

## EDITORIAL

GERMAN PHILOSOPHER FRIEDRICH ENGELS was one of the first theorists to conceive of crime as a sign of political resistance. In his classic text *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), for example, he wrote that “the clearest indication of the unbounded contempt of the workers for the existing social order is the wholesale manner in which they break its laws.” This argument became one of the central tenets of Marxist criminology, and it was largely inspired by the romantic notion of the outlaw as an activist against social inequality and injustice. The most notable examples of such figures include beloved folk heroes like Robin Hood, who actively promoted the redistribution of wealth, and rebel leaders like William Wallace, who fought back against an oppressive regime (and whose story was recently retold in the aptly titled film *Outlaw King*).

In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975), however, French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that “the lyricism of marginality may find inspiration in the image of the outlaw, the great social nomad, who prowls on the confines of a docile, frightened order,” yet criminality is a product of “ever more insistent surveillance” and “an accumulation of disciplinary coercion.” The terms “outlaw” and “criminal” thus reflect two different ways of understanding and interpreting transgressive behaviour. While the former serves to challenge the existing social order by representing such behaviour as a positive act of civil disobedience, the latter more often serves to reinforce the status quo by representing such behaviour as an exclusively negative threat to social stability. The tension between these competing interpretations can also be seen in literary texts, which often represent transgressive characters as either exciting and glamorous outlaws, whose actions represent a legitimate and justifiable response to unfair social conditions, or dangerous and frightening criminals, whose actions need to be suppressed.

Our spring issue features a selection of works that explore this theme in various ways. For example, J. R. Boudreau’s “Where Trees Stand in the Water” tells the story of two smugglers who help a woman in an abusive mar-

riage, as the characters gradually recognize their shared identity as outlaws living on the fringes of society. Brandon Marlon's poem "Anonymous Inmate" similarly examines the ambiguous nature of transgressive behaviour by addressing the competing interpretations of Louis Riel's activities as rebel leader of the Métis people. Bill Green's story "The Highwayman" similarly depicts a group of charismatic outlaws who earn our sympathy as they reject the conservative values of mainstream society, yet the romanticization of the outlaw is gradually undermined as the characters begin to turn on each other. John O'Neill's story "Shiva Dancing" also tells the story of a man who sees the minorities in his neighbourhood as potential criminals in need of discipline or even removal, but in the process of reinforcing social norms he gradually engages in transgressive behaviour himself, thus challenging the cultural assumptions that inform the distinction between outlaws and criminals. Dermot O'Sullivan's story "Silom Road" similarly focuses on the lives of minorities who have been forced to make a living as prostitutes on the streets of Bangkok, and it challenges the romanticization of the outlaw by illustrating the violence inflicted by and on those around them. John Grey's poem "Matt Mugged" and Rachael Biggs' story "Green" more explicitly focus on the negative consequences of transgressive behaviour, as they depict both the physical and psychological harm caused by outlaw characters, and David Sheskin's story "Sanctuary of the Damned" similarly challenges the lyricism of marginality by presenting an exiled outlaw whose pathological violence is even more shocking and menacing.

Our spring issue also features an interview with African-American poet Tim Seibles, who discusses the social function of literature and the need for literary innovation during times of social upheaval. Charles Campbell's essay "A Spectacular President" also examines the recent political turmoil in the U.S. as a media spectacle that serves to conceal the negative impact of American foreign policy across the globe. Our spring issue then concludes with two new chronicles: Roberta Barker's review of Sam Gold's Broadway production of *King Lear* and Canadian video artist Alison S. M. Kobayashi's play *Say Something Bunny!* (2017) and Jerry White's review of the superhero film *Shazam!* (2019) and the long and acclaimed career of French filmmaker Agnès Varda, who passed away in March.