



It's one thing to write a novel about trauma - to tell a coherent story, to create (and be comforted by, to whatever extent) a narrative arc of pain and loss. But it's something else entirely to find oneself inside a series of imagistic and syntactical loops - a Venn diagram of partial thoughts (or dreams or memories) that become more certain and more troubling each time they refuse to relate or resolve. Harold Abramowitz's *Blind Spot* is not about anything - about, from the Old English, 'outside of.' Instead, it's a kind of prayer made out of attention (Simone Weil). Incantatory and somatechnic. I fucking love this book. Abramowitz writes the mind and body (in trauma, in everyday life) from the knotted and careful inside.

-TC TOLBERT

## TEACHING GUIDE

# BLIND SPOT

by Harold Abramowitz

978-1-937865-72-6 / 166 pages / \$15.95

### Recommended Classes:

- Creative Writing
- Hybrid Writing
- Literature / Contemporary Literature
- Trauma Studies
- Narrative Studies
- Gender Studies
- Experimental Writing

### Keywords:

Narrative / New Novel / Nouveau Roman / Fiction / Experimental Fiction / Trauma / Hybrid / Dystopia / Time / Cinematic Narrative / Hotel / Funeral / Psychological Narrative / Crime / Loop / Repetition / Unreliable Narrator / Language

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Revisit your idea of what narrative is (prior to reading *Blind Spot*). How does *Blind Spot* ask you to amend, add, challenge, change your understanding of narrative?
2. Look at David Antin's distinctions between story and narrative. One of the defining characteristics of narrative for Antin is the presence of *stakes*. How does *Blind Spot* illuminate these distinctions between story and narrative?
3. What genre would you classify *Blind Spot* as? Why?

4. In what ways can the primary settings in *Blind Spot* (hotel, mountains, dining room, city, cemetery, cafe, restaurant, etc..) be thought about as characters in the book? How do you experience space throughout the book?
5. What role do the book's settings play in terms of shaping the way the narrative is told by the narrator?
6. How would you describe the function and operation of time? Does it feel like time contracts or protracts as we move through space or language? How does the shape of time in *Blind Spot* reflect the psychology of the narrator?
7. Choose a single paragraph-section that is interesting to you. What do you notice about the sentences? How do the sentences *work*?
8. How can the use of repetition in *Blind Spot* be characterized?
9. The main character in *Blind Spot* is unnamed. How is the main character's anonymity a central theme in the book?
10. What is the relationship between the two main sections of the book?
11. What role does gender play in *Blind Spot*?
12. Significant events ("crisis", "war", "death") frame the narration in *Blind Spot*, but are not named or described in detail. How does the ambiguity surrounding these events inform your understanding of the events that are described in detail in *Blind Spot*.
13. What resonances do you see in *Blind Spot* with Maurice Blanchot's writings on disaster and grief? (*The Writing of the Disaster* by Maurice Blanchot)
14. *Blind Spot* partially responds to the the Nouveau Roman, a type of French experimental novel that diverged from traditional styles. How do you see the *Blind Spot* diverging from styles? What relationship do you see with other French New Novels?

**Possible Assignments:**

- Make a chronology out of the events of the book.
- Make a list of (6) elements of plot for a story, or (6) fragments from a story, write a narrative where each of the 6 elements appears in exactly the same way at least (3) times.
- Write a narrative that depicts a psychological or emotional state or the aftermath of a traumatic event. What would those states look like in the form of a narrative?