

critique



A Ransom Fellowship Publication

2012 Issue 1

CAN WE, WILL WE REDEEM THE VAMPIRE?

Poetry by
Scott Schuleit

*Phlox: a Flower by
any other name*

A secularist
pursuit of
compassion

Midnight in Paris

CRITIQUE



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ABOUT CRITIQUE

Critique is part of the work of Ransom Fellowship founded by Denis and Margie Haack in 1982. Together, they have created a ministry that includes lecturing, mentoring, writing, teaching, hospitality, feeding, and encouraging those who want to know more about what it means to be a Christian in the everyday life of the twenty-first century.

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Everyone on Ransom's mailing list also receives *Notes from Toad Hall*, a newsletter by Margie Haack in which she reflects on what it means to be faithful in the ordinary and routine of daily life and gives news about Ransom's ministry.

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2012:1 CONTENTS



1 FROM THE EDITOR

Resolutions not made

DIALOGUE

2 Readers respond

3 POETRY

by Scott Schuleit

DISCERNING LIFE

6 A secularist pursuit
of compassion

8

READING THE WORLD

Can we, will we
redeem the vampire?

14

RESOURCES

Phlox

A flower by any
other name

16

DARKENED ROOM

Midnight in Paris
Nostalgia traps the soul



FROM THE EDITOR: RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions not made

by Denis Haack



I have never been one for New Year's resolutions, mainly because I have never been able to keep any I've made much beyond the end of January. Novelist John Hassler once commented at a reading on the publication of *The Dean's List* that he had discovered the secret of happiness involved lowering expectations. I believe he is onto something significant. So, maintaining a long and honored tradition, I have made no resolutions this year and thus have removed the possibility of having one more thing to feel guilty about as the weeks pass. It's a good system, and I recommend it.

Though these are definitely not resolutions, there are a few things I would like to make part of my life this year.

I'd like to be a better listener. Sometimes I think that the best single phrase summary of my life would be "learning to hear." There are so many reasons to desire this that listing them all would be a wearisome task. To the best of my knowledge, there is not a single reason that can be found against the idea.

I'd like to pay more attention to creation. I live in the city, work in an office, and so my brushes with nature tend to be that—brushes. I tend to brush past plants and flowers and other fellow creatures on my way to something else. But they are fellow

creatures, they reveal the Creator's glory, and their existence is not an afterthought in the cosmic scheme of things. I should not live as if they were an afterthought.

I'd like to not change the world. The political and religious pundits that keep urging us to accomplish this have really gotten on my nerves. The entire enterprise seems presumptuous, for the simple reason that only God can do such a thing. I am called to be faithful in the ordinary and routine of my life. I am to live out the truth of the biblical story under Christ's lordship in whatever corner of life I find myself in and in every aspect of reality and culture my existence touches. Faithfulness in the ordinary—it is more than enough.

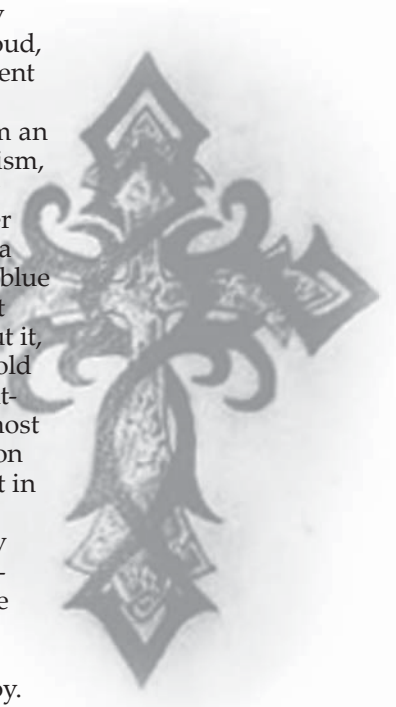
I'd like to read more poetry. William Cowper (1731-1800), one of the very few Christian hymn writers who happened to be a great poet, believed that poetry was the original form of natural human speech prior to the fall into sin. I think he may have been onto something. Poetry cannot be hurried, is best read aloud, and requires reflection—all excellent reasons to enjoy it more.

I'd like to see more tattoos. I am an introvert with no gifts in evangelism, but I do enjoy talking with young adults about the things that matter most. Just this morning the barista who made my latte had beautiful blue ink on her upper arm peeking out under her sleeve. I asked her about it, and she lifted up her sleeve and told me the story behind it. It's fascinating to hear people's stories, and most of the stories about tattoos touch on events or ideas that are significant in their lives.

I'd like to get art I don't like. By "get" I don't mean "buy," but "understand." I find it easy to skip the galleries that feature postmodern art, instead concentrating on art I find easy to comprehend and enjoy. Nothing wrong with that, and if I

have one more chance to see paintings by Rembrandt this next year, I'll take it. But I don't live in Rembrandt's day, and the artists at work today are part of the cultural conversation that is exploring the perennial issues of life, meaning, morality, and death. I like to have at least a hint of what that conversation includes.

I'd like to have meals take more time. Good food should be savored and the conversation at the table unhurried. Of course we all say we don't have enough time as it is, but that is really just a convenient lie—we always have time for what we find significant. There is something really fine about sharing a meal together. It is, Scripture teaches, a foretaste of the time when the Lord of all the far-flung galaxies will serve us food and wine in a celebration fit for a well-beloved bride. I'm especially looking forward to the wine. ■



DIALOGUE: READERS RESPOND



To the editor:

We are trying to get her started early on an informed Christian worldview. :)

Matt, Lindsay, and
Evie Kinnick
Fargo, ND

Denis Haack responds:

Evie: You have marvelous taste, and I hope that extends to loving Runaway Bunny as well.

To the editor:

Thanks for your review of *The Tree of Life* [Critique 2011:4]. Don't you think that when the Agnus Dei is played during the scenes where the mother finally accepts that the Lord is in control, (as I interpret it) that it is recognition of the atonement and the Lamb of God/Christ is central to this moment in the film? Just a thought...

Warmly,
Henry Tazelaar
Scottsdale, AZ

Denis Haack responds:

Henry: Throughout the film, Terrence Malick weaves in some very strong images—some visual, some in the glorious soundtrack—that have deep Christian meaning. There are scenes of baptism, confirmation, an excerpt from a homily, and a quiet scene of praying alone, kneeling in

an otherwise empty sanctuary. And you are quite correct that the Agnus Dei, along with some other wonderful musical selections bring not just a vague mysticism to the film but distinctly Christian content.

Alleluia
Alleluia
For the Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia
Alleluia
For the Lord God Almighty reigns

Alleluia
Holy
Holy are You Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb

You are holy
Holy are you Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb

Amen

Whenever we approach art, there is a subjective element that is part of the aesthetic experience of beauty. I certainly was deeply moved as I watched the film,

and found myself by the end quietly worshipping God for the goodness of his creation and the reality of forgiveness. But I also felt that Malick never affirmed the essential character of Christ's atonement for the forgiveness he celebrated in the film—that was something I read into Malick's presentation from my own faith commitment.

The question, it seems to me, involves how Malick weaves all the music and images together to produce his very wonderful film. As a Christian I loved these distinctly Christian references, but *The Tree of Life* never finally convinced me that Malick is committed to the Christian understanding of faith in opposition to all others. All these images and music lend a religious atmosphere to the flow of the film, but the forgiveness finally offered, though precious, seems to me to be finally limited to what humans can produce on their own. Remove the distinctly Christian references by making them more religiously neutral, include sweeping orchestral music that is not a hymn to Christ, and it seems to me the basic plotline of *The Tree of Life* could remain untouched.

Source: online "Berlioz: 10. Agnus Dei [Requiem, Op. 5 (Grande Messe des Morts)]." Performed by Wandsworth School Boys Choir, London Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra, Sir Colin Davis (http://blogs.indiewire.com/theplaylist/archives/music_list_all_37_songs_features_in_terrence_malicks_the_tree_of_life/#)

To the editor:

This is just a brief note to tell you how welcome *Critique* and *Notes from Toad Hall* are. When I find them in my mailbox, I stop everything, sit down, and read cover to cover.

God bless you both,
Patrick Davitt
Rochester, MN

Denis Haack responds:

Patrick: Such kind words, and our gratefulness (I shared your letter with Margie) for your taking the time to write is exactly the sort of motivation we need as we begin a new year of writing. Thank you. ■

POETRY: SCOTT SCHULEIT



Sanibel Island Snake

*A coiled orange-gold whip
sheathed in a tight weave of scales—
a corded length of thick,
sinuous symmetry—
not needing to be cracked,
for immediately after
the freeze and wonder of fear,
this small boy turned,
and with sincere passion,
disappeared.*

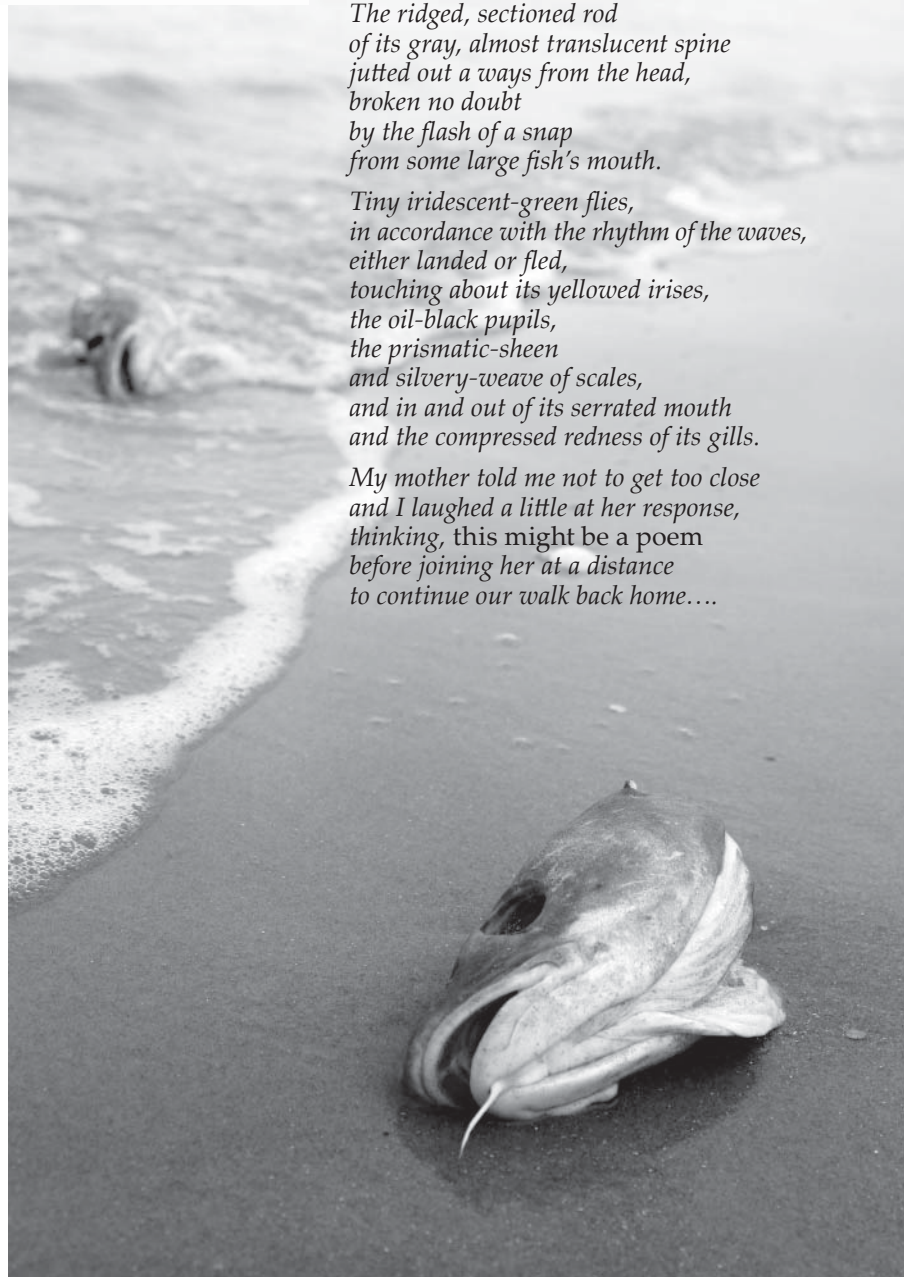
Fish Head

*As I analyzed it
my mother moved away,
cushioning herself from its coarseness.
It lay on the vast beach
where the sand meets the wrinkled,
foam-edged fringe of the ocean.
In a long, sweeping movement,
the next row of hungry waves rushed
then roared into whiteness, boiling, hissing,
thinning out into a sliding sheet,
causing it to lift then gently sway,
the glassy, light-scribbled water receding,
settling it back down
against the dark-brown smoothness
of swiftly drying sands....*

*The ridged, sectioned rod
of its gray, almost translucent spine
juttied out a ways from the head,
broken no doubt
by the flash of a snap
from some large fish's mouth.*

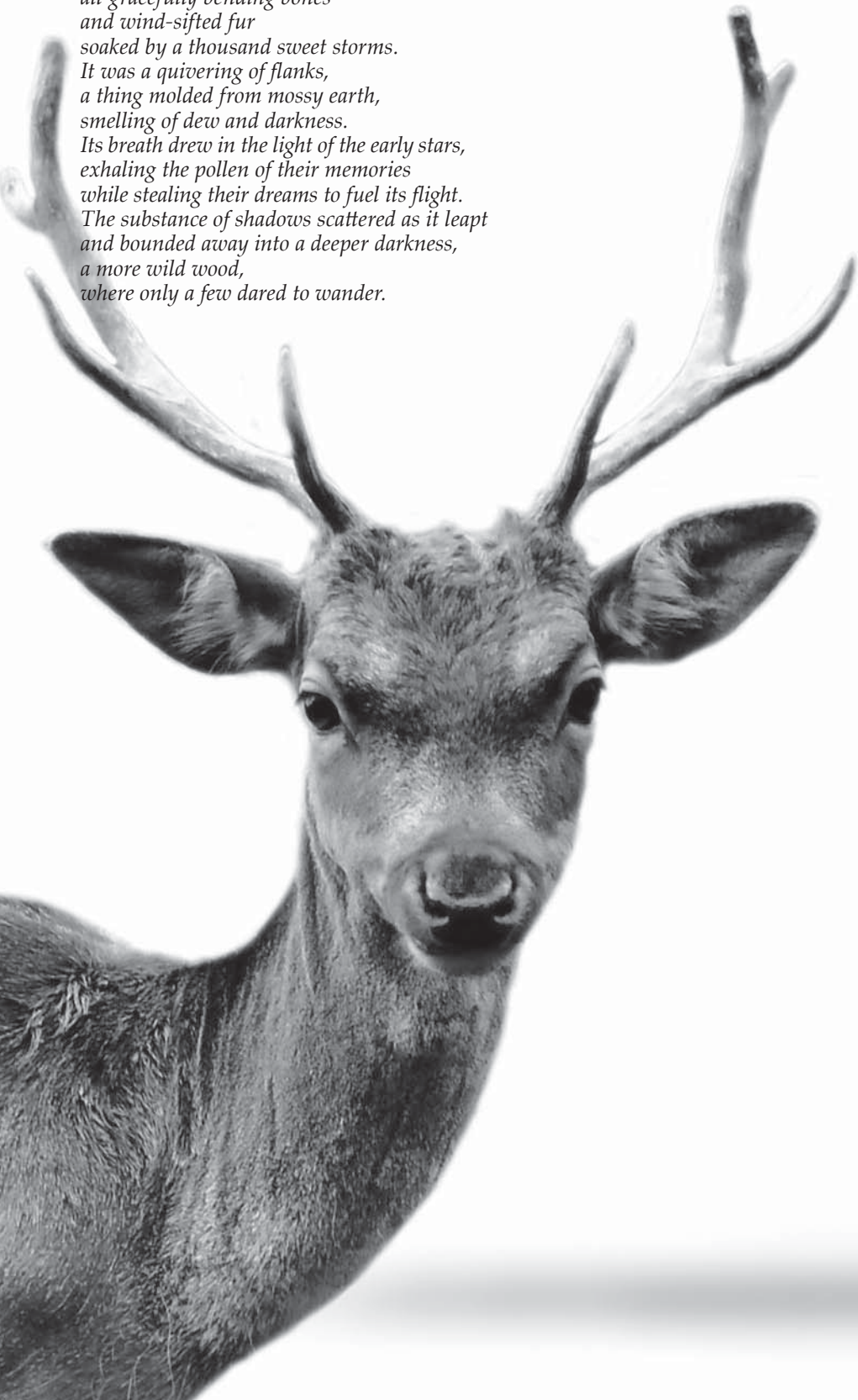
*Tiny iridescent-green flies,
in accordance with the rhythm of the waves,
either landed or fled,
touching about its yellowed irises,
the oil-black pupils,
the prismatic-sheen
and silvery-weave of scales,
and in and out of its serrated mouth
and the compressed redness of its gills.*

*My mother told me not to get too close
and I laughed a little at her response,
thinking, this might be a poem
before joining her at a distance
to continue our walk back home....*



Wildwood

*The wildness of its blood sounded through the forest.
A faint light touched its dark glistening eyes.
It was beautiful to behold,
all gracefully bending bones
and wind-sifted fur
soaked by a thousand sweet storms.
It was a quivering of flanks,
a thing molded from mossy earth,
smelling of dew and darkness.
Its breath drew in the light of the early stars,
exhaling the pollen of their memories
while stealing their dreams to fuel its flight.
The substance of shadows scattered as it leapt
and bounded away into a deeper darkness,
a more wild wood,
where only a few dared to wander.*



Worm

*While walking this morning,
I came across a worm
fleeing rain-saturated earth.
Without thinking, it began inching
over a desert of blacktop,
oblivious to its vastness
or the sudden storms of hard soles
and tornadoes of rubber tread
common to the area.
And of course, while exposed,
there was always the threat
of a fall of wings,
of a thunderous flapping-rush
dropping lightning flashes
of a scissoring beak.*

*It was a mixture of sickly colors,
of dark, reddish and light browns
and on one part of the worm
there was a milky, pus-colored patch.
And beneath its translucent, segmented skin,
one long, black, vein-like thing
could be seen running its length.*

*It moved by a curious motion;
first its front part slid forward,
then its body contracted, looping
before repeating the movement.
By this method, though certainly efficient
for its element, it sadly and slowly
made its way over the black desert.
Grit and pieces of dry grass
clung to it as it dragged along,
agitating its skin,
the delicate, protective sheen
of its mucus-like sheath
now dried and rubbed away.*

*It then, in an attempt to rid itself
of the abrasive torments,
began to thrash and squirm in agony,
wriggling and balling up
in spasmodic jerks and movements,
strange fits and hysterics.
Soon it stopped, becoming wise,
and in an attempt to save its life,
began scraping back
to the jungle of grass.*



Hawk

*A dark, graceful, distant speck,
wings probably outstretched, angling,
veering for stability, rooted in wind,
balanced in beauty, floating slow, slow,
patient for earth's arrival, descending
like erosion, weathering the air, circling
through blue coolness and cloud vapor,
sculpting, preening feathers in atmosphere
until black talons clutch rough branch,
flaking off scratchy bark.*

The author, that God may
be exalted rather than
man, is striving to avoid
self-promotion, including of-
fering detailed bios due to his
tendency to become proud
under the slightest provocation.

A secularist pursuit of

by Denis Haack

I first became aware of Alain de Botton by reading his *The Architecture of Happiness*, a book of uncommon insight and sensitivity to the human condition. His exploration of place and humanness, of how the shape of our buildings in turn shapes us and the nature of the community we experience, reveals a mind that has been nurtured by careful observation, unhurried reflection, and wide reading. I commend *The Architecture of Happiness* to you.

Alain de Botton is also founder and chair of an enterprise called The School of Life, located in London (www.theschooloflife.com), where ideas are seen as important and where those ideas are intentionally linked to daily life. "The School of Life is a new enterprise offering good ideas for everyday living," the Web site explains. "We are based in a small shop in central London where we offer a variety of programmes [sic] and services concerned with how to live wisely and well. We address such questions as why work is often unfulfilling, why relationships can be so challenging, why it's ever harder to stay calm, and what one could do to try to change the world for the better. The School of Life is a place to step back and think intelligently about these and other concerns. You will not be cornered by any dogma but directed towards a variety of ideas—from philosophy to literature, psychology to the visual

arts—that tickle, exercise and expand your mind. You'll meet other curious, sociable, and open-minded people in an atmosphere of exploration and enjoyment." If I lived in London, I would certainly look forward to attending some of their lectures and discussions.

The School of Life is worth noting for several reasons. For one thing, it challenges many of the easy stereotypes Christians tend to hold about secularists. For another, their materials and lectures—at least the ones I've read and listened to—are well crafted and astute. Even when I have disagreed, the challenge has deepened my own thinking, forcing me to dig past surface ideas to the deeper issues involved. The School of Life cherishes truth and wants to help human beings flourish in a world where falsehoods proliferate and brokenness haunts everything we seek to accomplish.

For the month of December (2011), The School of Life sponsored a project they defined as an attempt to help people find creative ways to demonstrate compassion, to learn to reach out to others instead of remaining locked in the confines of their own narrow boundaries. Day by day, a task was assigned that people could choose to accomplish. Each was designed to be unobtrusive, simple, and accessible, a small step towards caring for others, a practical way to learn to put the idea of compassion into actual practice.

Task 1: Next time you're on public transport, identify the person who is least "like you," perhaps by age, appearance, or manner, or the person you feel least drawn to. Then, internally, wish them well, hope that their life is happy. That's it.

Task 2: Think of someone you know who is ill or sad. Take them a little gift of, for example: the most comforting book you know, the most cheerful flower you can find, the best music you've heard on a mix-CD (remember those?), the tastiest treat, or the softest socks. Remember that taking the gift is only an excuse to see them and listen to how they're really doing.

Task 4: "The hidden thoughts in other people's heads are the great darkness that surrounds us," writes the historian of conversation Theodore Zeldin. Have a conversation with a stranger today. Write one thing about it that surprised you.

Task 6: Go through your phone/address book and find somebody you've lost touch with and give them a ring. Tell them the truth, saying something like, "I feel sad we've lost touch and I'd like to hear how you're doing." Who knows where the conversation will lead—but you're making a connection, you're acknowledging your past relationship, and you're saying that they are in your thoughts which is why you called.

Task 10: Say hello to someone who is homeless: People who spend their days on the streets often talk about how painful it is to be ignored by the hundreds of people who pass by them. You don't need to give



compassion

money. Just a quick hello and a smile will do.

Task 11: Take a photograph of yourself in somebody else's shoes. Literally. In their shoes. Share the photograph on our Facebook page and write a sentence or two about the person whose shoes you are wearing. Ask yourself, what does the world look like if I imagine being this person. It could be your partner, somebody at work, even a stranger you've struck up a conversation with.

Task 14: As winter draws in, one of the loveliest sounds is the blackbird's call at dusk. Make a gesture of thanks and connection by leaving birdfeed out over winter—don't stop till the seasons turn warm and fruitful again.

Task 15: We all have times where we are angry at ourselves. But would we be as furious with a friend for the same reason? Be kind to yourself. Turn your compassion inward as well as outward.

Task 20: Have you just finished a good book? Why not leave it in a public space for someone else to pick up and enjoy?

Task 23: The most generous gift you can offer someone is the act of unconditional listening. For a whole day, listen intently to every person you have a conversation with. Do not interject with your own stories, opinions, or advice. Simply ask to hear more from them. See how their sense of peace grows and how much more you learn.

Task 24: It's difficult to know what to do when someone on the street is begging and asks you for money. Giving cash may do no good—but why not try, for your month of compassion, cutting down on buying takeout coffee and snacks for yourself and, instead, offering others who might need it a hot drink, a bite to eat, and a kind word.

Task 25: The philosopher Nietzsche wrote, "Among the small but endlessly abundant and therefore very effective things that science ought to heed more than the great, rare things, is goodwill. I mean those expressions of a friendly disposition in interactions, that smile of the eye, those handclasps.... It is the continual manifestation of our humanity, its ray of light...in which everything grows." Is there someone you see every day—a shopkeeper, the neighbour opposite [sic]—but have never spoken to? Say hello next time you pass.

Task 29: It's the last day of The School of Life's Month of Reaching Out. So where do we go from here? Let's try to make compassion and kindness part of our everyday way of thinking and acting in the world.

All of which raises some questions that discerning Christians might be wise to consider. ■

Source: The School of Life, www.theschooloflife.com

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. What tends to come to mind when you think of people who identify themselves as secularists? Where do these ideas come from? How many secularists have you known well?
2. What is your first impression or immediate response of the tasks proposed for The School of Life's Month of Reaching Out? Why do you think you reacted this way? If your reaction was primarily negative, why? Would not the world be a better place if more people acted as the tasks suggest? Is it possible your negative reaction is a measure of your lack of compassion?
3. One criticism that can be raised about this effort by The School of Life is that compassion is finally not outward actions but an inward virtue, a matter not essentially of behavior but of the character of the heart. To what extent is this criticism true? To the extent it is true, what series of ideas or tasks would you develop for someone wishing to become more compassionate? How would your list be similar to The School of Life's? How would it differ?
4. To what extent do the tasks listed by The School of Life express characteristics of your daily life?
5. Do a study of compassion in Scripture. Which texts define it? Which texts identify the sort of behaviors demonstrated by compassionate people? How does Jesus demonstrate compassion? How does the list of tasks developed by The School of Life correlate with this biblical data?
6. Describe the most compassionate person you ever met. How did she or he become so compassionate?
7. Which lectures and events sponsored by The School of Life would you attend if you lived in London? What materials available on the Web site might be good for your Christian small group to discuss?
8. What might a Christian learn from The School of Life?
9. What could the church learn from The School of Life?

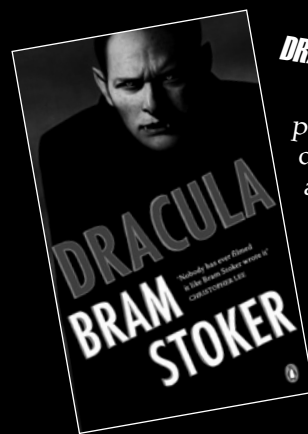
READING THE WORLD: VAMPIRES

CAN WE, WE REDEEM THE



WILL WE BE VAMPIRE?

By Denis Haack



DRACULA (1897)

In 1897 Bram Stoker published a book that drew upon numerous ancient myths from a variety of people groups that spoke of an evil creature of the night who preyed on human beings by drinking their blood or otherwise sucking out their life. In some cases the myths identify the vampire with demonic forces or the devil, but in others the creature was merely part of the forces of fear—some and mysterious evil that roamed the earth. Christians have, at least recently, been dismissive of such myths, but that is a mistake. From a Christian perspective, they should be seen as honest hearted attempts to explain the brokenness of the world. As such they are stories that are fictional in detail



are stories that are fictional in detail but true in a deeper way. The vampire is a metaphor for the wickedness that loves the darkness and seeks to seduce us away from virtue, goodness, and life into the arms of damnation and death.

Stoker's book was named, simply, *Dracula*. It consists of a series of diary entries and letters that even today convey a proper sense of horror about spiritual evil and sin, about beings that seek to destroy all that God has created good, especially those creatures made in his image. *Dracula* is worth reading—it is a book rooted in a distinctly Christian understanding of life and reality.

Near the beginning of *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker, a young British solicitor, arrives at night at a massive castle deep in the dark recesses and shadows of the mountains of Transylvania. His employer's client, Count Dracula, had summoned a representative of the firm in order that some business might be transacted. It had been a long and tiring journey, the final section through what Harker saw as a primitive land whose superstitious inhabitants are horrified when they learn of his destination. The night before reaching Dracula's castle, the Count arranged for Harker to stay at a country inn. The next day before he left, the innkeeper's wife tries desperately to dissuade him from continuing his journey.

Just before I was leaving, the old lady came up to my room and said in a hysterical way: "Must you go? Oh! Young Herr, must you go?" She was in such an excited state that she seemed to have lost her grip of what German she knew, and mixed it all up with some other language which I did not know at all. I was just able to follow her by asking many questions. When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:

"Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was the fourth of May. She shook her head as she said again:

"Oh, yes! I know that! I know that, but do you know what day it is?"

On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:

"It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know

where you are going, and what you are going to?" She was in such evident distress that I tried to comfort her, but without effect. Finally, she went down on her knees and implored me not to go; at least to wait a day or two before starting.

It was all very ridiculous but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it.

I tried to raise her up and said, as gravely as I could, that I thanked her, but my duty was imperative, and that I must go.

She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me.

I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind.

She saw, I suppose, the doubt in my face, for she put the rosary round my neck and said, "For your mother's sake," and went out of the room.

Stoker effectively raises the sense of impending doom with descriptions of the weather and countryside, conversations with passersby, and little coincidences that seem to take on a dark life of their own. Harker, however, as an enlightened London Protestant, sees himself as too highly educated, too sophisticated for such gullible nonsense. He finally arrives at the castle in the dead of night and is welcomed by Count Dracula, who firmly shuts and locks the great door behind him. From that moment, the castle is Harker's prison. He is first shown to his room and then joins the Count for dinner.

I found supper already laid out. My host, who stood on one side of the great fireplace, leaning against the stonework, made a graceful wave of his hand to the table, and said,

"I pray you, be seated and sup how you please. You will I trust, excuse me that I do not join you, but I have dined already, and I do not sup..."

The count himself came forward and took off the cover of a dish, and I fell to at

once

on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese and a salad and a bottle of old tokay, of which I had two glasses, was my supper. During the time I was eating it the Count asked me many question as to my journey, and I told him by degrees all I had experienced.

By this time I had finished my supper, and by my host's desire, had drawn up a chair by the fire and begun to smoke a cigar which he offered me, at the same time excusing himself that he did not smoke...

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. But seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather coarse, broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal.

The Count, evidently noticing it, drew back. And with a grim sort of smile, which showed more than he had yet done his protuberant teeth, sat himself down again on his own side of the fireplace. We were both silent for a while, and as I looked towards the window I saw the first dim streak of the coming dawn. There seemed a strange stillness over everything. But as I listened, I heard as if from down below in the valley the howling of many wolves. The Count's eyes gleamed, and he said.

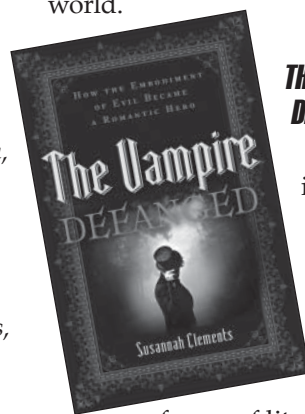
"Listen to them, the children of the night. What music they make!" Seeing, I suppose, some expression in my face strange to him, he added, "Ah, sir, you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter."

Much later in *Dracula*, Professor Van Helsing identifies the task that must be undertaken, if Dracula is to be defeated, even though the little band of warriors might well lose their lives in the process. Note that Stoker here depicts Van Helsing as expressing things in terms that reflect a Christian view of life: the reality of God, the incarnation and crucifixion, the nature of sin and death, and the fact that service to God is its own reward, even at the cost of one's life. In a long monologue, Van Helsing says:

"There are such beings as vampires, some of us have evidence that they exist. Even had we not the proof of our own unhappy experience, the teachings and the records of the past give proof enough for sane peoples. I admit that at the first I was sceptic. Were it not that through long years I have trained myself to keep an open mind, I could not have believed until such time as that fact thunder on my ear. 'See! See! I prove, I prove.' Alas! Had I known at first what now I know, nay, had I even guess at him, one so precious life had been spared to many of us who did love her. But that is gone, and we must so work, that other poor souls perish not, whilst we can save. The nosferatu do not die like the bee when he sting once. He is only stronger, and being stronger, have yet more power to work evil. This vampire which is amongst us is of himself so strong in person as twenty men, he is of cunning more than mortal, for his cunning be the growth of ages, he have still the aids of necromancy, which is, as his etymology imply, the divination by the dead, and all the dead that he can come nigh to are for him at command, he is brute, and more than brute, he is devil in callous, and the heart of him is not, he can, within his range, direct the elements, the storm, the fog, the thunder, he can command all the meaner things, the rat, and the owl, and the bat, the moth, and the fox, and the wolf, he can grow and become small, and he can at times vanish and come unknown. How then are we to begin our strike to destroy him? How shall we find his where, and having found it, how can we destroy? My friends, this is much, it is a terrible task that we undertake, and there may be consequence to make the brave shudder. For if we fail in this our fight he must surely win, and then where end we? Life is nothings; I heed him not. But to fail here, is not mere life or death. It is that we become as him, that we henceforward become foul things

of the night like him, without heart or conscience, preying on the bodies and the souls of those we love best. To us forever are the gates of heaven shut, for who shall open them to us again? We go on for all time abhorred by all, a blot on the face of God's sunshine, an arrow in the side of Him who died for man. But we are face to face with duty, and in such case must we shrink? For me, I say no, but then I am old, and life, with his sunshine, his fair places, his song of birds, his music and his love, lie far behind. You others are young. Some have seen sorrow, but there are fair days yet in store. What say you?"

In *Dracula* the vampire is an apt metaphor for all that is wrong in this fallen world, a symbol of the forces of evil that seek to do war against the kingdom of God in heavenly realms, a battle that spills into history for those who have eyes to see. This is a robust vision of evil, one that is truly frightening and should be. Contrary to what our mothers told us, there are things that go bump in the night. Creatures of enormous power and grandeur prowl about the edges of space and time seeking those they may overpower and devour, and if not resisted effectively, will make us their prey (1 Peter 5:8). This is not to say that in *Dracula* the vampire is to be identified with the devil, for instead Stoker develops it as a literary metaphor for sin—supernatural, personal, and supremely dangerous. The myth of the vampire is rooted in truth, a deep understanding of the reality of evil that ancient people possessed but is largely lost today in our postmodern world.



THE VAMPIRE DEFANGED (2011)

This loss is explored in *The Vampire Defanged: How the embodiment of evil became a romantic hero* by Susannah Clements, pro-

fessor of literature at Regent University (Virginia). "Vampires are more than just monsters to us" as a culture, Clements says. "They have recurred as a figure in literature and Western culture for the last two

centuries, and they go back much further in lore and myth. It is over the last hundred years or so, however, that their portrayal in our culture has morphed from monster to lover, from single-minded villain to complex antihero. The vampire was once held up as the embodiment of evil and temptation, but has now become the ultimate romantic alpha-hero."

In *The Vampire Defanged*, Clements begins with a thoughtful study of Stoker's classic tale and then walks us through the succession of vampire stories that have followed more recently: Anne Rice's ten-volume *Vampire Chronicles*, the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mystery* books centered on the character Sookie Stackhouse, and finally Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* books (and movies). In two final chapters, Clements explores other versions (film or book) of the vampire genre, including Bela Lugosi's classic films, the *Underworld* movie series, and Robert Rodriguez's film, *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996) written by Quentin Tarantino.

Clements has written a helpful book, and though she has written as a scholar on the topic, *The Vampire Defanged* is composed for ordinary people who care for story and truth. Though not designed as a study guide, I could see Clements' book used as a thoughtful guide as someone or some group works their way through the vampire genre that is so wildly popular and highly fascinating.

Clements is not merely concerned to trace the changes that have slowly transformed the vampire story in our day, though she does that well. She is more concerned to help Christians think Christianly about story, theology, and sin, and thus be able to see reality more clearly and engage our world more effectively with the gospel. The loss represented by the transformation of the vampire from seductive evil to attractive lover represents a loss of understanding of life in a sinful world. That loss, Clements believes, affects both believers and unbelievers.

As I read *The Vampire Defanged*, I thought of something the ancient Hebrew seer, Isaiah, recorded. He pronounced a series of woes—"woe" being a prophetic term referring to a divine curse—that obviously his

hearers and readers were to take seriously. The divine curse is expressed in poetry which only deepens the sense of doom.

*Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!*

(Isaiah 5:20)

At first glance, Isaiah seems to be describing something that few people would attempt. Who would try to say evil is good? It's such an absurd reversal of meaning. What could they possibly gain by doing it? The answer is found in my own heart. If I mention some tidbit of information that makes another look bad, is it not to my advantage to label that delicious gossip a prayer request? If someone criticizes me in a way that I do not like to hear, do I not feel better if I tell someone else how hurt I am because someone maliciously attacked me? In both instances have I not called evil good?

Perhaps, all things considered, these examples are rather insignificant in the cosmic scheme of things. Far worse are the Holocaust deniers, the despots who sanctimoniously insist their landslide election legitimates their oppressive regimes, the bankers whose risky trading helps trigger a massive recession and requires tax-dollar bailouts who nevertheless insist they have earned their massive bonuses, the researchers who shade their conclusions according to who happens to be funding their study, or the film director that depicts unsafe sexual behavior as attractive and without negative consequences. Perhaps these are worse, if by worse we mean which behaviors affect the most people. Still, a woe is a woe, so a divine curse should get our attention, and wickedness still reeks of death and decay whether we think it small and insignificant or large and important.

Another Hebrew prophet, Amos, cut to the heart of the matter. "Hate evil and love good" (5:15), though such a simple declaration masks the process that is required to live it out in daily life. The New Testament writer was referring to that process when

he identified "the mature" as "those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Such training never ends in this fallen world, and we would do well to delight in the practice that is required until our maturity is complete.

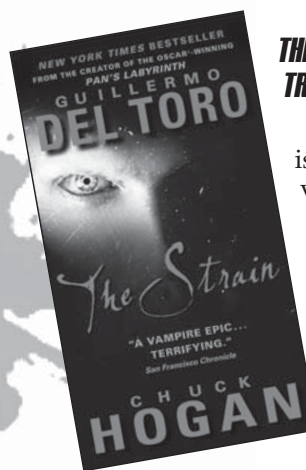
One way to gain traction in this process is to pay attention to the way stories change over time. Story is central to our humanity, essential to reality, and the form in which each generation and culture embodies its deepest beliefs and values, hopes and fears. Some stories sound such deep mythic chords they appear in widely disparate cultures and over long periods of time. As the stories are told and retold, cultures shift and, as that happens, sometimes the stories shift as well, and those changes can be telling.

One such story is the tale of the vampire, and the way that story is told has shifted within our own time. It's an example of what the prophet so long ago warned about in his declaration of woe: when evil is called good, bitter is imagined sweet. Do that, and people are bound to get hurt. Not necessarily by the stories themselves, but by the loss of a sense of evil in the culture at large.

Clements understands that the story of the vampire has morphed in part as a reflection of the changes in our culture. But she also argues, "Christians have let this happen" through apathy, fearfulness, and lack of discernment and that this failure calls for repentance.

The vampire can engage both the intellect and the imagination of the Christian, but it is not likely to happen by accident. Using the vampire to explore human experience that is not spiritual or theological is certainly not bad in and of itself, and we shouldn't devalue those stories that do so. But it is worth recognizing that, as the vampire figure has lost its spiritual potency, it has lost much of its metaphorical power. If the vampire represents for us aspects of ourselves that make us human, then the spiritual and theological aspects are necessary for a fuller, richer picture. If Christians can understand the vampire better, we can discuss, create, and inspire a respiritualized figure of the vampire. In doing so, we can help return the vampire tradition to the power it once had.

I must confess that when I began reading *The Vampire Defanged* I was not expecting this conclusion. I expected to read about the change from evil antihero to romantic hero, and even to hear some grief over this devaluation. I also expected to read how American or Western culture has changed over the past couple of centuries and how this change explains the transformation of how the vampire is depicted. I also expected to read how what has been lost is of theological significance from a Christian perspective. Clements goes one step farther, and I find her challenge both intriguing and creative. The vampire story needs, essentially, to be redeemed, and the church must take the lead. I wonder if we'll get past our apathy, our fearfulness, and our lack of discernment?



THE STRAIN TRILOGY (2009-11)

One thing is certain: vampire stories continue to be told. Guillermo Del Toro, the writer and director of *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) has

published a trilogy of vampire novels, co-written by novelist Chuck Hogan: *The Strain* (2009), *The Fall* (2010), and *The Night Eternal* (2011).

I would not rank *The Strain Trilogy* as great literature, though they are exciting page-turners, bringing the vampire into our modern technological world in a way that is both plausible and horrible. Just as Stoker's *Dracula* was written so that his readers recognized their own day in the story, Del Toro sets his telling of the vampire threat in our postmodern world. Though the vampire in *The Strain Trilogy* is far closer to Stoker's vision of evil than the adolescent heartthrobs of *Twilight*, Del Toro is not content to merely repeat Stoker's depiction. In Del Toro's version, the vampire is primarily linked to a spreading virus so that medical science is both necessary and yet insufficient in itself to defeat the spreading plague. Here the vampire is a parasite on the human

race, an evil certainly, but one that can be eventually defeated by technology.

As those who know his movies will realize, Del Toro is far too good a storyteller to limit the plot to adventures in technology. He loves monsters, not merely science fiction; stories that partake of myth, not merely entertainment. So numerous themes weave their way through *The Strain Trilogy* that touch on deeper ideas that have always animated the human imagination because they are woven into the very fabric of existence. The importance of names and naming; the existence of an ancient book (*Occido Lumen*) that reveals essential truth that can be found in no other way; the transcendent value of sacrificial love; the fact that myths dismissed by science as superstitions contain within them truths that must never be lost; that the most deadly wounds are in the soul rather than the body; mysterious events that can only be understood correctly as portents; the existence of a spiritual realm where angels exist and which breaks into human history in surprising and inexplicable ways.

Each of the holy books, the Torah, the Bible, and the Koran, tells the tale of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, in a way, does the Lumen.

In Genesis 18, three archangels appear before Abraham in human form. Two are said to proceed from there to the doomed cities of the plain, where they reside with Lot, enjoy a feast, and are later surrounded by the men of Sodom, whom they blind before destroying their city.

The third archangel is deliberately omitted. Hidden. Lost.

This is his story.

Five cities shared the vast, lush plain of the Yarden River, near what is today the Dead Sea. And out of all of these Sodom was the proudest, the most beautiful. It rose from its fertile surroundings as a landmark, a monument to wealth and prosperity.

Irrigated by a complex canal system, it had grown randomly through the centuries, radiating outward from the waterways and ending up in a shape that vaguely resembled a dove in flight. Its ten-acre contours crystallized in that form when the surrounding walls were erected around 2024 BC. The walls were over forty feet tall and six feet thick, constructed of baked mud brick and plastered

in gypsum to make them shine brightly in the sun. Within them, mud-brick buildings were built so close together as to be almost on top of one another, the tallest of which was a temple erected to honor the Canaanite god Moloch. The population of Sodom fluctuated around two thousand. Fruits, spices, and grains were abundant, driving the city's prosperity. The glass and gilded bronze tiles of a dozen palaces were visible at once, glinting in the dying sunlight.

Such wealth was guarded by the enormous gates that gave entrance into the city. Six irregular stones of enormous size and heft created a monumental archway with gates fashioned from iron and hardwoods impervious to fire or battering rams.

It was at these gates that Lot, son of Haran, nephew of Abram, was when the three creatures of light arrived.

Pale they were, and radiant and remote. Part of the essence of God and, as such, void of any blemish. From each of their backs, four long appendages emerged, suffused with feathery light, easily confused with luminous wings. The four jutting limbs fused in the back of the creatures and flapped softly with their every step, as naturally as one would compensate for forward movement by swaying one's arms. With each step they acquired form and mass, until they stood there, naked and somewhat lost. Their skin was radiant like the purest alabaster and their beauty was a painful reminder of Lot's mortal imperfection.

They were sent there to punish the pride, decadence, and brutality that had bred within the prosperous walls of the city. Gabriel, Michael, and Ozryel were God's emissaries—His most trusted, most cherished creations and His most ruthless soldiers.

In the few interviews I have read, Del Toro has said he has no argument with those who have changed the vampire story into a romantic romp. I have no reason to question that, except this is not the impression I was left with as I read *The Strain Trilogy*. Del Toro's vision is strong, the evil depicted is frightful, and, in the story itself, the characters discuss Stoker's *Dracula*. There are differences, and Stoker's version is regarded as mistaken in details, but in Del Toro the vampire is once again evil, an explanation for all that is wrong in a broken world.

In the end, though I prefer Del Toro's version to that of *Twilight*, he

does not return us to the Christian understanding displayed by Stoker in *Dracula*. Rather than a metaphor for human sin, Del Toro's vampire is linked to angels who have gone astray, and technology plays too big a role in defeating the evil plague that has infected the planet and enslaved the human race. It's a step in the right direction, but only a step. More steps are needed if the vampire myth is to be, shall we say, redeemed. ■

Sources:

Dracula by Bram Stoker, chapters 1, 2, 18 online (www.literature.org/authors/stoker-bram/dracula).

The Vampire Defanged (p. 2, 162, 164).

The Night Eternal (p. 139-140).

Books recommended:

The Vampire Defanged: How the embodiment of evil became a romantic hero by Susannah Clements (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press; 2011) 164 pages + notes + bibliography + index.

Dracula by Bram Stoker (*The Online Literature Library*, 1897; www.literature.org).

Books mentioned:

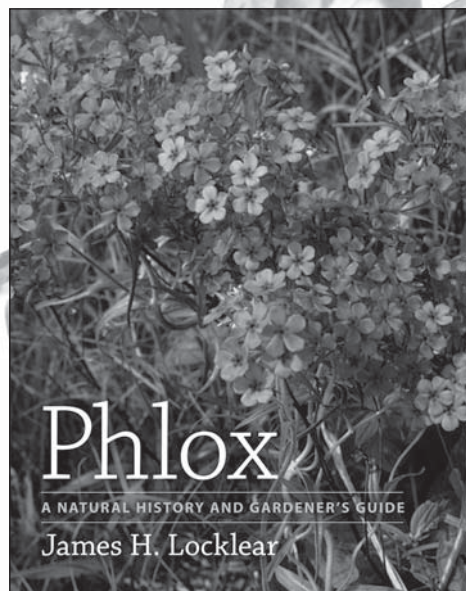
The Strain by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan (New York, NY: HarperCollins; 2009) 401 pages.

The Fall by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan (New York, NY: HarperCollins; 2010) 440 pages.

The Night Eternal by Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan (New York, NY: HarperCollins; 2011) 371 pages.

A flower by any

by Denis Haack



If you were to walk around Toad Hall in the summer, you'd notice that though the city lot on which it is built isn't large, the ground surrounding the house is given over to pleasant little garden plots. They are edged with a flowing curve of old bricks set into the ground, or by hunks of limestone set on edge in a line that stretches off to end at a sidewalk. Ornamental grasses and a few fruit trees reach out over an array of flowering plants chosen to attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds and to provide a thicket of color during the short Minnesota summer.

In two places around the perimeter of Toad Hall—on the north and south sides of the house—you can find phlox. The ones on the south side produce lovely white blossoms, the ones on the north, pink and purple. No one can remember where the white ones came from, but the others were found via Craigslist. A woman advertised that she was moving and would give perennials to anyone willing to dig them up. We found the price to our liking.

When we first moved into Toad Hall in 1981, Margie did the gardening—I like gardens and flowers and all that but prefer seeing them in films to actually tending them. I also prefer using a snow blower to pushing a lawn mower around, so extensive yard work in the heat has never been my idea of a good time. For the past few years, Anita (Ransom's resident

assistant) has been Toad Hall gardener, and the place has begun to look like a miniature arboretum. It's been wonderful.

As I was saying, we now have phlox on two sides of the house. The blossoms are delicate, small, and fragile and, when the flowers are cut, the petals tend to fall relatively quickly, meaning the phlox tend to be allowed to remain outside when arrangements are needed for the guest bedroom, dining, or living rooms. They are hardy plants, not needing a lot of attention, and their quiet unassuming beauty yields rich color when they bloom in early summer.

So, I was pleasantly surprised when an e-mail appeared in my inbox from the man who has written the botanical reference book on this genus of flower. He heard me speak in Nebraska, serves as the director of conservation at Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha's Botanical Center. James Locklear wondered if I'd like to see his book, *Phlox: A Natural History and Gardener's Guide*. I replied that indeed I would.

Locklear covers all 61 species, providing extensive scientific, historical, botanical, and geographic data for each variety as well as information accessible to the ordinary gardener—and to non-gardeners, like me. Locklear has a wonderful way of introducing each variety, with personal observations and anecdotes collected in the endless hours he has logged traveling

other name

and studying this widespread and lovely plant. This, for example, is how he introduces us to *Phlox tenuifolia*, known as Apache phlox:

The term desert does disservice to the fantastic saguaro forests of Arizona. Defined by the presence of the giant saguaro cactus, there is an exuberance to this Sonoran ecosystem that feels tropical, with cartoonish cacti and prickly shrubs sheltering Gila monsters, elf owls, and more kinds of hummingbirds than you can shake a stick at. Apache phlox leads a quiet life amidst this biological bedlam, a straggling, somewhat woody plant growing among, often within, acacia, jojoba, bush buckwheat, and other shrubs, comprised more of twig than of leaf.

The range of Apache phlox is concentrated in southeast Arizona, where once the Chiricahua and other Apache bands held sway. Here it dwells in the sky islands—an archipelago of mountain ranges surrounded by desert basins. Saguaro-thronged desert scrub dominates the lower slopes, while chaparral and Madrean evergreen woodland succeeds it farther up. Apache phlox works its way up into the understory of these xeric woodlands of oak, pine, and juniper, where its creamy white flowers impart a whiff of vanilla to the crackly shade.

And Locklear's introduction to *Phlox speciosa*, known as showy phlox:

It was the fall of 1809 and in a cabin along the Natchez Trace in Tennessee a man lay dying of self-inflicted wounds.

The troubled soul was Meriwether Lewis, who only three years earlier had been hailed as hero of the one of the greatest enterprises in American history. But those heady days were past, and the captain of President Jefferson's celebrated Corps of Discovery was apparently overwhelmed at being a better woodsman, hunter, and botanist than businessman, socialite, and politician.

In Undaunted Courage, Steven Ambrose respectfully wonders about the stream of images coursing through the Captain's mind as he contemplated ending his life. Perhaps, mixed with that which caused such despair were scenes of the great beauty Lewis witnessed in the untrammelled reaches of the young United States. If so, surely he revisited early May along the Kooskooskee, the Clearwater River of present-day Idaho, where he did his most productive botanical collecting, and discovered one of the most beautiful wildflowers of the American West—showy phlox.

Phlox is a fine book and, even if it doesn't make you a gardener, it will give a reason to be glad, a reason to be grateful, a reason—61 reasons, actually—to look with greater care at the plants we tend to brush by without a second glance. It is the product of someone whose vocation as a horticulturalist has been pursued with both careful scholarship and an obvious love for the handiwork of the Creator. Just to glance through this volume reminds us of the prodigal nature of our

God, of the lavishly extravagant way he called the universe into existence and adorned the world with beauty that provides, for those with eyes to see, a tiny shimmering glimpse of the glory that resides in him, world without end. I have a feeling that this next summer I am going to spend some time looking more closely at the phlox growing on two sides of our house. *Phlox* has helped me to see, and for that I am thankful. ■

Recommended: *Phlox: A Natural History and Gardener's Guide* by James H. Locklear (Portland, OR: Timber Press; 2001) 266 pages + colored plates + appendices + glossary + bibliography + index.

RESOURCE

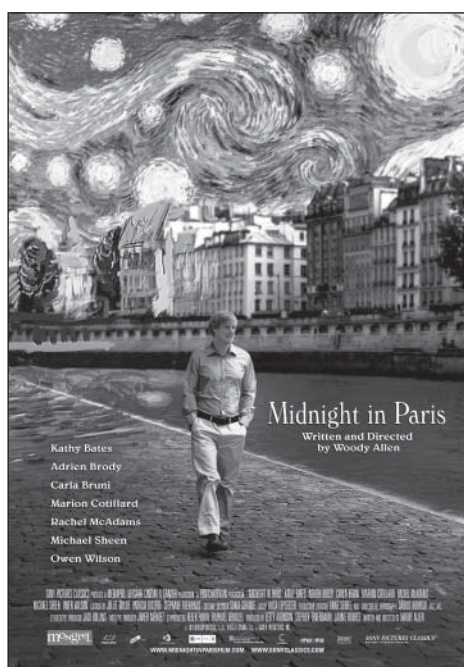
Hearts and Minds bookstore is a well-stocked haven for serious, reflective readers. When ordering resources, mention Ransom Fellowship and they will contribute 10 per cent of the total back to us. ■

Resource: Hearts and Minds bookstore, www.heartsandmindsbooks.com



Nostalgia traps

by Denis Haack



We had a friend who one time mentioned she thought she had been born in the wrong century. “When you consider everything,” she said, “everything from how I’m made to what I prefer to how I’d like to live, I should have been born into the family of a wealthy aristocrat at the height of the old Russian Empire.” She imagined living in a formidable mansion on a sprawling country estate surrounded by acres of carefully tended gardens and meticulous lawns. She would be cared for by an army of servants: chefs, kitchen help, grounds-keepers, maids, and carriage drivers, each fulfilling their duties under the watchful eye of a butler who organized everything on the estate and in her life down to the

smallest detail. After several months at the estate during the summer, a carriage would shuttle her to town where a series of private railroad cars awaited to carry her across the rolling landscape to visit the great cities of Russia: Moscow, St. Petersburg, and perhaps across the wastes of Siberia to the port city of Vladivostok. Servants would travel ahead, making all the necessary arrangements, and, whenever possible, she would stay in suites in grand hotels, visiting friends and acquaintances over leisurely and lavish dinners. She was not unhappy with her life, understand—it’s just that, in her heart of hearts, somehow she sensed her personality would have been specially suited for the life of the Russian aristocracy but had been born too late in history to fulfill that destiny. “That,” she always said, “would have been the life.”

The idea that some golden age existed in the past is a seductive idea. Some people my age, worried about the growing decadence they identify on prime time, wish television was still like what they remember from the fifties, when even married couples were shown sleeping in separate beds. Others prefer the earlier time evoked in the *Little House* books of Laura Ingalls Wilder, when life was apparently simpler and slower. Some Christians have mentioned they wished they lived in the apostolic era, before the church went astray from the pure gospel of Christ. Some artists see the Renaissance as the golden age, when art was esteemed, artists could find patrons, and when buildings were constructed with careful

attention given to the details of every grand façade.

There are problems with all such dreams, of course. They are based on a very selective memory, for one thing. The world’s brokenness is revealed in every age, and even periods of accomplishment are marred with disease, disappointment, and death. There is no golden age in the past, only ones we conjure up in our imagination.

Nostalgia is a poor counterfeit for hope. Looking backwards to a time that can never be retrieved, we miss the opportunity to live in light of something that is worthy of true hope—for the Christian, the triumph of Christ’s resurrection. Nostalgia, a form of sentimentality, fills us with warm feelings and a sense of self-righteous loss that comes from the knowledge that we, unlike our neighbors, are privy to what things could be like if only they listened to us. Such nostalgia generates art that is sentimental and devoid of reality, a political ideology that is rooted in a misreading of history, and a way of life that is defensive because it is always looking backwards trying to retrieve what has been lost.

Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris* is a cinematic exploration of these crucial and very human themes—the idea of a golden age, the pull of nostalgia, and the need for hope. Gil (played by Owen Wilson) and Inez (Rachel McAdams) have tagged along with Inez’s parents for a weekend away in Paris just before their wedding. Gil takes a walk alone in the city one night and, while sitting on some steps as midnight strikes, is invited to join a

the soul

couple at a party. The couple turns out to be Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. A Hollywood scriptwriter who longs to be a serious novelist, Gil is suddenly welcomed into his golden age, the literary and artistic world of Paris at the dawn of the twentieth century where he chats with T. S. Eliot and Ernest Hemingway, discusses a new painting with Pablo Picasso, hears Cole Porter sing, watches the lovely Joséphine Baker dance, meets artists Man Ray and Matisse, and has his manuscript read by Gertrude Stein (played wonderfully by Kathy Bates). Adrian Brody performs with delightful surrealist abandon as Salvador Dali, and the encounter with the diminutive but impressive Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Vincent Menjou Cortes) is too good to describe in words. Long wanting to escape the hack but highly lucrative writing he is doing in California, Gil not only dreams of his golden age but is given the chance to visit. "It's a little unsatisfying," Gil says about the present, "because life is unsatisfying."

Like all Woody Allen movies, there are numerous subplots as well, and some of the classic themes Allen has long explored in his films appear in *Midnight in Paris*. Falling in and out of love, the yearning for significance in a world without God, wrestling with an inner sense of being lost in a universe where personal fulfillment seems to be the only guide, the tranquil beauty of great cities that hum with promise, and putting up with snobbish bores that think they know everything and think that everyone wants to hear them talk about it. *Midnight* opens with shot after shot of Paris,

so poignantly stunning that we want to move there, set to the music Allen is known to choose, both classic and breathtaking.

This is not the first time Woody Allen has played with the boundaries of reality. In *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), set in Depression-era America, a young wife goes to a movie to escape her poverty and abusive husband, only to be shocked when the handsome lead in the film escapes the confines of the screen and sweeps her off her feet. In *Purple Rose*, the line between fiction and real life is transcended by love, just as in *Midnight in Paris* time no longer keeps pace when desire for true love and a more satisfying life becomes overwhelming.

Allen produces films at a steady pace, most of them ignored by the mass of moviegoers, but seen by an audience that appreciates his work. I am in that group, always eager to watch his next production. In both his life and art, Allen has held up a mirror so we could see the sexual mores, sense of meaninglessness, and yearning for relationship reflected in our modernist and postmodernist world. The picture he has painted on the screen has not always been pretty or consistent, but it has in the main been an honest view, even when it is clear he has to cheat in some way to make the story come out the way he finds most satisfying. In *Midnight in Paris* Gil meets Gertrude Stein who befriends him and offers suggestions about his novel. "The artist's job is not to succumb to despair," Stein tells Gil, "but to find an antidote for the emptiness of existence." That has been, I

think, Allen's pursuit as a filmmaker over the years. Every one of his films gives me the impression of having been written and directed on the very edge of the abyss, in full knowledge that the abyss is real, in the outside chance that love will somehow, against all expectations, find a way out.

"This is Woody Allen's 41st film," Roger Ebert notes. "He writes his films himself, and directs them with wit and grace. I consider him a treasure of the cinema. Some people take him for granted, although *Midnight in Paris* reportedly charmed even the jaded veterans of the Cannes press screenings. There is nothing to dislike about it." Considering the film as cinematic art, I believe Ebert is correct. You may not like this film, but you should watch it, and watch it enough times to get it. Woody Allen is saying something in *Midnight in Paris* that is worth some careful reflection, and the popularity of this film suggests he is touching a chord in millions of our neighbors. Without something to live for, living at all is almost impossible. If we do not find and intentionally nourish hope, we will be trapped by nostalgia, longing for a golden age that never existed and cannot be retrieved. ■

Source: Roger Ebert from his review online (<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?aid=/20110524/reviews/110529987/0/commentary>)

Resource: Go to www.ransomfellowship.org to find questions for reflection/discussion.

BACK PAGE (DARKENED ROOM, CONTINUED)

Midnight in Paris – Credits

Director: Woody Allen

Writer: Woody Allen

Producer: Letty Aronson and others

Starring:

Owen Wilson (Gil)

Rachel McAdams (Inez)

Michael Sheen (Paul)

Carla Bruni (Museum Guide)

Kathy Bates (Gertrude Stein)

Corey Stoll (Ernest Hemingway)

Sonia Rolland (Josephine Baker)

Marion Cotillard (Adriana)

Adrien Brody (Salvador Dali)

Francois Rostain (Edgar Degas)

Original Music: Stephane Wrembel

Release: USA, 2011

Runtime: 94 min

Rating: PG-13 for some sexual references and smoking

Visit www.ransomfellowship.org to find questions for reflection/discussion.

