

In This Issue

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The editorial board of the *Agora* is delighted to present our 2016 issue. This year's volume includes traditional written submissions as well as several pieces presented at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC). We are proud to showcase the work of these scholars as they analyze important themes and ideas in art, history, literature, and philosophy.

Our volume begins with the work **Laura Meisner** of Lynchburg College, whose essay, "Allegorical Paintings and Alberti's *Istoria*: Making the Unseen Seen," analyzes several Italian Renaissance artists. Meisner focuses on the complex narratives and allegorical subjects used by these painters. Meisner argues that "The symbolic and allegorical nature of these works allows for the unseen to become seen."

The following essay, by **Teresa Gunter** of Lynchburg College, examines the uses and appropriations of the Confederate flag in U.S. history. Taking the flag itself as a "core text" to be analyzed, Gunter analyzes its use in remembrance of the Civil War as well as its appropriation in anti-segregation movements. Gunter's careful analysis sheds new light upon a complicated narrative and contentious symbol.

Tyler Cummings of Shimer College offers a reading of *Hamlet* that focuses upon the play's approach to death. Cummings argues that the treatment of death in Hamlet's "to

be or not to be” soliloquy and his encounter with the gravediggers transforms death “into an object of absurdity, comedy, and perhaps, to be extreme, ridicule.” Cummings’ refreshing reading of this classic text reminds us that a central quality of enduring literature is the ability to resonate with readers in a variety of ways over changing historical and cultural contexts.

Following Cummings’ analysis of *Hamlet*, **Anne Elise Bates** of Mercer University offers a similarly refreshing reading of Plato’s *Republic*. Bates encourages readers to set aside their preconceptions about the text’s meaning and purpose in order to see overlooked aspects with new eyes. Bates presents Adeimantus and his brother, Glaucon, as representative of two ways of approaching philosophical texts: “A reader may choose to suspend disbelief in order to experience the text uninterrupted, or a reader may choose to remain skeptical of the text and interrogate it.”

Parker Allen and **Elizabeth Kirkwood**, both of Oglethorpe University, each present a distinctive analysis of the C.S. Lewis texts *Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength* in relationship with Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. Allen sees reflections of Aristotle’s notion of reason and longing in Lewis’ treatment of the human condition and contrasts Lewis with Hobbes’ well known assertion that “good” and “evil” have no inherent meaning outside of the social contracts we create. According to Allen, Lewis and Aristotle reject such notions, arguing instead that humanity requires virtue and morality in order to live fully.

Elizabeth Kirkwood's analysis of Lewis' text applies the work of Aristotle and Hobbes differently. Kirkwood focuses upon the relationship between morality and education as presented in the Lewis texts and reflected in Aristotle and Hobbes. According to Kirkwood, Lewis' concern that the educational system has abandoned morality – disdained as merely “subjective” – in favor of the (presumably) more “objective” disciplines. Kirkwood's synthesis of these texts masterfully shows the value and importance of a diverse educational approach.

Our final text by **Ebonee Johnson** of Oglethorpe University looks at Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* with a focus on the relationship between the main character, Underground Man, and Liza. In Johnson's reading, this text explores “the power struggle between humanity and ourselves and humanity against the world.” Johnson's analysis shows how the text reflects the broad human experience of attempting to save others while being oblivious to their “saving” role in our own lives.

The outstanding work of this year's scholars would not be possible without dedicated mentoring by faculty. *The Agora* thanks Dr. Delane Karalow of Lynchburg College (Meisner), Dr. Brian Crim of Lynchburg College (Gunter), Dr. Barbara Stone of Shimer College (Cummings), and the many faculty at Mercer University and Oglethorpe College who worked with our ACTC presenters to prepare their work (Bates, Allen, Kirkwood, and Johnson).

We are pleased to present you with the twenty-fifth edition of the *Agora* Journal.

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