

Public Abstract

First Name:Sarah

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Last Name:Heston

Adviser's First Name:Andrew

Adviser's Last Name:Hoberek

Co-Adviser's First Name:Scott

Co-Adviser's Last Name:Cairns

Graduation Term:SP 2014

Department:English

Degree:PhD

Title:Civilization

This memoir that recounts my struggle to decide whether to follow my father, Trevor, training for survival in the cataclysms that he believed were imminent, or to settle into society in a way he never could. At the center of this narrative is Trevor's sudden death when I was a teenager. Alone after Trevor's death, I sell illegal guns on the streets of San Diego, figure out how to pay the phone bills, and pit my power against that of lawyers and cops. This is a braided narrative of a girl becoming a woman of Endtimes, in a world dark enough to hold my father's delusions about the meaning behind earthquakes, celebrity deaths, and genocide, but bright enough to show me how the lowest man can—beyond death—educate a girl in the most exalted love. The narrative barrels through scenes of California's restricted mountains and skunky highways, a state mental hospital on the Arizona-Mexico border, and the eerie plains of Missouri. This is a contemporary work of literature that fits in with apocalyptic works of fiction and genre literature, but what separates Civilization is that it is not fiction—it is a disarming memoir that shows a hidden California upbringing as native as the Blue Oak and as foreign as the Wormwood Sage, where an orphaned daughter learns to separate dirt from concrete, coincidence from prescience, and the death of one from the death of all.

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Title:Memoir Outside of Self

Memoir Outside of Self is a scholarly work that accounts for the ways Western memoir from Late Antiquity to the present does not conform to memoir scholars' focus on selfhood in the genre. My introduction examines readings by canonical scholars, laying them against readings of the same texts by scholars from other fields in order to identify and correct the historical and philosophical gaps in the canon of memoir studies. Chapter One places Augustine in a tradition of hagiography to argue that he is not the first memoirist but a writer mimicking the testimonial tradition of women martyrs. Chapter Two places Rousseau in a tradition of slave narrative memoirs to show the ways his text does not provide the genre's secular shift but works against divisions of spiritual and secular. Chapter Three jumps argues that the resistance to Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss* misunderstands the historical and moral stakes of memoir as confession, conversion, and self-articulation that Harrison rejects by following a tradition of women's hagiography. The final chapter advocates for reading the theorists that memoir studies derides as memoirists because they produce life writing that rejects concepts of the self in favor of representing ambiguous authorship, forms, and themes. My conclusion asserts that studies in nonfiction are appearing at universities at an accelerated rate and advocates for this discipline to use a collaborative approach across English departments.