

Standard staff *bookshelf*.

Editors continue a collaborative column. Novels included highlight contemporary global issues and how to achieve palpable action.



REVIEW | 'Life of the Party: Poems' by Olivia Gatwood dissects sexism, sexual assault

Eden Leavey /
Culture Editor: Print

From the #MeToo Movement to the Everyone's Invited online platform voicing youth experiences with sexual violence, many take action by utilizing social media to shed light on rape culture. With an increasing number of survivor testimonies, sexual violence, particularly against women, is abundantly clear.

Herein lies the surge of films and literature destigmatizing sexual assault. Even so, never before have I read a work that so authentically depicts these deeply patriarchal issues as Olivia Gatwood's "Life of the Party: Poems."

The book is a collection of poetry with a mixture of literary structures – anecdotes, prose, sonnets and odes – all of which highlight the themes that have had tangible impacts on Gatwood's life. This structural variety allows the book to expand

upon numerous topics relating to sexual violence and evaluate the complexities of sexism.

In essence, "Life of the Party: Poems" beautifully exemplifies the ups and downs of friendship, sexuality, domestic violence, heartbreak and the struggle of transitioning between girl and womanhood.

Based on Gatwood's ever-growing interest in true crime, the poetry collection centers around the fear commonly associated with being a woman in a world filled with sexual violence, illustrating its daily impact on mental health.

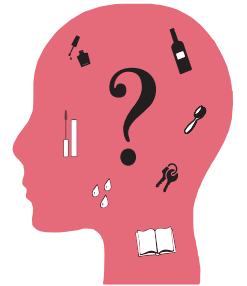
However, what distinguishes this book from others grappling with similar themes is Gatwood's fearlessness to confront the reality that marginalized groups – namely women of color and members of the LG-BTQ+ community – are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. Realistically, the true crime narrative is profoundly misconstrued. Gatwood touches upon the media phenomenon popularizing missing white

women over people of color, commonly referred to as "missing white woman syndrome." She actively acknowledges intersectionality alongside the privileges she holds as a white person.

In addition, each poem embodies an individual tone and style, creating a stark contrast between the lyrical qualities of Gatwood's writing and moments of fiery passion evoking raw emotion. These literary dynamics also shine through during her live readings of the book, which were hosted regularly prior to COVID-19 and posted online.

Not only is Gatwood a writer and an activist, but she is also an award-winning slam poet. All of her poems are designed for stage performance. Gatwood originally gained traction through these slam poem performances prior to publishing "Life of the Party: Poems."

In 2015, I stumbled across a YouTube video of one of her performances, and I have been following Gatwood and her



Graphic by Eden Leavey

work ever since.

Perhaps Gatwood's poetry facilitates strong personal connections on account of her relatability. Growing up and finding your place in the world is arguably the most challenging element of adolescence. Hence, relying on literature that effortlessly describes the myriad emotions of a teenager can act as a guiding force.

Even if one is not as likely to suffer from sexual violence, everyone can learn a thing or two about the intricacies of growing up within a normalized rape culture surrounded by confining biases and gender norms from this collection.

REVIEW | 'Power of Habit' by Charles Duhigg unlocks key to tangible action

Grace Hamilton /
Lead Culture Editor

Through evolution, human consciousness has facilitated active thought, choice and reflection. Conversely, humans maintain the ability to simultaneously carry out actions in the absence of conscious thought.

Habit – the one word that tends to shroud every conversation concerning human nature – permeates numerous facets of our world. Thus, forming these regular tendencies is inherent to human nature.

These behaviors dictate the course of our lives, holding the power to engender productivity and subsequently, success. Yet, acquiring harmful habits is remarkably common and hinders our ability to transform our lives in ways that productively impact both ourselves and those around us.

"Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg – a novel evaluating this phenomenon – seemed to call my name as soon as I read the cover. Even upon skimming the first page, my expectations of its potency were far exceeded. Every feature of the book im-

mediately sucked me in, from the inclusion of scientific evidence to captivating anecdotes.

Duhigg, an award-winning New York Times reporter, reveals the ins and outs of habit formation through gripping scientific analysis. On the basis of countless research papers and interviews, Duhigg relays the overlap between social psychology, clinical psychology and neuroscience concerning habit formation.

Perhaps the central appeal of this novel lies in its unveiling of the often imperceptible power of forming constructive habits. This argument is backed by a vast quantity of formation in the form of narratives and multifaceted scientific findings.

Duhigg brings a remarkably complex topic of study, human nature – as well as its potential for encouraging action – to life with remarkable simplicity. In fact, each chapter details a story related to the nature of habits and how these patterns influence group behavior. Duhigg ultimately surmises that habits unlock the key to transformation beyond individual lives, simultaneously facilitating reform on a wider scale.

The reader is transported to

labs where neuroscientists explore the root of habits before unearthing the success in habit formation of Olympian Michael Phelps, civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz.

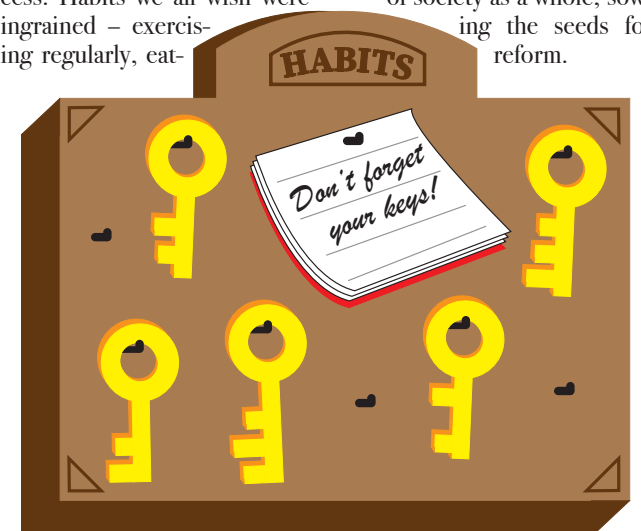
The role of habits in determining the difference between failure and success as well as life and death is then further exemplified through the stories of Target, the NFL and healthcare systems.

"Power of Habit" ultimately explores a compelling narrative unearthing the recipe for success. Habits we all wish were ingrained – exercising regularly, eat-

ing healthy meals, constructing effective social movements – are all achieved by understanding how habits fundamentally operate.

At its core, "Power of Habit" disproves the notion of fate, flipping said assumption on its head, claiming that habits dictate our lives. Its relevance in unlocking the key to success renders "Power of Habit" well worth a read.

Through harnessing the science of behavioral patterns, we can transform our lives and understand the inner workings of society as a whole, sowing the seeds for reform.



Graphic by Luke Martinez