

feelings and justify our actions. What are they saying about pain? Athletes extol it. Those who can't "tough it out" are wimps. Pop musicians sing, "It hurts so good/come on, baby, make it hurt so good/sometimes love don't feel like it should" (John Mellencamp)* and "I hurt myself today/to see if I still feel/I focus on the pain/the only thing that's real" (Nine Inch Nails).† The recent hit movie "Natural Born Killers" glamorizes gratuitous violence and indifference to pain. Bruce Springsteen explains the popular reason for these actions, "I guess there's just a meanness in this world."‡

To understand our ambivalence toward suffering and the persistence of traditional concepts valuing pain, as described by Caton, we need only to listen to the songs of today. If we want to abolish pain and suffering, we must also change our lyrics.

* Mellencamp J, Green G: Hurts So Good. © 1982 Windswept Pacific Entertainment Co. d/b/a Full Keel Music Co. International copyright secured. Made in USA. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

† Reznor T: Hurt. New York, T.V.T. Music, 1994. Reproduced with permission.

‡ Springsteen B: Nebraska. 1982. Reproduced with permission.

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In Reply:—As Johnstone and Fife suggest, it is ironic that our society extol the work of Mother Theresa and Albert Schweitzer to abolish pain and suffering even as we pay large sums of money to listen to John Mellencamp and Nine Inch Nails sing about it. This illustrates quite well both our preoccupation with the problem and the ambiguity toward it.

Ironically, the work of Schweitzer and Nine Inch Nails also have something in common. Each represents a social response to pain and, therefore, something that unites us. Similarly, the "gratuitous violence and indifference to pain" in the motion picture "Natural Born Killers" resembles the spectacles staged by the Romans in the Coliseum and may represent another social response to pain, one which has persisted for a long time.

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2. Schweitzer A: On the Edge of the Primeval Forest. New York, Macmillan, 1931, p 62

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