READING THE BEATLES
CULTURAL STUDIES, LITERARY CRITICISM, AND THE FAB FOUR
KENNETH WOMACK AND TODD F. DAVIS, EDITORS

Addresses the band’s resounding impact on how we think about gender, popular culture, and the formal and poetic qualities of music.

Despite the enormous amount of writing devoted to the Beatles during the last few decades, the band’s abiding intellectual and cultural significance has received scant attention. Using various modes of literary, musicological, and cultural criticism, the essays in *Reading the Beatles* firmly establish the Beatles as a locus of serious academic and cultural study. Exploring the group’s resounding impact on how we think about gender, popular culture, and the formal and poetic qualities of music, the contributors trace not only the literary and musicological qualities of selected Beatles songs but also the development of the Beatles’ artistry in their films and the ways in which the band has functioned as a cultural, historical, and economic product. In a poignant afterword, Jane Tompkins offers an autobiographical account of the ways in which the Beatles afforded her with the self-actualizing means to become less alienated from popular culture, gender expectations, and even herself during the early 1960s.

“This book addresses many of the most significant aspects of the Beatles—their music and their social and cultural influence and contexts. It finds a balance between specialist knowledge (i.e., musicology) and more general interest, and it covers the full breadth of the Beatles’ output. The Beatles effected a significant and irreversible epoch in popular music, and for this reason deserve a sound academic study of the many aspects of their arrival, their dominance, their challenges, and their legacy. Such a study is provided here in a diverse and inventive collection of engaging essays.” — Julian Wolfreys, author of *Occasional Deconstructions*

At The Pennsylvania State University at Altoona, **Kenneth Womack** is Associate Professor of English and **Todd F. Davis** is Assistant Professor of English. Together they authored *The Critical Response to John Irving* and *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory*, and edited *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory*. Davis is also the author of *Kurt Vonnegut’s Crusade*; or, *How a Postmodern Harlequin Preached a New Kind of Humanism*, also published by SUNY Press.
KURT VONNEGUT’S CRUSADE
OR, HOW A POSTMODERN HARLEQUIN PREACHED A NEW KIND OF HUMANISM

TODD F. DAVIS

Explores the moral and philosophical underpinnings of Vonnegut’s work.

Kurt Vonnegut’s desire to save the planet from environmental and military destruction, to enact change by telling stories that both critique and embrace humanity, sets him apart from many of the postmodern authors who rose to prominence during the 1960s and 1970s. This new look at Vonnegut’s oeuvre examines his insistence that writing is an “act of good citizenship or an attempt, at any rate, to be a good citizen.” By exploring the moral and philosophical underpinnings of Vonnegut’s work, Todd F. Davis demonstrates that, over the course of his long career, Vonnegut has created a new kind of humanism that not only bridges the modern and postmodern, but also offers hope for the power and possibilities of story. Davis highlights the ways Vonnegut deconstructs and demystifies the “grand narratives” of American culture while offering provisional narratives—petites histoires—that may serve as tools for daily living.

“Davis’s book is an engaging examination of the issue at the heart of all Vonnegut’s fiction—Vonnegut’s humanism. With acumen and grace, Davis exposes Vonnegut’s ongoing relevance to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and illustrates how Vonnegut manages to retain his status as one of the most important figureheads in postmodern literature while remaining socially conscious and humane. Kurt Vonnegut’s Crusade should be mandatory reading for all students, fans, and scholars of Vonnegut’s canon.” — Kevin Alexander Boon, editor of At Millennium’s End: New Essays on the Work of Kurt Vonnegut

“Kurt Vonnegut has been studied (and argued about) for nearly forty years, but no one had thought to examine his readership until now. Todd Davis’s book not only resolves ethical problems, but also clarifies Vonnegut’s unique appeal—which, thank goodness, is to what’s best in all of us.” — Jerome Klinkowitz, author of The Vonnegut Effect

Todd F. Davis is Assistant Professor of English at Penn State at Altoona. He is coauthor (with Kenneth Womack) of Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory and coeditor (with Womack) of Reading the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four (also published by SUNY Press).
Drawing on recent media portrayals and her own experience, author and dancer Caroline Joan S. Picart explores ballroom dancing and its more “sporty” equivalent, DanceSport, suggesting that they are reflective of larger social, political, and cultural tensions. The past several years have seen a resurgence in the popularity of ballroom dance as well as an increasing international anxiety over how and whether to transform ballroom into an Olympic sport. Writing as a participant-critic, Picart suggests that both are crucial sites where bodies are packaged as racialized, sexualized, nationalized, and classed objects. In addition, Picart argues, as the choreography, costuming, and genre of ballroom and DanceSport continue to evolve, these theatrical productions are aestheticized and constructed to encourage commercial appeal, using the narrative frame of the competitive melodrama to heighten audience interest.

“I began this book with but a cursory understanding of ballroom dance and a strong understanding of things rhetorical; I ended it with a deep appreciation of the art of ballroom dancing and admiration for the author’s deployment of contemporary critical theory.” — David Frank, University of Oregon

“This book on the politics, aesthetics, and cultural underpinnings of ballroom dancing and DanceSport is written by someone who participates in both, and this lends an immediacy and authority to the author. Picart is able to provide a very thoughtful and subtle analysis of how society positions itself on the transformation of an art form into a sport.” — Adrian Del Caro, University of Colorado

Caroline Joan S. Picart captured second place at the 2005 United States DanceSport Championships in the World Pro Am Cabaret Champion category, as well as second place at the Millennium National Pro Am Cabaret Championship. When not dancing, she is Associate Professor of English and Courtesy Associate Professor of Law at Florida State University, and is the author of many books, including Remaking the Frankenstein Myth on Film: Between Laughter and Horror, also published by SUNY Press.
Tainted Milk provides an in-depth analysis of the debate about infant nourishment issues, with a particular focus on environmentally contaminated breastmilk. Maia Boswell-Penc asks why feminists and environmentalists have, for the most part, remained relatively quiet about the fact that environmental toxins have been appearing in breastmilk. She argues that feminists avoid the topic because of their fear of focusing on biological mothering and essentialist thinking, while environmentalists are reluctant to be perceived as fearmongers advocating formula use and contributing to public hysteria. Boswell-Penc also points to the continuing racism, classism, ageism, and corporatization that leaves the less privileged among us more vulnerable.

“The level of scholarship, clarity of writing, and the importance of the topic and argument are excellent. The advocacy of breastfeeding is balanced with a recognition of the problems of contamination, and there is a careful effort to integrate an ecojustice approach that recognizes the greater risk of women of color to contamination.” — Rosemary Radford Ruether, author of Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, Tenth Anniversary Edition

“Boswell-Penc clearly delineates the significance of the issues involved with toxins in breastmilk and the alarming ways that this contamination matters deeply to us all. She does a very good job helping us understand why most Americans lack any knowledge of the issue and why those we might expect to hear from about it have, for the most part, failed to adequately communicate it.” — Ruth Ann Smalley, independent scholar

Maia Boswell-Penc is Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies at the University at Albany, State University of New York.
The global consumption of fossil fuels is dramatically rising, while inversely, the supply is in permanent decline. The “end of oil” threatens the very future of Western civilization. Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge examines the politics of drilling for oil in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and presents this controversy as a precursor of future “resource wars” where ideas and values collide and polarize. The reader is introduced to the primary participants involved: global corporations, politicians, nongovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples and organizations, and human rights/religious organizations. Author David M. Standlea argues in favor of seeing this comparatively “local” conflict as part of a larger struggle between the proponents of an alternative, positive vision for the future and an American culture presently willing to sacrifice that future for immediate profit.

“Extremely relevant and timely, this book not only addresses a central concern in the field—environmental politics—but also represents an important attempt to illuminate the ideological dynamics of our time. This is an outstanding contribution to the emerging field of global studies.”
— Manfred B. Steger, author of Globalism: The New Market Ideology

“This book makes a major contribution to one of the great moral and political debates of our time, highlighting aspects that are not well known or appreciated in more general accounts available in the mass media. Especially significant is its treatment of both aboriginal rights and the role of churches in connecting those rights to more global concerns regarding the environment. In short, Standlea shows how the symbiotic relationship of the Gwich’in to their ecosystem is clearly a lens through which we can see and understand the physical, psychological, and spiritual stakes of our environmental crisis. I am certain that many will find this work challenging—that is good; it is time to be challenged.”
— Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

David M. Standlea is an independent scholar who received his Ph.D. in Political Science/Political Ecology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.
LIVING THE DEATH OF GOD
A THEOLOGICAL MEMOIR
THOMAS J. J. ALTIZER
FOREWORD BY MARK C. TAYLOR

The eminent death-of-God theologian traces his lifelong search for a theory that is contemporary yet biblical.

Theologian Thomas J. J. Altizer became both famous and infamous as the chief spokesman for death-of-God theology in the 1960s. In the years that followed, he has created a theological tradition that has influenced all succeeding generations of theologians. Living the Death of God is Altizer’s theological memoir. Taking us from his transformation as a theological student to his present life of solitude, Altizer recapitulates the voyage to create a truly new theology. The memoir recounts each stage of this voyage, from being overwhelmed by Satan to a conversion to the death of God and an extensive and even ecstatic preaching of the death of God. However, this is the death of that God who is the wholly alienated God, a death realizing anew the crucified God or the apocalyptic Christ.

Written with Altizer’s characteristic elegance, this book is fascinating on its own account, but can also serve the reader as a companion or introduction to Altizer’s body of work.

“I like that Altizer has put so much of himself into the text. We readers are privileged to suffer the profound personal meaning of his theological voyage, through his sickness unto death and his ecstatic joy. Truly, he gives us access to the lived depth of his unparalleled and unique theological vocation. I could not put this book down and it haunted my imagination and thoughts. What a gift from a great man!” — David E. Klemm, coeditor of Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy

“Thomas J. J. Altizer has achieved that which he has long sought—to render his highly sophisticated thinking accessible to a general reading audience.” — Brian Schroeder, coeditor of Thinking through the Death of God: A Critical Companion to Thomas J. J. Altizer

Thomas J. J. Altizer is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He is the author of a number of books, including Godhead and the Nothing; The Contemporary Jesus; and History as Apocalypse, all published by SUNY Press.
THE DEMON’S DAUGHTER
A LOVE STORY FROM SOUTH INDIA
PİİĞALİ ŞÜRNAŅA
TRANSLATED AND WITH AN AFTERWORD BY
VELCHERU NARAYANA RAO AND DAVID SHULMAN

This sixteenth-century work has a modern sensibility, presenting characters’ inner worlds and understanding love as the fullest realization of the individual.

The Demon’s Daughter (Prabhavatī-pradīyumnamu) is a sixteenth-century novel by the south Indian poet Pingalī Sūranna, originally written in Telugu, the language of present-day Andhra Pradesh. Sūranna begins with a story from classical Hindu mythology in which a demon plans to overthrow the gods. Krishna’s son Pradyumna is sent to foil the plot and must infiltrate the impregnable city of the demons; Krishna helps ensure his success by having a matchmaking goose cause Pradyumna to fall in love with the demon’s daughter. The original story focuses on the ongoing war between gods and anti-gods, but Pingalī Sūranna makes it an exploration of the experience of being and falling in love. In this, the work evinces a modern sensibility, showing love as both an individualized emotion and the fullest realization of a person, transcending social and cultural barriers.

The translators include an afterword that explores the cultural setting of the work and its historical and literary contexts. Anyone interested in the literature and mythology of India will find this book compelling, but all readers who love a good story will enjoy this moving book. Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman have provided an elegant translation that will serve well the contemporary reader who wishes to encounter a masterwork of world literature largely unknown in the West.

“This is an eminently readable translation of an outstanding work of the late sixteenth-century Telugu literature. The text itself is a highly engaging work that is readily accessible to the contemporary English-speaking reader. It is also of considerable significance for the light it appears to shed on the nature of social and historical changes in late sixteenth-century south India.” — Phillip B. Wagoner, coauthor of Vijayanagara: Architectural Inventory of the Sacred Centre

Velcheru Narayana Rao is Krishnadevaraya Professor of Languages and Cultures of Asia at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. David Shulman is Professor of Indian Studies and Comparative Religion at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They are the co-translators of The Sound of the Kiss, or The Story That Must Never Be Told by Pingalī Sūranna.
This volume describes, both in words and in images, the physical, emotional, and spiritual sensibilities of the Italian immigrant. These stories, like the photographs that accompany them, are a fundamental part of our individual and collective experience as a nation.” — From the Foreword by Mary Ann McDonald Carolan

“This moving and informative description of Italian immigrants is a badly needed antidote to the poisonous effects of media distortions that have misled generations of Americans. ‘Bravo’ to the author, SUNY Press, and all those responsible for its production.” — Mario M. Cuomo

Drawing on interviews as well as family and archival photographs, The Italian American Experience in New Haven weaves a rich tapestry of social, political, and cultural history, offering a vital supplement to our understanding of the Italian immigrant experience in the United States. With the warmth and sincerity of conversations around the kitchen table, members of New Haven’s Italian American community evoke the rhythms of the streets and the pulse of life in New Haven’s old ethnic neighborhoods, describing how they mingled with other ethnic and racial groups in the shared spaces of neighborhoods, apartment houses, corner stores, churches, playing fields, and schools. They also touch upon the great events that shaped the twentieth century—the Spanish Flu pandemic, the Great Depression, and World War II—and reveal the unknown working history of Italian immigrant women who toiled under terrible working conditions in New Haven’s shirt factories and who sacrificed dreams of education and careers for the immediate economic well-being of their families. Taken together, these interviews and photographs offer a compelling social history of a vibrant immigrant community.

Anthony V. Riccio is Stacks Manager at the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University. He is the author of Portrait of an Italian-American Neighborhood: The North End of Boston.