and made public. If a government is repressing its people’s rights through force, how do its citizens

challenge and disobey the law? If a regime is controlling and suppressing information, how do the people protest, and what do they do to circumvent the rule of law? And finally, how do we as academics, study, teach, and interpret these ideas?

Review

Shannon Flynt

Everitt, Anthony. *The Rise of Rome: The Making of the World's Greatest Empire*.

New York: Random House, 2012. xxxii. 478 pp. \$30.00 (cloth).

Anthony Everitt's latest offering, *The Rise of Rome: The Making of the World's Greatest Empire*, is one of no fewer than five books on Rome that have been published in the last year. In fairness, Everitt does note correctly in his preface that his is the first book written in several years that details Rome's *early* history, from its founding down through the last years of the Republic, and not the empire of the Caesars. Still, given that Rome is the one civilization from antiquity with which the public is most familiar, one would be justified in wondering if yet another book on this subject is necessary or whether any new commentary on such well known events as Hannibal's crossing of the Alps is possible. Not to worry, Everitt does not even attempt to take a novel approach to, or construct a new understanding of, the development of Rome. Instead, he returns to some of the most familiar myths from the past and one of the most traditional approaches to constructing a picture of ancient Rome, that of the ancient Roman historian Livy. Everitt attempts to retell—as Livy did—the story of Rome “*ab urbe condita*,” from the city's foundation.

For this retelling, Everitt uses a tripartite division. The first part, “Legend,” covers the Fall of Troy, Aeneas's escape from the city through the founding of Rome, and its monarchy until the expulsion of the last king, all in four chapters. The second part, “Story,” has five chapters and discusses the early Republic from the establishment of this new government by Brutus down to the conquest of the Italian tribes and their assimilation into the Roman world. The third part, “History,” takes eight chapters to detail the three wars with Carthage, the conquest of Greece, and Rome's social wars before ending with the civil war between the Roman military leaders Sulla and Marius.

Everitt remarks that these three sections reflect the variable nature of the literary sources at his disposal (xiii). However, he relies on the same short list of sources for the entire book to document the mythical past as well as to verifiable historical events: Plutarch, Cicero, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Livy. Indeed, the educated reader familiar with Livy will immediately recognize that Everitt's narrative reads at times as a translation of Livy's own work. Everitt practically acknowledges as much in the preface, noting that, like Livy, he feels the writing and reading of history is a “remedy against pessimism about the present” and that his work will be

a “portrait sketch” that will feature the city itself as a character (xii-xiii). The book is framed around the “big names” of Roman history: primary characters such as Aeneas, Romulus, and the Scipios. Everitt’s account seems to reflect that he, again, like Livy, believes the characters and personalities of these men lead to a particular set of actions that then move the course of history on its way.

Everitt seamlessly blends the myths and legends with more reliable historical and archaeological evidence to flesh out this early history of Rome. As the best-selling author of a series of popular biographies of famous Romans (Cicero, Augustus, and Hadrian), Everitt occupies a spot somewhere between hard scholarship and popular historical nonfiction. Not surprisingly, Everitt states in the preface that he is writing for the “reader with a general interest in history” (ix). One wonders, though, if the general reader will be able to separate reliably the myth from the history. At the start of chapter two, Everitt begins with a geographic description of the site of Rome, focusing on the source of the Tiber River and its course from the Apennine mountains to the sea. Then he writes: “It was here that one of the greatest heroes and demigods of the ancient world, Hercules, slew Cacus, a fire-breathing monster” (12). Although there is no pause or qualification between the statements, a reader will easily separate fact from fiction in this case. However, in an account of the Etruscan kings of Rome, Everitt describes the first king in the line as the “son of an aristocratic Greek exile from Corinth” (35-36) named Democritus and credits him with establishing a pottery workshop in the Etruscan city of Tarquinia. Everitt blends the two elements—a legendary king and an archaeologically attested ceramic tradition—as if there were no difference between the two, leaving the general reader unaware that Democritus never existed. The reader must make it to chapter four, “So What Really Happened?” to be told that “very little” of the previous account of the founding of Rome and the monarchy is true. Everitt then points out that even the “Romans themselves recognized that some elements of the tradition were not to be trusted” (57). As with most foundation myths, the “historical unreliability is much less important than the light it casts on what a Roman saw when he [or she] examined himself [or herself] closely in an idealizing mirror” (xxxii).

No separate chapter is provided at the end of the second or third sections of the book to make clear which events in the history of the Republic are real and which are the product of legend. Instead, comments are made along the way to point out when stories are either fantastic or invented by ancient writers to enliven their work. When Everitt introduces the Celts into the narrative as they prepare an assault on Rome, he includes the Romans’ opinion of their appearance and lifestyle. He then remarks that it is “hard to know how much weight to place on these accounts, for we have no counterbalancing records from the Celts themselves” (126).

Given the unwavering popularity of Hollywood’s versions of antiquity, the general public apparently has no worries about taking the romanticized myths as entertainment, if not fact, and Everitt’s account certainly entertains. The reason that authors—and filmmakers—repeatedly return to these stories is the power they have

both to inform and to enthrall. One of the most noteworthy things Everitt achieves by threading together information from a number of ancient sources and types of evidence is a “complete” narrative of the development of Rome. A reading of most primary and many secondary sources gives only parts of the story, leaving authors to construct views that met their individual purposes. Everitt’s book can serve easily as the one source for the reader who wants a reliable account of Rome’s early history.

Still, the question may remain why readers should keep returning to the sagas of a long-vanished civilization. Everitt says the trip is worthwhile because we “live in a world they [the Romans] made” (ix). Additionally, as Livy himself observed, the reading of history both warns against repeating our ancestors’ mistakes and inspires us to recall a golden age when there was little difference between the gods and the people who walked the earth—or between myth and fact.

Carlson Coogler

Blossom-yellow

Rock-born above the docks is quiet—
it's with or without the “e”—
as blossom-yellow refuses to loose
the haar into the sea.

This is a song of Mallaig:
loch over-spilled with rain,
an oval-bodied leech after you left
it, a letter curled.

I stole your scrabble spot.
You did not have enough for
that slime-pathed ferry
smelling like a salt-water shell.

I think the quiet
stars like the wind, wheat-colored
grass, the sun shelling out
rivets with light.

As yawning yellow
yields, this turning Leith,
lots are lost under
the sound of goose-wings.

Contributors

Taylor Burgess is a junior English major from Tallahassee, Florida. Academic interests include fiction writing and analytic philosophy.

Megan Burr is a sophomore English Major with a concentration in Film Studies from Guntersville, Alabama. She plans to be a screenwriter.

David W. Chapman is Dean of the Howard College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of English. His research interests include the novels and essays of George Orwell, the scholarship of teaching, and issues in higher education. He currently directs the Pan-American Network for Problem-Based Learning and is planning PBL2014, an international conference on innovative teaching methods.

Carlson Coogler, a University Fellow, is a senior English and pre-med major. She plans to pursue medical school next year and hopes to specialize in Pediatrics.

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