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GRADUATE HUMANITIES

A multidisciplinary program bringing together students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds to collaboratively explore the interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural, and literary studies within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment.

Everyone has a story

Revered William Zinsser, teacher and author of the craft book, *Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*, counseled that “clear writing is the result of a lot of tinkering...You won’t write well until you understand that writing is an evolving process, not a finished product.” Referring to “reshaping and tightening and refining the raw material [written] on [the] first try,” Zinsser identifies tinkering as a necessary part of rewriting.

For this issue, we looked at the papers from the 2024 “HUMN 604 Writing for Research” seminar (as we did with our last issue), which had undergone multiple reshapes, tightening, and refining by the authors themselves, *and* by their classmates in small group workshops.

Once the seminar was finished, four students volunteered to submit their papers for publishing in *Graduate Humanities*, knowing that, as their instructor-become-editor, I would ask them to commit to two or three *more* rounds of minor rewriting. Zinsser would be pleased—the papers you read in this issue were thoroughly tinkered with.

But as Zinsser cautioned, they are not finished products because they never will be. Still, they’re pretty-dog-gone-good, and I’m proud to have witnessed the students’ writing skills mature during the semester.

— Trish



Photos in this paper are by KB Media

Two heifers and steer calves in a pasture. While these cows look friendly, as with all livestock, it is best not to approach them without the owner's permission. Kathaleen is very hands-on with her cattle from birth, so they often come to greet her when she enters the pasture.

By Kathaleen Kuhn-Book Graduate Humanities Student Contributor
[Lightly edited for publication]

The legendary Holstein dairy cow, a bull named Stardell Valiant Winken, died twenty years ago. And yet in 2024 he became the father of a bull named Superman. No, farmers aren’t time travelers, but they are more science-savvy than you may think.

While most of the world thinks of AI as a moniker for artificial intelligence, those in the animal agricultural industry use AI to stand for artificial “insemination,” when a sperm from a male is deposited into the female reproductive tract. It is a common practice across species, including humans where it is commonly referred to as “intrauterine” insemination in modern medical terms for *Homo sapiens*. As you can imagine, cattle farmers must be well-versed in biology, physiology, and pharmacology

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to have a successful artificial insemination breeding program. The sperm used in the conception of Superman was collected in 1996. Superman was born nearly thirty years later, during which time the semen was stored in a liquid nitrogen tank.

One of the many benefits of implementing an artificial insemination breeding protocol in a milk producing cattle herd is the preservation of genes that were impactful for the dairy industry, such as Wiken's. Three of the top reasons many cattle producers have switched from natural breeding to artificial insemination are health and safety, economic, and genetic benefits.

Health and Safety

Often weighing in at over two thousand pounds, mature bulls pose a potential safety concern to humans as well as to other cattle due to their sheer size, strength, and temperament. The use of artificial insemination eliminates the need for any sexually mature males to be a part of the herd. This is because the semen, the only part of the bull needed for reproduction, can be easily stored for many years in a liquid nitrogen tank.

Before artificial insemination became accessible, a widespread breeding stock solution was that farmers often shared herd bulls or rented them for the breeding season. The driving force behind this method was the costs of caring for a bull year-round and the need for genetic diversity. This practice led to biosecurity issues and disease transmission, as the bulls could easily carry pests and diseases from one herd to the next as they were trailered from farm to farm. Artificial insemination has made this practice less common, helping reduce the spread of diseases and infections within the cattle population.

Economics

Reproduction efficiency is a key factor that has a great economic impact on cattle operations. Ideally, mature cows will have one calf per year. Cattle farmers often count on the profits from selling the calf to offset the cost of feeding and caring for the mother cow. When the cow fails to produce a calf for the rancher to sell, she becomes a liability with a net negative financial impact. With the use of AI breeding protocol, cows are able to be bred quicker and easier than with natural breeding. Thus, driving up the reproductive efficiency.

A 2007 study found that artificial insemination is more profitable than the best natural breeding scenario, even when done under less-than-ideal management conditions. The notion that even the imperfect implementation of an AI breeding program can outperform the best case of natural bull service should put cattle farmers at ease

General Livestock Industry Terms

Artificial insemination- a valuable tool for cattle producers to take control of their cattle's reproduction efficiency

Biosecurity- set of practices that prevent the spread of disease and other harmful agents to animals, people, and the environment

Bovine- domestic animal of the *Bos Taurus* (cattle) species

Bull- sexually intact male bovine

Calf- young bovine offspring of either sex

Cow- mature female bovine who has given birth to a calf

Finish out- when the animal has put on sufficient muscle and fat for slaughter

Heifer- typically young female bovine who has not given birth yet

Natural breeding or natural service- traditional breeding method where a bull inseminates a cow/heifer without technological assistance

Serving- another term for breeding or inseminating livestock.

Sire- male parent of cattle offspring

Steer- non-sexually intact (castrated) male bovine

Straw- small tube used to store one unit of semen

about deciding if a new breeding protocol call would be worth their investment.

There are upfront costs and training associated with artificial insemination, including a liquid nitrogen storage tank, various drugs, and other veterinary supplies, in addition to the price of the semen itself. In 2024, these AI necessities would total approximately \$1,680. All this considered, it was found that it was still a cheaper option to pursue artificial insemination over the cost of feeding, caring for, and managing a bull, which had an annual amount of about \$1,960. Prize-winning bulls sold for upwards of \$170,000. This would be too expensive for the average cattle farmer, but they may be able to splurge on a \$65 "straw" of semen. This allows smaller operations

a previously impossible chance to introduce high-quality genetics into their herd and improve the breed overall.

Genetics

As part of artificial insemination, bulls and their sperm are genetically tested for mutations, deformities, and diseases. This allows for better management of these conditions and the opportunity to remove affected bulls from the breeding population. This has proven to nearly eradicate some genetic conditions within breeds, such as dwarfism within the US commercial cattle population.

During processing, semen can be sexed by whether they are carrying an X or a Y chromosome. The sperm can be mixed with a carrier solution and then be separated into gender-specific semen units for distribution and storage. This ability to control the sex of a calf crop is greatly beneficial for dairies, which are mainly hoping for heifers to join the milk-producing herd. Sexed semen is also used in the beef industry as steers are often preferred for their ability to “finish out” more efficiently than heifers.

Through the sperm preservation process, genetic information is additionally cataloged. Over the last seventy-plus years, an extensive library of cattle genetics has been accumulated. Some bulls, such as Wiken, were so popular and possessed such breed-shifting characteristics that they were able to live on, in a sense, well past their death. Animal genetic companies, such as Select Sires and ABS Global, procure bulls, collect, process, store, market, and sell units of semen and embryos for artificial breeding. Through these international companies, bulls are able to sire thousands of calves across the world without ever leaving their home barn. This multigenerational catalog of semen and embryos ensures key genetic markers will be preserved while also helping maintain a diverse gene pool.

Drawbacks of Artificial Insemination

Other factors that must be considered before including artificial insemination breeding in a cattle operation are the additional labor and specialty training. During natural serving, the farmer allows the bull to manage most of the logistics associated with breeding cows by just opening a gate and allowing him access to the cows and heifers. In contrast, artificial insemination requires the farmer to manually inseminate each female, a process that takes about six minutes per cow.

Artificial insemination is a relatively new practice and is often learned through a short certification course. These courses frequently cost additional money, require the farmer to leave the farm, and incur travel fees to attend these events or hire

someone who is already trained. Ultimately, each cattle breeder must make the decision of which breeding method best meets their herd’s needs.

Universal Impacts

The benefits offered by utilizing AI in cattle breeding are felt not only by farmers but consumers as well. The improved health and safety, as well as the overall genetic improvements of livestock, have a direct impact on the quality of the meat they produce. The economic benefits lead to lower input costs for farmers, which can, in turn, lower the cost of beef for consumers.

Although the average consumer is not an active part of the agricultural industry, they should still be an informed consumer. The agricultural industry supplies the meat and produce that stock the grocery store shelves.



Kathaleen's had just purchased a young Hereford bull, Clifford, who is getting a full health check before being introduced to the herd. When handling cattle, farmers use halters, the rope Kathaleen holds around Clifford's head, chutes, and the metal gates Clifford is standing between. These ensure both the livestock and farmer remain safe and calm while being examined.

Conclusion

Artificial insemination is a valuable tool for cattle producers to take control of their cattle's reproduction efficiency. Despite what many people think, agriculture is, at its core, science. In modern times, where seeing a robot milking a cow is commonplace in large-scale dairies and crop farmers use advanced chemistry to optimize soil health, one could venture to say farmers themselves are scientists!

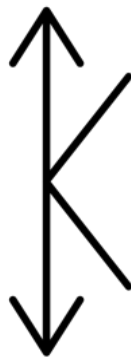
While they may not be mad scientists like Dr. Frankenstein, bringing bulls back from the grave, they are able to make some seemingly crazy things happen, such as **Wiken and Superman's story.** ###

Kathaleen's Reflection on Rewriting

Agriculture is my comfort zone, so I wanted to select a topic that was niche enough to be intriguing but not so agricultural-centric that my peers would be bored or overwhelmed when reading it. Rereading one of the papers I wrote as a college student in my "Introduction to Animal Science" at The Ohio State University was certainly humbling.

Throughout my undergraduate studies, professional work, and now graduate-level courses, I've polished my writing skills. And I've enjoyed rewriting this paper with a new set of skills I learned through the Expository Writing for Research seminar.

During my rewriting process, I wanted to add a story to emphasize how advanced modern agriculture is. When a friend on Facebook shared a story of a calf being born to a bull from the 80s, I knew it was the perfect fit! This story gave the readers a touch point to see the power of artificial insemination in the real world. Consumer education and agricultural literacy are things I am personally passionate about, and I enjoyed sharing my agriculture story in a fun, approachable, and educational way with my peers.



As a farmer, I'm excited to use my humanities degree to connect more deeply with consumers and with like-minded people in the Appalachian region while also increasing my understanding of the human condition and how that can inform my multi-media work. ###

Even though Kathaleen uses ear tags for identification for her cows instead of branding, her father created this brand design as a graduation present.

Kathaleen Kuhn-Book is pursuing a master's degree in humanities and an Appalachian Studies certificate. She and her husband, Wesley, co-own and operate her family's grain and cattle farm on the banks of the Little Scioto River near Minford, Ohio.

Kathaleen also owns KB Media, a photo, video, and drone multi-media agency. Her work can be seen at www.kbmediaco.com and in nationwide agricultural publications such as AgDaily and Ayrshire Cattle Breeder's Journal.

In her free time, Kathaleen enjoys volunteering with local 4-H and FFA groups to promote agri-literacy and youth development.



Lisa Hamm

Intersectionality, Identity, and Domestic Violence: A Former Police Officer Weighs In

By Lisa Hamm Graduate Humanities Student Contributor
[Excerpts from a larger paper and lightly edited for publication]

< As a former Police officer in the military, I became curious to see what barriers people have when trying to get aid for domestic violence. I have never experienced it so, at first, I felt a disconnect with it and lacked compassion for those victims. I took the opportunity to learn more during an internship through the sociology & anthropology department. Then when I took the Expository Writing for Research seminar from the Graduate Humanities program, I

took the opportunity to write down some of what I had been learning, to educate and inform myself about domestic violence.

This research opened my eyes to the profound impact of intersectionality on domestic violence survivors. As I delved into the unique challenges they have faced, each statistic and story resonated with me, emphasizing the need for compassionate, inclusive, and culturally sensitive approaches.

Lisa holds a Bachelor's degree in anthropology with a minor in Spanish from Marshall. She's seeking a double Master's degree in humanities and sociology. Being a practitioner of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, Lisa's passion lies in understanding human behavior. She is dedicated to fostering a deeper appreciation of humanity's continuous evolution.

Lisa's original paper on intersectionality, identity, and domestic violence was too long for publication in this newsletter, however, she extracted three key terms and four significant examples of overlapping systems to share with us.

Three Key Terms and Their Interconnectedness

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."

Intersectionality acknowledges that everyone has unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and that we must consider all factors that can marginalize people.

First coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School, intersectionality was added to the Oxford dictionary in 2015, with its importance increasingly recognized in women's rights.

Identity

When defining "intersectionality," it's crucial to understand "identity." The identity of the victim can influence the help they receive, often hindering a positive outcome and pushing the victim back to the abuser.

A person's identity encompasses many characteristics: for example, their gender, looks, personality, beliefs, and socioeconomic status.

Intersectionality underscores that a person's identity can be both a source of discrimination and

a barrier to receiving proper aid in critical situations. Categorizing identity can lead to negative outcomes

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is total control of a person in a domestic setting. The victim can be anyone living or occupying a dwelling, not just an intimate partner.

Domestic violence encompasses not only sexual, emotional, and physical abuse but also threats and total economic control of the victim in a domestic setting.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), "1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), use of victim services, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and more."

When an individual belongs to multiple marginalized groups, their access to domestic violence support can be severely limited.

Addressing the intersectionality of identity and domestic violence is essential at all levels of society to ensure effective support for survivors.

Four Overlapping Systems

Domestic Violence and Native Americans

There is a historical link between domestic violence and colonization. Poverty, isolation, and high rates of substance abuse and mental disorders, all byproducts of colonization, contribute to the prevalence of domestic violence in Native American communities.

Prior to colonialism, physical and sexual violence was frowned upon and dealt with severely in many Native American communities. Today, domestic violence rates among Native Americans

are extremely high compared to other communities. Abusers are often of non-Native background.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, over 4 of 5 American Indian and Alaskan Native women and men (84.3% and 81.6%, respectively) have experienced domestic violence. Native women endure domestic violence and sexual assault at much higher rates than any other ethnic group.

Native American women face unique challenges that hinder aid for domestic violence victims.

One is the inability to access available resources due to location and lack of transportation. Until 2013, tribal nations did not have the authority to

prosecute non-Native Americans for crimes committed in Indian territories.

In 2013, the Violence Against Women Act was amended to grant tribal nations the jurisdiction to prosecute and hold accountable those who commit crimes on Indian territories.

Domestic Violence Within Different Gender Identities

Domestic violence affects not only heterosexual couples. Data for domestic violence among the LGBTQ+ community is hard to obtain because much of it goes unreported. However, the [2010 National Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Survey](#) found that 44% of lesbian women, 61% of bisexual women, 26% of gay men, and 37% bisexual men experience domestic violence by an intimate partner at some point in their life. One study shows that 30-50% of all transgender people experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime."

A common misconception that stops community members from reporting domestic violence is the belief that it is essentially a "straight" issue. Other misconceptions include the belief that women are

nonviolent by nature and that domestic violence within the community is mutual, with both partners equally to blame. These misconceptions, along with the fear of being "outed" or ridiculed among peers, hinder reporting.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community face unique challenges when they are victims of domestic violence, such as fear of discrimination by police, medical personnel, and other service providers.. There are few medical facilities sensitive to the needs as LGBTQ+ individuals. There are also problems dealing with legal departments when trying to obtain protection orders. In addition, many do not report domestic violence for fear of social isolation.

Domestic Violence and Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status is a reliable indicator of life outcomes, including mental and physical well-being. Low socioeconomic status is associated with lower educational attainment, poverty, and poor health, all of which negatively impact the entire society. Economic distress can raise tensions but is not the cause of intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence occurs at all economic levels.

Victims of domestic violence in lower socioeconomic status groups cannot easily walk away from abusers. They must be financially and mentally prepared, which includes finding affordable housing, legal assistance, and financial support. While some argue it is easier for victims

in higher socioeconomic statuses to leave abusers, this is a misconception. Victims often face barriers like lack of credit or rental history.

Being a victim of intimate partner violence is scary and should not have to be as equally scary when asking for help. The added barrier of being a minority within a community puts a level of anxiety on the victim that others do not feel.

The simple act of picking up a phone to make a request for help is hindered by the realization that, yet again you will be either stereotyped or frowned upon even suggesting that you need help.

Domestic Violence and Communities of Color

While researching domestic violence and communities of color, I found, "[Why we never use the phrase "communities of color."](#) on the Anti-Discrimination Center website: "The phrase often acts to sanitize segregation, . . . that you can use race or ethnicity as a proxy to be able to judge the opinions, interests, or behavior of all members of a group or neighborhood. . . The

neighborhoods created most often reflected (and still reflect) concentrations of poverty and exclusion from areas of opportunity. Describing such an area as a 'community of color' instead of a 'neighborhood that is segregated African-American' does a disservice to the historical record and suggests, erroneously, that a

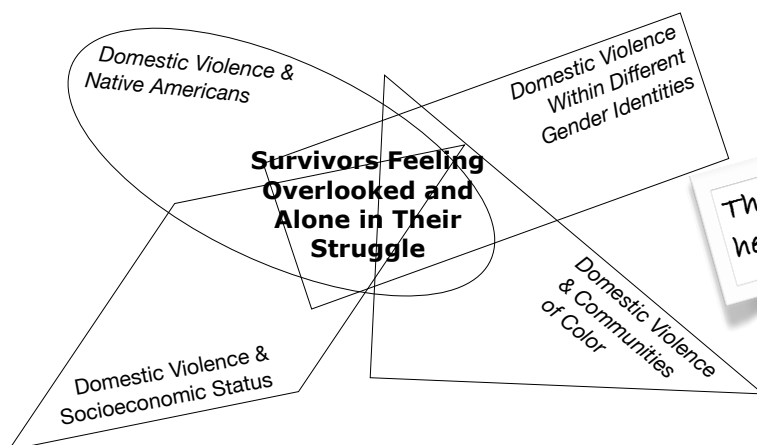
segregated status quo is acceptable or even desirable.”

Domestic violence and sexual abuse affect all socioeconomic and ethnic groups, but the obstacles and concerns survivors face in neighborhoods of color are unique. Survivors are

frequently denied culturally relevant assistance and preventative and supporting resources in their native languages. Furthermore, The lack of coordination with community-based social service agencies that help these neighborhoods exacerbate these issues, resulting in overlooked and neglected survivors.

My Conclusion

Recognizing and addressing these overlapping systems of discrimination is crucial. This research has deepened my empathy and strengthened my resolve to advocate for effective, personalized support for all survivors, ensuring no one feels overlooked or alone in their struggle.>



National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-7233

WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence
400 Patterson Lane, Charleston WV
304-965-3552

Safety Resources

Licensed Domestic Violence Programs in WV

Safety Planning

Legal Service

WV Batterer Intervention & Prevention Program



AWBW

Art Transforming Trauma

A Window Between Worlds seeks to empower individuals and communities impacted by violence and trauma through a transformative healing arts program, viewing art as a catalyst to release trauma, build resilience, and ignite social change. When individuals create art in a safe community they can be heard and respected — replacing violence and shame with safety and hope.

Flesh, Carnality, and Human Corporeality: An examination of Mayra Rivera's *Poetics of the Flesh*

By Abby Parks Humanities Graduate Student Contributor
[Lightly edited for publication]

*As tactile and tangible beings we co-exist
with others in a reciprocal circuit of touching
and being touched—from the moment we are
born to the moment we die.*

Richard Kearney



Abby Parks

Throughout history, there have been many long standing philosophical and theological discourses pertaining to human corporeal existence. From Aristotle to Rene Descartes to modern Christian philosophers, corporeality has been examined from various perspectives, but each academic has only managed to draw a mediocre conclusion.

Mayra Rivera, professor of religion and Latinx studies at Harvard University, takes a different approach in her book, *Poetics of the Flesh*, and examines human corporeal existence through philosophical, theological, and feminist lenses.

Poetics of the Flesh analyzes biblical texts in an attempt to uncover and diagnose the many discourses surrounding flesh and carnality in modern society. By identifying the Christian ideals pertaining to such concepts, she accepts their original connotations while also critiquing their influence on both gender and race.

Rivera's main argument is that Christian narratives of flesh have shaped social constructions and marginalized specific minority groups such as people of color and women. She explains, "Being seen through the mythologies of histórico-racial schema affects anyone whose body is marked negatively in society. Social fantasies pose corporeal threats to people's bodies... The specters of a histórico-racial schema are composed through long processes by which cultural representations accumulate, fuse, and interlace."

In *Anglican Theological Review*, Jodi L. A. Belcher states, "Rivera identifies flesh as the root of many long-standing critiques of the body in theology

and philosophy, and she sets out to unlock Christian imagination from connotations of flesh with sin, feminine and colonized bodies, and evil. The fruit of her labor is a beautiful invitation to reimagine and dwell in the rich complexity of enfleshed life within this world." The connotations Belcher mentions are the root of many social constructions that have in turn defined the basis for modern ideas of materiality and corporeal existence.

Karmen MacKendrick, the author of *Divine Enticement: Theological Seductions*, elaborates on this idea featured in a "Critical Research on Religion" review, saying, "Moving from ancient Christian texts to the most up-to-date material feminisms and postcolonial discourses, this book insistently returns us to the unsettled and elusive vitality of flesh even in the most unpromising theoretical contexts, and opens up the promise and possibility that our flesh, formed by those contexts, might through its practices change them in turn."

What is flesh?

From a biblical standpoint, there is no one definition that encompasses the full quality and scope of flesh. For many Christians, there is a distinct tie between flesh and spirit, with flesh representing the physical body and spirit representing the Holy Spirit, or God's love. John 3:6 (New International Version) states, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." The main distinction John makes between the constitution of flesh and the constitution of spirit is that of the material realm and that of the heavenly realm.

MackKendrick states, however, that these distinctions do not always move away from each other, but often “flow into each other.” This means that flesh influences the spirit, or the faith, of an individual, while that spirit also influences the fleshly appearance and actions of that individual. Romans 8:5 corroborates this idea, stating, “Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires.” Biblically, to live by the flesh means to live outside of the spirit and vice versa.

Rivera takes a different approach to understanding flesh. In the introduction to *Poetics of the Flesh*, she begins by saying, “Flesh is a concept prone to metaphysical excess, used not only to demonize corporeality, but also to spiritualize it”

Throughout her book, Rivera repeatedly tries to come to a sound conclusion on what constitutes flesh and how it is defined. She connects flesh directly with materiality. She elaborates: “But the effects of our visible bodies are different depending on the meanings given to each by the societies in which we live.”

For Rivera, flesh is what constitutes human materiality, while also being subject to different societies and cultures. “Flesh makes possible the ‘communication’ between the sensing and the sensed” which “gives me a certain access to the world, but it does not explain or clarify it.” Rivera rejects the sinful nature of flesh present in Christian texts and redefines it as what constitutes the material world, while also being subject to change by the world.

What is carnality?

In 2018, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association defined carnality as, “living life consumed by satisfying fleshly desires,” and as a “constant state of depravity.”

This understanding of flesh is derived from a multitude of biblical verses referring to the *desires of the flesh*. Ephesians 2:3, for example, states, “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”

Flesh is what allows humans to communicate in the world, and carnality is the effect of those communications.

The cravings of the flesh are often also referred to as being of the *earthly nature*, as in Colossians 3:5, “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” In

this sense, the flesh, or the body, is directly associated with eroticism and sexuality and with carnality.

Though Rivera offers no single definition of carnality in her book, she does reject the notion that carnality is the root of human desire and evil. To Rivera, carnality is rather seen as “the complex qualities of sensation: the silences, disruptions, and opacity that characterize the body’s relation to this world.”

Flesh is what allows humans to communicate in the world, and carnality is the effect of those communications. Whether it be desire, fear, or even happiness, these are what constitute human carnality.

Human Corporality

Despite their religious implications, flesh and carnality are essential to understanding how the material world is constructed even for individuals that fall outside of the religious umbrella. In Tiffinay King’s essay “Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies,” she writes “From the biblical,

to the political, and to the phenomenological, many differently situated people have used the term flesh. Flesh has indexed various social and ontological positions (states of being and their rank in the hierarchy) that attempt to mark the boundaries of self and other or ideal states of existence.”

Flesh is interconnectedly linked with corporeality. It is through flesh that humans are able to be suspended in space and time. Flesh gives humans a material existence, but it is that very existence that constrains and molds how we, as humans, view flesh corporeally.

The ideas and pre-conceived notions of flesh shape and constrain the way we view our bodies in relation to the world around us. Betti Mario explains in her book, *Twelve Ways of Seeing the World: Philosophies and Archetypal Worldviews*

for *Understanding Human Consciousness*, "It is not that bodies call forth feelings in us but rather, the bodies to which we refer in general terms are in reality complexes of feeling and sensation... and of these elements the I is constituted." It is through our fleshly bodies that we are able to experience human carnality.

Rivera explores this relation of carnality and the material world thoroughly, "Each body's visible traits, its place in prevailing social hierarchies, affects its exposure to the world – how the body is seen, heard, approached. Visible attributes thus affect how it sees, speaks, and approaches the world." She recognizes the interconnectivity of social constructions of flesh and how individuals view their own materiality.

People often begin to construct their actions to fit into the finely lined categories to which they believe they should subscribe, based on pre-existing notions of what defines a person. Rivera elaborates on this further, stating, "These actions enter into the constitution of the flesh of the world, which in turn coils over each body and weaves its flesh. The social-material world touches upon and enfolds even the tiniest element of human carnality."

Each person is shaped by how they see and are seen by the world. It is through this connection of

People often begin to construct their actions to fit into the finely lined categories to which they believe they should ascribe, based off pre-existing notions of what defines a person.

the carnal to the material that entire societies are influenced. "Social ideas in turn produce material realities that shape our bodies;" it is through this perception that we interact and exist within the material world; our perception constitutes human corporeality.

Conclusion

The terms, flesh and carnality, are not just relevant to religious frameworks, but to the understanding of how the material world is shaped and influenced by social interactions and perceptions. In Christian theology, human flesh is the root of all evil desire and is what constitutes the existence of carnality. Turning from

this viewpoint and seeing flesh as purely a means of connection to the material world offers a greater understanding of corporeal existence.

Social constructions are formed from already existing ideas of how flesh should interact with the world. These social constructions are what determine our modes of action within society. People are often confined and limited by these ideas of the ideal flesh. Our corporeal representations of our flesh are constituted by the cultures and social discourses in which we interact. Through flesh the world becomes accessible to us, and through flesh we form and maintain corporeal reality. ###

Abby's Reflection on Rewriting

I hadn't thought about this paper for nearly a year. Once I was able to put myself in the right headspace, I found the rewriting process fulfilling. This is such an interesting topic with a dense material, but I was able to jump right back into the text, as if I had read the book a few weeks ago.

I am proud of the overall structure and body, but by far I am proudest of my conclusion. It took several days of tweaking and rewriting it over and over again, but I was finally able to produce something that sounded fluid and with a sense of completeness.

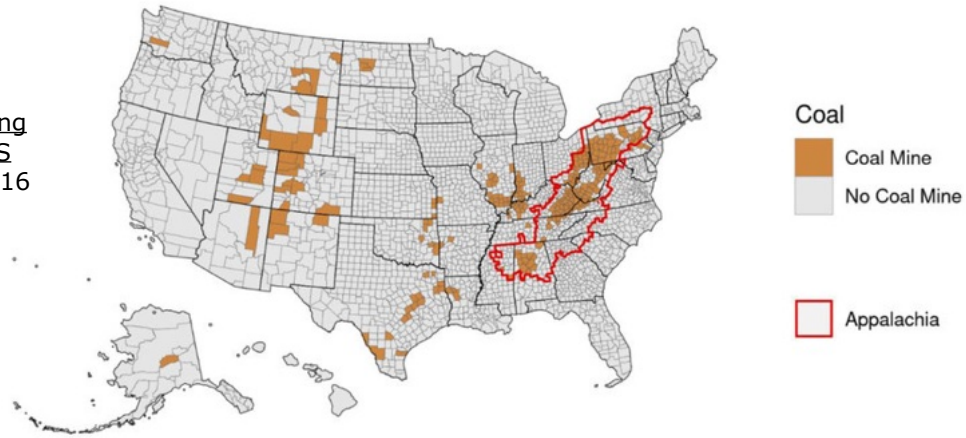
There are parts that I am not 100% happy with. I had a hard time deciding the right placement for quotations within my paragraphs. Do I put the quote before my argument? Do I put it after? I often think my papers sound and look better when I use a quote to corroborate something I just said. A quote is a

great way to back up the information previously mentioned, and you don't always need to explain it afterwards.

I had a lot of fun working on this paper. Before the rewrites, my paper was okay, but it was a little choppy and some of my points were left dangling without a sound conclusion. Now I feel as though my paper is easy to follow. Perhaps this is simply because I have read it over hundreds of times, but I hope that others will think so as well. ###

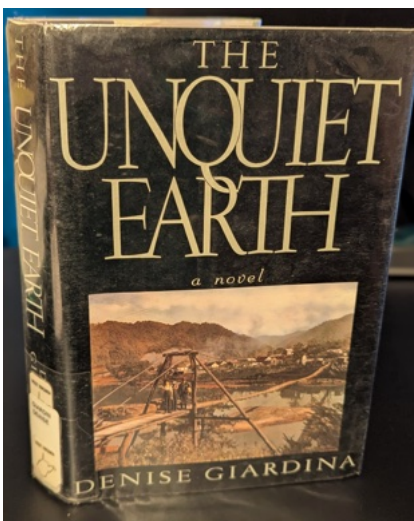
As a native Appalachian, education and expressive thought has always been important to Abby. From a very young age she was determined to break down the stereotypes that have burdened West Virginians for decades. After completing her undergrad degree with two majors, Psychology and Humanities, and a minor in Classical Latin, the Graduate Humanities Program offered her the opportunity to continue her education while focusing on what she loves, ancient culture and history.

Coal mining
in the US
2001 - 2016



An Open-minded, Intelligent Appalachian Man

By **Dylan Haynes**, Graduate Humanities Student Contributor
[Lightly edited for publication.]



Denise Giardina has established herself as one of the most noteworthy Appalachian authors of the 20th century with works like *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*. Giardina, a West Virginia coalfield native, strategically creates characters

and plot lines that address and counteract many stereotypes and derogatory assumptions made by outsiders regarding Appalachians.

In *The Unquiet Earth*, Giardina's character, Dillon Freeman, bucks Appalachian male stereotypes by representing the academically intelligent, politically aware, and universally moral humanitarian Appalachian man.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Dillon Freeman is his concern for the greater good of humanity. Although a bit rough around the edges at times, Dillon is very informed in regard to crimes against humanity occurring globally, nationally, and locally.

When Dillon was a young man, he joined the British military to participate in World War II in early 1940, before America joined in the cause. Dillon simply claims: "I'm thinking I might go off and fight in the war. I don't care for that Hitler."

This action speaks volumes, as most young people would not become so consumed by the evil-doing of a foreign dictator that they volunteer to participate in a war on international soil, let alone wear the uniform of another country.

As many believe that Appalachians are typically ignorant of global affairs, Dillon exemplifies a political awareness and humanitarian concern untouched by the apathetic Appalachian stereotype.

A section of the novel narrated by Dillon's mother, Carrie, also sheds light on Dillon's interesting political views and uncharacteristic levels of international awareness, once again contrasting stereotypes. "Then I was proud of Dillon, because he got into the fight before such people. He hated the Fascists because that is the way I raised him and because it is his nature." "Such people" references the American Coal Company, who she claims thought highly of Hitler prior to Pearl Harbor, as Hitler was fighting the spread of communism.

verbalize his disgust for such disregard to humankind.

Dillon's demand of respect for the fallen enemy is uncharacteristic of most Americans during the period following the war.

Dillon's physical entrapment in the mine leads to a transcendentalist thought, shedding light upon his unorthodox ideologies regarding life and the greater purpose, and acting against the Appalachian stereotype that men are incapable of philosophical thought outside of what they are taught in church. "I can reach out and touch my

atheist, she does allow a questioning of the traditional religious portrayal of God, a topic more than often neglected by other platforms of Appalachian literature. Dillon expresses:

I have never been a regular churchgoer, not even when I was in the war and expecting to get my head blown off any minute. The God I believe in doesn't take kindly to people sitting around in buildings feeling pious. I fancy a God that as soon level a church building as look at it.

This opposition to the stereotype regarding

"As many believe that Appalachians are typically ignorant of global affairs, Dillon exemplifies a political awareness and humanitarian concern untouched by the apathetic Appalachian stereotype."

Dillon's ongoing struggles against the corporate coal industry are an important part of Giardina's countering of the Appalachian stereotypes, as many outsiders assume that West Virginians are blindly loyal to these large corporations.

Dillon's reaction to a peculiar gift given to his cousin, Rachel, further indicates his outspoken humanitarian concerns and global awareness, pulling him further once more from the stereotype of the ignorant Appalachian man. The skull of a dead Japanese soldier was given to Rachel, and Dillon was quick to speak his mind on the matter. "It was a person. You can't carry a person's head around like this," and "They're people, goddamn it!" were phrases used by Dillon to

world . . . It's a good thing we will die or life would be worthless, we wouldn't even know what it is."

This philosophical thought could be a tool used by Giardina to demonstrate the ways in which young, informally educated Appalachian men are capable of complex ideologies.

Credit must also be paid to Giardina for the phrase: "I can reach out and touch my world." Although textual usage represents a piece of shale trapping men in a coal mine, the phrase could also create an analogy for the way that West Virginians were trapped by the community monopolization techniques utilized by corporate coal companies.

Although Giardina does not explicitly label Dillon as an

Appalachians as Bible thumpers, incapable of developing a unique opinion regarding religion, is dismantled by Giardina's kind-hearted, monotheistic, questioner of the "piety" surrounding the traditional Christian church.

Giardina carefully crafts an admirable image of Dillon through the eyes of Rachel's daughter, Jackie, especially in comparison to Rachel's husband, Tony.

As Dillon and Jackie are first cousins, and Dillon is more than likely Jackie's (secret) biological father, their illicit relationship plays an important role in the context of *The Unquiet Earth*. Dillon quickly begins supporting and encouraging Jackie's interest in learning. When Jackie is young, she has a Civil

War game that no one wants to play, but Dillon is quick to play the game as well as listen to Jackie's stories of the blue and grey uniformed cavalymen.

Soon after, Dillon purchases *Charlotte's Web* for Jackie during a trip to Charleston. As these events take place during the first significant times Jackie and Dillon spend together, Giardina is making it clear what type of father Dillon is: one concerned with the education and hobbies of Jackie.

Dillon's encouragement of Jackie's interests in literature stem from his own, as he

Rachel explains, "I have never cared much for politics, nor thought deeply about why the world works the way it does, why some are rich and some are poor, why the coal companies do what they do. Dillon is obsessed with such things. . . ." This opinion of Dillon by another person is vital in Giardina's cultivation of the politically-versed, socioeconomically-concerned Appalachian man.

Further insight to Dillon's uncharacteristic set of morals is demonstrated as he becomes more involved in the coal strikes.

between Dillon and Sim, Giardina addresses the incredibly false assumption that all Appalachians possess racist beliefs.

Giardina writes Dillon as inquisitive of government authority from the very beginning, and this curiosity only intensifies as the novel progresses.

When an AmeriCorps volunteer is sent to Blackberry Creek to aid the "impoverished West Virginians," Dillon is suspicious. He says, "You work for the government, and the government and the company,

"Dillon's encouragement of Jackie's interests in literature stem from his own, as he represents a well-read although not formally educated Appalachian man."

represents a well-read although not formally educated Appalachian man. Dillon expresses a passion for reading multiple times throughout the text. "I love to read. Just now I have a Sam Spade mystery novel from the library. I have to limit myself on mysteries or I will finish all the library has and there will be nothing left." Dillon's interest in mystery novels conveys two messages from Giardina: that men do in fact read for pleasure, and that Dillon is well-versed within the realm of critical thinking.

Giardina exemplifies the sometimes rebellious nature of Appalachian men by pairing the characteristic with the politically informed Dillon when he begins his strife with a corporate coal company.

Dillon's progressive social beliefs are expanded when the reader is introduced to Sim Gore, a Black coal miner and activist.

Dillon is continually chastising his cousin, Brigham, for his small-minded, racist comments in regard to Gore and his workforce of Black miners. When Dillon is asked why a Black person was elected president of the mining local, he simply replies: "Because he's smart." Nearing the meeting of the union, Dillon threatens his cronies to ensure they do not call any of Gore's men by an offensive name. Dillon's fondness for Gore is found throughout the novel: ". . . he is a good man to work with, he knows his job...."

Through the friendship and coalfield activism partnership

they're the same. They didn't send you in here to get anything done. They sent you in here to make folks think they care. It saves their asses until they can think up something else."

Such strong opinion demonstrates of political awareness on the national level, and, although Appalachians are not portrayed to be submissive in regard to the government's authority, many believe that occupants of the region are simply passive due to an assumed ignorance of current events.

This awareness demonstrated by a male character in lieu of the frequently used "revolutionary female" adds yet another layer to Giardina's careful characterization of an open-minded, intelligent

Appalachian man. Dillon Freeman is a character that should not be disregarded within the realm of Appalachian literature.

Giardina's creation of Dillon represents an Appalachian man capable of groundbreaking thought, liberal morals, and a deep concern for the greater good of humanity as well as his local coal community. ###

Dylan's Reflection on Rewriting

I was reading *The Unquiet Earth* at the hospital when my Dad died. The character Dillon Freeman reminded me so much of my Dad that when I was assigned a literary analysis paper two weeks after his death, I chose to write about this character. I was desperate to be with my Dad a little longer, even

if it was by analyzing the actions of a fictional character.

I enjoyed revisiting this piece from undergrad because I forgot how much I loved this book. I took "Appalachian Literature" to fulfill a requirement for my Bachelor's in English at Shawnee State University, unaware that I was about to meet my soulmate in genre form.

This story made me fall in love with Appalachian literature, a love that remains seven years later. Additionally, my husband is named Dillon, and I love that guy, too.

The relevance of analyzing depictions of rural masculinity feels more important now than ever. Appalachian masculinity takes many forms, and Dillon Freeman is an example of how "traditional" machismo isn't the only way to present oneself to

the world. Giardina helps us understand this by presenting a lovable character who is intelligent and kind, and not ashamed of these traits. ###

Dylan Haynes has taught 12th grade English at Meigs High School in Pomeroy, Ohio for four years. She has a Bachelor's in English from Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, OH. She will complete her Master's in humanities this summer. Her scholarly interests include the intersectionality of the Appalachian experience with other cultures, the impact of the opioid epidemic on Appalachian culture, and literary depictions of Appalachian Ohio (she hopes to contribute to these depictions if she ever has the time). She lives in Meigs County with her daughter, husband, and their pets. When not teaching or learning, she enjoys running and lifting, drawing and writing, watching history documentaries, and selling vintage clothes online.

Editor's Note: Every book has a story of passing through many or a few hands. Dylan's review of The Unquiet Earth sent me down the hill to our local library, which had a copy of the book, thank goodness. I wanted to read it before publishing the newsletter and was facing a deadline.

When the librarian opened the hardbound book, however, the front board hung limply from the spine, and was in tatters, revealing the netting usually hidden but now exposed. (Much, as I could imagine if the book were alive, to its embarrassment.) The dust jacket and plastic cover had kept the damage private.

The librarian showed the book to his supervisor, noting that it had been checked out either 13 or 33 times. Seeing my surprise turn into sorrow and feeling my urgency increase, the supervisor told him to check it out to me, but to make a note so I wouldn't be charged for the damage. She said, under her breath, that it would likely be taken out of circulation.

So, even before I walk out the door, even before I've read it, I have a personal relationship with this particular copy. As a book lover, am I sad about its poor condition or glad it's been read so many times?



Summer & Fall **2025 SCHEDULES**

Faculty member, Cat Pleska, continuously delights her fans with her creative non-fiction. Her newly released essay in Still: The Journal (Fall 2024) acts as a thoughtful follow-up to Dylan's review of The Quiet Earth. Thank you, Cat.

Excerpt from

"The Ineffability of Home"

by Cat Pleska

< He swayed from foot to foot, looking down at the floor. I stopped moving, realizing he was nervous. I repeated softly: "What did you need to say?"

The young man stood before me, almost at attention. He whipped off his ball cap as if he suddenly realized he was wearing it in front of me, his teacher. He had asked me earlier if I would wait after class.

"What did you want to talk to me about, Jason?"

I moved to turn off the computers around us. We were in the computer lab for English 101, back in the day when we had students in class one day a week and took them to the lab the other day to write their papers, practice typing in Word.

He swayed from foot to foot, looking down at the floor. I stopped moving, realizing he was nervous. I repeated softly: "What did you need to say?"

He looked up and blurted out, "Professor, my parents want me to quit college and come home to work. To get a job in the mines."

"Oh." I sat down on a nearby chair. I motioned for him to sit in the one next to it, but he shook his head.

"Well, Jason . . . how do you feel about that?"

He shook his head again. "I don't want to, but I don't have no choice. I want to stay in college and study business." I remained silent for a beat, trying to think of what to say.

"Why do your parents want you to work in the mines?"

"They say college is a waste of time and money. I need to be home and working. They didn't want me to go but gave in 'cause I begged. They figured I'd realize I hated college. They want me in the mines like my daddy and grandpa."

"I see. So, they're not going to pay for your school then?"

"No ma'am."

"Jason, could you stay here, maybe get a part time job, maybe rent a small apartment with someone, perhaps apply for a loan for school?" I was ignorant

then of what it took to get a loan, not realizing his parent's credit was necessary.

"I thought of that ma'am, but I don't know no one here. They said they'd take my pickup truck back, too, if I don't quit and come home."

"Jason . . . I'm so sorry. I know you've been enjoying your classes."

He smiled. "Oh yes! I kinda like writing. I didn't do well in high school. The teachers didn't seem to care. At least in my school. I really like your class. You make writing fun. You let me write about football!"

I smiled. Many of my men students, a few women, liked to write about football, basketball, soccer, tennis. Most chaffed at writing about anything else, though Jason hadn't seemed to mind.

"Well, I hate this for you. I wish I had an answer to your problem. I know that coal mining is a strong tradition in many families. I also know it's a way to make good money. Is it possible you could work in the mines to save up for school?"

He looked away from me then answered, "If I go into the mines, there won't be no way out."

~

I never saw Jason again. He quit mid-semester, and I supposed he went home to Southern West Virginia and into the mines. It's been 25 years since that conversation and in my classes, to this day, I hear something similar to it: Can't leave 'cause my family doesn't want me to go away; I have to stay and support my mom because my dad overdosed last year; I have to work and help pay for food; my grandparents need me; I don't want to leave my state and if I get my degree there are no jobs here.

Reasons abound now.

~

West Virginia is rife with the idea that coal mines are everywhere and we all work in them, always have. That is not the truth at all yet the attitude persists. The marketing idea resounds like this: coal provides your power and more cheaply than anything else.

The economy of this state has been formed under many governors and legislators, whatever party they



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represented, but all kowtowed to big extractive corporations. Money flowed, lots of it—outside this state. Change comes exceedingly slow here, economic-wise, but there are clear signals that it is shifting; however, the poverty persists, and the family bonds are weakening as we suffer a lost generation to drugs. Futility is often the sensibility in much of our region. Economic colonization has remained for the past 150 years, and the long-time citizens are convinced through constant rhetoric that it's all our fault, a mantra reinforced generation after generation. And recently, it has become further entrenched through national politics, berating us for not only our own misery but of the nation's.

This was the spider's web of misinformation and realities that captured Jason all those years ago and many people now. Why educate when you don't need a formal education to operate within various industries, the work environment still most prevalent?

Information, false or true, spreads like despair, like hope. It flows in and out of our lives and floods us with so many contradictions that it is hard to find answers. Many are working on untangling us, of restoring flow: of money, of hope, of opportunities, of dreams. But their voices are lost in the cacophony of a ruling roar and fear deliberately spread like a virus.

If Jason were standing before me now, and I am still a writing teacher at a university, his laments about

leaving college may still be plausible. The reasons may differ slightly, but the pull of family, of familial responsibility, of working in industry still dwells in our experience, what we see; what we know. Maybe we are reluctant to protest because love has been denied or not easily accessed when faced with so many personal troubles.

I don't have any easier answers for the Jasons of now. I might say to them:

"Jason, there are ways and means to help you stay in school, but I understand that familial pull. I am here because of it. I found a way to make my stay here in this state work, but I will never say it was easy." Maybe such decisions are not so challenging elsewhere in this country. But another truth, my parents, all that time ago, were dismayed with the way college changed me. I spoke differently; I knew things they didn't even know to ask questions about. But I learned to come back to them and speak with them in the language they gifted me with when I was born. I laughed with them and listened to their stories. I came to understand the pull and undertow of family and how they also remind you to recall the softness of clear cool water and the clarity of who you are.

I want the Jasons of this region to sail away on the dreams education can build, but when you weigh anchor realize you can return and anchor again and again at home. >



Trish Hatfield here, letting you know this is my last regular Graduate Humanities to edit. My first issue was the Fall of 2011. I've tried to retire two other times since then, having dreams of finishing a memoir and visiting distant family more often. Those dreams vanished – twice – as I considered the reality of the laughter, learning, and opportunities to use my strengths that I experience within the program. But the dreams have resurfaced and this 26th issue is the one to say good-bye with and carry my memories and relationships from this time with me as I travel down a different path.

Many thanks to Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter for entrusting me with this role. I learned a great deal from him about thinking, writing, and publishing. And I give a shout of gratitude out to all who've shared their writing with me over the years. I hope our paths cross again sometime soon!