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Review of the Soul of the Marionette by John Gray

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Gray, John. *The Soul of the Marionette: A Short Inquiry into Human Freedom.*

Farrar. May 2015. 192p. notes. ISBN 9780374261184. \$23; ebk. ISBN 9781429953191. PHIL

Gray's (*The Silence of Animals; The Immortalization Commission*) book claims to be an inquiry into human freedom but reads like a collection of anecdotes strung together by a jaded, unreliable narrator. The work describes several conceptions of freedom from philosophy, art, and sf that skirt the more conventional concerns about the topic of freedom of the will, such as freedom from suffering, doubt, and having to make one's own choices. Unfortunately, the text inexplicably glosses over the entirety of the current free will debate. While divided into three sections and further into a number of vignettes, the book seems to have an overarching theme that freedom is an illusion and religion something worse. The author ultimately states but doesn't defend a somewhat nihilistic compatibilist stance. Human beings, Gray declares, are accidents of evolution whose only freedom is the old compatibilist standby—the ability to do as one wants. It's difficult to call this a philosophical text as the author makes wild and unsupported claims about history, religion, and science. **VERDICT** Although erratic and undefended, there is nothing new here. Others explore these topics with more rigor and intellectual honesty.—**William Simkulet, Univ. of Wisconsin-Marshfield/Wood Cty., Marshfield**