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The Intricacies of Punishment and Power in Gendered Medieval English Society: Exploring Alison's Curious Escape from Punishment in Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale"

Abigail Driver

Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* relates a story of scandal, adultery, and social expectations. Using the events from this bawdy fabliau, Chaucer clearly paints each of the characters as flawed. John the miller fails to notice his wife's trickery; he becomes the cuckolded husband he wishes to avoid. Nicholas pursues a married woman, and Absolon womanizes rather than preach the Word of God. Alison also appears flawed because of her unfaithfulness to John and her pleasure in Absolon's embarrassment. However, in the final lines of the tale when the characters each receive specific punishments for their failures and sins, only the males experience punishment. Unlike the other characters, Alison gains what she desires without any repercussions. In fact, she essentially obtains the last laugh in the story, which suddenly gives her enormous power and agency compared to each of the humiliated men. This moment of escape and agency contrasted with Alison's objectification, animalization, and ultimate dehumanization throughout the story work together to reveal insights into medieval English culture's misogynistic perception of women. However, when Chaucer allows Alison great agency as the only character to escape the consequences of her actions, he breaks from this misogynistic cultural view and underhandedly asserts that because of medieval English culture's view of women, women deserve—and can achieve—a special agency and differentiated treatment that men can neither receive nor merit.

Alison's difference from the male characters in the text demands attention before exploring her escape from punishment. Throughout "The Miller's Tale" Alison consistently receives

animalistic characterization—not in passing moments, but in a repeated, systematic, focused way. Although Chaucer admits her beauty, calling her a “fair [...] yonge wyf” (125) who “was full [...] blissful on to see” (139), he also compares her small, slender body to the body of a “wezele” (126) and says that she is “softer than the wolle is of a [sheep]” (141). Additionally, he declares that “hir song, it was as loude and yerne / As any swalwe sittyng on a berne” (Chaucer 149-50), comparing her voice to a swallow. He even goes so far to say that “she koude skippe and make game / As any kyde or calf” (Chaucer 151-2), and he declares that “[skittish] she was as is a joly colt” (Chaucer 155). Eventually, in what serves as one of the most vivid and shocking examples of Alison’s animalization, Alison “[springs] as a colt dooth in the trave / And with her heed she [twists] faste away” (Chaucer 174-75) when Nicholas, the university student, “[catches] her by the [genitals...] and [holds] hire harde by the haunche bones” (Chaucer 168, 171). In this moment Chaucer describes Alison’s response to Nicholas’s sexual advances more like the responses of an endangered animal than of a frightened woman. Each of these moments work together to establish Alison as animalistic, stripped of agency and even humanness. She more frequently receives animal-like treatment—by both the author and the characters—than treatment as a person with value aside from her physicality and sexuality. Unlike the male characters in the story who Chaucer characterizes based on their occupations and reputations, all of Alison’s characterization stems from her beast-like physicality. To make the difference even clearer, each of the animals associated with Alison—a weasel, a sheep, a swallow, a goat, a calf, and a colt—are each animals of small size and little power, symbolic of Alison’s separate position in society. Chaucer makes Alison’s separateness as a female unquestionable.

Additionally, Chaucer also crafts Alison’s feminine clothing to contain and restrain her supposedly animal-like nature. Just as John the miller “heeld hire narwe in cage” (Chaucer 116), Alison’s clothes also restrain her. Chaucer writes, “A [girdle] she werede ybarred al of silk” (127), and he also states that she wears a “white [cap]” (133) and a “[headband] brood of silk” (135)—three constraining articles of clothing. In *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, V.A. Kolve states, “We are shuttled back and forth

between similes that suggest an animal nature—free, instinctive, sensual, untamed—and an inventory of the costume that is meant to contain those energies” (163). Kolve goes on to explain how Alison’s “clothing [...] is steadily registered as something that limits and confines” (163). Ultimately, within the very first pages of the tale, Chaucer characterizes Alison as an animal and simultaneously attempts to constrain that animal freeness through her clothing, shedding light on the negative connotations of her animal spirit. From the start, Chaucer blatantly uses Alison’s characterization—physically and visually—to place her in a social, physical, and sexual category separate from the male characters. Women become represented by flesh and sinfulness. While the male characters enjoy definite classification human—as men, respected individuals—Alison exists in a limbo of sorts where she lives out the dichotomy of animal and woman.

This separate social category indeed presents an accurate representation of medieval English society’s misogynistic perception of women. At the time Chaucer pens *The Canterbury Tales*, English women experience a culture of blatant misogyny. In her book *Species, Phantasms, and Images: Vision and Medieval Psychology in The Canterbury Tales*, Carolyn Collette provides an example of the inequality—the different categories—experienced by men and women that begin even at the marriage altar. She writes, “The discourse of medieval marriage constructs the woman as unruly will, a lesser partner whom the sacramental texts of the Church regard as dangerous to the rational male, the dominant partner in the union” (Collette 62). She explains how the sacramental wedding “prayer begins by recalling woman’s role in the original sin [...] and] it recalls the female weakness that led up to the Fall” (Collette 62). In this seemingly tiny moment, the church itself validates medieval English society’s misogynistic views by underscoring women’s weakness and promoting the idea that women fall into a separate category from men. Women are weak; women are wild. To make the differentiation even more blatant, Collette observes how the “fact that there is no equivalent prayer for men underscores the pervasive nature of the assumption that women’s behavior or misbehavior cause[s] problems in medieval marriage” (63). Women begin marriage already on an unequal playing ground, and beginning this way gives medieval English

women little hope for equality. Similarly, Alison begins her marriage to the miller in an unequal state, making her dehumanizing characterization unsurprising and even expected within the misogynistic cultural context.

Although it appears that this separate categorization serves to differentiate and belittle Alison and ultimately all medieval women—which it certainly accomplishes—it also works for the female benefit. Since Alison exists on a lesser level of humanness—on an animal level—it follows that her moral code, social expectations, and punishments fall on a different plane as well. At the end of the text Chaucer sums up each of the men’s embarrassments and downfall, declaring, “Thus [made love to] was the carpenter’s wyf / For al his kepyng and his jalousie, / And Absolon hath kist hir nether eye, / And Nicholas is scalded in the [rear]” (Chaucer 742–5). However, the text’s animalized female, the character with the least support from society and the character expected to succumb to weakness and wildness, remains unscathed through the closing events. In fact, Chaucer only mentions Alison to note how she “told every man that [John] was wood” (Chaucer 724). She revels in her husband’s embarrassment and quickly covers her tracks by passing him off as crazed. In his book *Philosophical Chaucer: Love, Sex, and Agency in the Canterbury Tales*, Mark Miller attempts to reconcile Alison’s sudden burst of agency and escape from punishment with her previous degradation by stating, “[Alison] alone never acts in such a way as to erect an artificial barrier between herself and her own pleasure; she alone consistently lets instinct settle questions of what to do, or rather lets it prevent those questions from even arising” (57). Essentially, Alison, embracing her lesser, animalistic status in society, accepts her forced social role and uses the lesser expectations to her advantage. Miller suggests that “as a result [of embracing her animalistic status] she alone remains unpunished by the crushing inevitability of cause and effect at the tales end” (57). Surrounded by falling men, Alison stands tall thanks to the uneven playing ground established by medieval English society; she embraces the inequality and twists it to her advantage, using it to escape the expected retribution for sexual promiscuity.

Interestingly, Chaucer’s choice grant Alison enormous agency after lines and lines of dehumanization presents little surprise

when considered within the context of his life. Historical documentation reveals that Chaucer's audience largely dictates his writings. In his essay "Signs, Symbols, and Cancellations," John Gardner writes, "All the hard evidence we have suggests that Chaucer, all his life, [writes] mainly for the feminine leaders of the court: Lady Blanche, Queen Anne, Princess Joan, and so on" (197). With a largely female audience, Chaucer walks a narrow path. He comprehends the necessity of recognizing the power of these important and influential females and simultaneously attempts to provide realistic, culturally-relevant stories. Therefore, Alison's agency at the end of "The Miller's Tale" functions doubly to pacify his female audience seeking validation in his writings and to also provide an accurate representation of medieval England's misogynistic culture. When writing about "The Wife of Bath," Gardner reinforces this idea when he states, "[G]iven the personal affairs of certain key members of Chaucer's audience, Chaucer, whatever he may privately have believed, [is] not in a good position to make much point of sexual incontinence" (198). This concept similarly applies to the "The Miller's Tale" where Chaucer also lacks a position to completely strip the female entity of agency. He recognizes how his audience and their prestigious positions influence his writing choices. Perhaps Chaucer's representation of women in "The Miller's Tale" provides a skewed representation of his personal views, but it certainly reveals the pressures and expectations placed upon Chaucer as an author.

Additionally, this monumental female agency holds importance because of the intense culture of misogyny in medieval England at the time. Doubtlessly, Chaucer breaks from this social expectation, but he makes this break in an underhanded way that both works to his advantage and pacifies his misogynistic audience. Kolve writes in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* that the animalistic characterization of Alison "commended itself to Chaucer as a way of disarming certain kinds of potential response among his audience, as well as affording him a chance to write about a period of human life in which he took self-evident delight" (172). Chaucer faces not only writing to please his royal audiences, but he exists in a misogynistic culture where even the church supports the blatant oppression of women. In Chaucer's text he skillfully creates a pretext of misogyny only to shatter the

construct in the final moments of the tale. By that point readers have become so entrenched in the misogynistic point of view penetrating the tale that only the most alert readers pick up on the enormous moment of agency granted to Alison. Chaucer skillfully uses the humor of his *fabliaux* to screen his underhanded promotion of at least some sort of equality for women in a culture that preaches misogyny.

Not only does Chaucer's inclusion of Alison's sudden agency promote female capability and power despite the crippling cultural norms, but the conclusion of "The Miller's Tale" also recognizes the difference of males and draws attention to their flaws and inability to find salvation. In fact, Alison's escape from punishment provides a context for examining the actions that prevent Absolon, John, and Nicholas from receiving salvation like Alison. Although each of the male characters receive punishment for different reasons, each exhibits inexcusable qualities that Chaucer's audience cannot overlook due to the males' higher and more humanized status in society.

First, Absolon receives punishment for his failure to live up to his assigned social role as the parish clerk. Kolve explores this idea and proposes that "Chaucer is interested in Absolon not merely as the recipient of an insult, but as someone who creates occasion for its delivery" (193). Indeed, examination of Chaucer's text backs up Kolve's proposal. Absolon spends his time in alehouses, and Chaucer writes, "In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne / That he ne visited with his solas / Ther any gaylard [barmaid] was" (226-7). The source of Absolon's downfall appears to be his promiscuous lifestyle. However, Chaucer paints the problem not simply as a matter of flirtatiousness, but highlights Absolon's wandering eye in light of his status as a religious leader. When Absolon approaches Alison saying, "My faire bryd, my swete cynamone? / Awaketh lemman myn, and speketh to me" (590-91), he begins to place Alison—and sexual experience in general—above his religious duties. Ultimately, although existing at the higher male social plane appears to Absolon's advantage, this differentiation actually causes his downfall. When Absolon fails to meet the expectations for someone in his position, his character requires, and promptly receives, punishment at the end of the text. Essentially, the male exaltation creates the context for the male downfall, an

experience not threatening Alison and other women since they already exist at a lower social status with different morals and expectations.

Next, as the character who blatantly engages in sexual acts with Alison, Nicholas's need for punishment stands quite clear. Medieval English society places the emphasis in marriage on how "the man takes a wife and the woman is married to the man" (Collette 62). The woman exists as a sort of object to be taken, possessed, and guarded. Therefore, through approaching Alison and begging, "Lemman, love me al at ones / Or I wol dyen" (Chaucer 173-4), Nicholas begins the process of taking the a woman that already belongs to another man; he takes John's property. Although Alison eventually plots with Nicholas to deceive John, Alison is not held responsible for her actions because of her animalistic characterization. However, Nicholas stands in full blame for his actions because of his elevated human status as a male. Chaucer uses this difference in characterization to affirm the validity of Nicholas's punishment in contrast to Alison's escape.

Similarly, John's ignorant behavior brings about punishment again because of the differing social expectations. Unlike Alison who freely embraces the wild, animalistic physicality and sexuality thrust upon her by society, John must live up to society's tamed expectations for males. Throughout the text John's flaws appear less obvious than those of Nicholas and Absolon, but Chaucer ultimately uses John's punishment to criticize his ignorance and lack of foresight. In the very beginning of the text Chaucer reveals John's suspicion that he was "lik a cokewold" (117); however, despite this idea, John fails to notice the trickery taking place in his own house. He blindly believes Nicholas's declaration that there "[s]hal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood / That half so greet was nevere Noees Flood" (Chaucer 409-10). Had John known the Biblical account of Noah's flood, he would have known that in Genesis 9:15 God declares, "Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life" (*The Holy Bible*). Therefore, John stands dually flawed; he not only walks blindly through life ignoring his own intuitions, but he also displays a lack of basic Biblical knowledge. These two flaws work together to merit John's eventual punishment—a broken arm and a ruined reputation. While Alison commits sexual sin and escapes, John simply commits sins

of ignorance and receives a dual punishment, again reinforcing how the humanized social status of males requires John to receive these punishments and accept responsibility for his shortcomings, no matter how miniscule in comparison to Alison's purposeful cheating.

Without a doubt, Chaucer grants Alison—and women in general—an enormous amount of agency through the concluding actions of his text. In an underhanded way he demonstrates Alison's animalistic status in medieval English culture and explores how her status contrasted with the men's completely human status allows her to escape the retribution for her actions while the men must face the consequences of their behavior. Chaucer appears to balance a desire to reveal this reality of medieval English culture and a need to pacify his largely female audience by creating the animalized yet empowered Alison, and he begs his modern readers to grapple with understanding Alison's agency. Ultimately, Alison escapes *because* she is not equivalent to a man and *because* she is held to a different set of standards. Alison's agency certainly exists, yet Chaucer leaves readers with a problematized understanding of a type of agency derived from a lesser social status. Even after working through the intricacies of the punishments of the male characters and the escape of Alison, Chaucer indirectly sets up his readers explore the validity of agency derived from female social inequality.

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Becoming Redeemed: Lancelot's Journey of Faith in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*

Sydney Bollinger

Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* continues to be one of the most influential works of Arthurian legend since its original publication in 1485. In his text, Malory combines many sources, such as *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* and *The Vulgate Cycle*, with original stories to create a narrative detailing the lives of knights in King Arthur's court. Stylistically, Malory's narrative is structurally similar to the Bible, implying a religious theme underlying the surface story. His central figure is Lancelot, a man in an adulterous relationship with Queen Guenevere, but despite this relationship, Lancelot attempts to seek God throughout the book. Malory's narrative distances itself from traditional Christian practice which relied heavily on the church, allowing Lancelot to seek redemption on his own—a personal relationship between man and God. By focusing on Lancelot, Malory provides a compelling example of the Christian journey from sinner to redeemed man, in effect turning Lancelot's story into a representation of a new faith, one that can be defined by personal failure and triumph with all events leading to reconciliation with God.

To make his narrative of faith recognizable and relevant to Christianity, Malory chose to write his book so it can be explicitly compared to the Bible in both style and content. In similar fashion to the Bible, Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is made up of many separate books, each with their own story that connect thematically to each other to form the overall narrative. Malory's work "is, like [the Bible], a narrative of faith" that revolves around central themes and constantly returns to them throughout the book (Grimm 16). These themes and ideals—chivalry, courtly love, the Pentecostal Oath—are not only important to the central storyline, but are also important to the development of Malory's characters. In this way, his characters, including Lancelot, are much like the heroes of the Old Testament in the Bible who adhere to the Mosaic Law in order to become godly men. Although all men will fail in pursuit

of perfection such as Lancelot, who struggles with adultery, or Noah, a drunk, these men still have favor with God by adhering to the laws set before them. The failings of these men do not discount their ability to be figures of faith. Instead, they provide an example of the human struggle to remain god-like in a fallen world. Both the stylistic and content-related similarities between *Le Morte D'Arthur* and the Bible allow for Malory's work to be read as a faith-based narrative. The writing style allows Lancelot to read as a knight of Arthur's court, as well as a Biblical man of faith, similar to Abraham or Noah of the Old Testament.

Lancelot, as Malory's central figure, is an alternative to the traditional characterization of a Christian man promoted by the Catholic Church. Historically, he wrote during a time of widespread animosity towards the Church. Around this time, "there was a strong desire among many of the faithful for reform [of the church]" (Hart 251). His narrative, completed in 1469 or 1470, contains little mention of the church as an institution. Malory used his narrative to respond to the corrupt Catholic Church, by providing a new Christian experience through Lancelot. Malory's Christian journey distinguishes itself by focusing on the journey of a single man who wrestles with faith on his own, in a more secular setting, rather than finding redemption and acceptance in God through Catholic practice. *Le Morte D'Arthur* becomes "his personal faith ... unique, idiosyncratic ... and rarely expressed in a direct way" (Grimm 17). His writing, while a commentary on his time, allowed him to redefine the Christian lifestyle as it relates to him. Lancelot becomes the prime example of this new lifestyle, a life without need of the church to come to God for redemption.

Throughout *Le Morte D'Arthur* Lancelot attempts to uphold Christian values, but is brought down by his affair with Guenevere, highlighting his human character. Although Lancelot "passed all other knyghtes[,] ... he [was] ovircom ... yf hit were by treson other inchauntement[,] ..." and since the cause of his faults are known, Lancelot becomes sympathetic and relatable (Malory 151). Malory's hero is caught in a treasonous relationship with Guenevere, his king's wife, so by extension, Lancelot is betraying the kingdom he strives to protect. The hero of the Bible, on the other hand, is Jesus Christ, a holy and perfect man-god. If Malory's focus was on perfection, he would have chosen King

Arthur, a man described as god-like, though stagnant in his character development. Even sleeping with Morgause, Arthur's well-known sin, is pardoned because he "knew nat that Kynge Lottis wyff was his sister" (Malory 30). Instead of the blameless Arthur, Malory relies on Lancelot, a knowingly sinful man, to become the hero. Lancelot can be compared to Noah or Abraham, men who are said to have "obtained good testimony through faith ... that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (*The Scofield Study Bible*, Heb. 11.39-40). The men of faith in the Bible were all flawed in some capacity and not meant to be celebrated for their perfection, but for their ability to overcome great sin and shame, and in turn bring glory and honor to God, rather than themselves. Through his sin, Lancelot continues to seek God and build his faith through the Grail Quest, the Healing of Sir Urry, and adherence to the knightly code. By modeling Lancelot after these Biblical characters, Malory promotes the idea that it is possible to overcome great sin in order to be redeemed, and that Lancelot's position as the central character is important to Malory's model of the Christian faith.

To accurately use Lancelot as his "man of faith," Malory must mirror the human struggle of internal sin and outward perception. In spite of his fatal flaw, Lancelot is expected to uphold the ideals of the Pentecostal Oath, a set of guidelines for knights original to Malory's text. For Lancelot, in light of his relationship with Guenevere, the oath is troubling because the second guideline is "allwayes to fle treson" (Malory 77). Malory's design of a treasonous relationship creates a parallel between the Arthur's kingdom and the kingdom of God. Lancelot's failing as a knight—treason—matches his failing as a Christian—adultery—allowing Malory to compare the knightly code with the Law of God. In both cases, Lancelot attempts to hide failure from his king, earthly or spiritual. Malory creates tension to demonstrate the existence of sin in a character typically considered exemplary. Arthur, his earthly king, is oblivious to Lancelot's adulterous relationship for most of the narrative, and so Arthur continues to rely on Lancelot's ability as a knight. At the same time, Lancelot struggles with sin, as all humans do, and seeks God anyways, hoping that his "good" character, defined by his dedication to Arthur and the court, as well as attempting to live a moral life, will be

enough for him to be a Christian man. Malory's representation of Lancelot's struggle through the Pentecostal Oath allows for Malory to illustrate the effects of living with two personalities, one of greatness and one of sin and shame.

Since Lancelot has deep internal conflict, Malory uses the Grail Quest to develop Lancelot's need for God and redemption, while proving that striving toward God does not lead absolutely to perfection. While on the Quest, "the hermits as well as Galahad, teach him to pray, and when Lancelot puts their advice into practice he is rewarded with his vision of the Grail" (Moore 4). Lancelot's journey into truly seeking God is marked by this moment. He was not able to retrieve the Grail, because, according to Malory, "had nat Sir Launcelot bene in his prevy thoughtes and in hys myndis so sette inwardly to the Quene as he was in semynge outwarde to God, there had no knyght passed hym in the Queste" (588). In this explanation, Malory returns to Lancelot's love for Guenevere as the factor keeping him from becoming the knight that retrieves the Grail. Even though he learns to pray and is rewarded with a vision of the Grail, Lancelot did not let go of his sin and so he fails. Following the quest, he is no longer considered the greatest knight. His title instead bestowed on his son, Galahad. Lancelot's failings as a Grail knight are not incidental, instead coinciding with the failings of Malory and humanity as a whole. Galahad, Christ-like in his perfection, is an unattainable standard, representing the outcome of perfect pursuit of God. Lancelot becomes the "normal" man in this scenario, the greatest worldly knight, no longer perfect as he was once perceived to be, instead full of fault.

Though his hero is flawed, Malory writes Lancelot as forgivable and exemplary in order to make him a compelling example of the Christian walk for his audience. In the first of his famous May passages, Malory comments on the love of Arthur's time and his time. He says in love the pair should "firste reserve the honoure to God ... and such love I calle vertuose love" (Malory 624-625). He specifies that a couple should honor God in their relationship, showing it is important to be a man or woman of God. Later, he describes Queen Guenevere as a "trew lover" (Malory 625). For many reasons, Guenevere should not be a model for love, namely because of her adulterous relationship with Lancelot. The seventh of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament is the instruc-

tion to not commit adultery (*The Scofield Study Bible*, Exo. 20.14). As such, Malory's definition of Guenevere as a "trew" lover also affects Lancelot, since they are romantically involved. If Guenevere embodies "trew" love, then Lancelot does as well. Though committing a sin, Lancelot continues to prove himself as a good person by being a "trew" lover to Guenevere. Malory makes the distinction that being a "good" man and a man of God are not the same. Like any human, Lancelot is fighting a fatal sin, however, he is still considered a good person. As a representation of the Christian journey, Lancelot's life is transparent, allowing him to appeal to the sympathy of the reader, as well as become a meaningful look into the difference between "good" and redeemed.

Lancelot's most public test of faith, the healing of Sir Urry, is a pivotal moment in his journey to God. Urry, a wounded man, can only be healed by the best knight in the world (Malory 639). Many knights, even King Arthur, try to heal Sir Urry, but are unable to close his wounds. Later, Lancelot arrives and is commanded by Arthur to attempt a healing. Lancelot is nervous about this, possibly because of his affair with Guenevere, and says "I wolde nat take upon me to towche that wounded knyght" (Malory 643). Through Lancelot's anxiety, Malory reveals weakness and humanity in Lancelot's character. In an instance where Lancelot would, most likely, earn honor and praise for his good deed, he rejects this act because of his own shortcomings, fearing that his peers and king would find out about the affair in the event he was unable to heal Sir Urry. This can be likened to a specific Christian journey of failure, and the shame resulting from that failure, as seen in the Genesis account when "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of God" following the consumption of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (*The Scofield Study Bible*, Gen. 3.8). Lancelot does not physically hide. However, by rejecting the task at hand, he tries to keep his sin hidden from his peers, and by extension, God.

Malory highlights Lancelot's anxiety at the healing to explain the conflict between earthly goodness and spiritual redemption. Though he would like to avoid the healing, Lancelot, a good earthly knight, is obedient to his king. In order to achieve success, he begins his healing with a prayer asking God for "power to hele thys syke knyght by the grete vertu and grace of The- but, Good Lorde,

never of myselfff” (Malory 643). By asking God for help, Lancelot recognizes his past sin, especially his failings with Guenevere, and turns to God for honor and glory. In this momentary revelation, earthly honor becomes meaningless. He finally accepts there is no way for him to achieve the perfection of Christ anymore. God grants Lancelot the miraculous ability to heal Sir Urry, and after Lancelot heals him he “wepte, as he had bene a chylde that had bene beatyn” (Malory 644). This moment is interesting, especially given Malory’s religious implications. Lancelot does not weep out of sadness, but because of the mercy he received from his God. He is not punished for his sins. Instead, he heals Sir Urry and is congratulated by Arthur’s court even though he “knows he deserves no such praise ... earthly chivalry is no longer sufficient” (Moore 13). In this scene, the glory is God’s, and Lancelot understands that he has been saved from humiliation and guilt by his omnipotent God. To his peers, nothing about this event is out of the ordinary as Lancelot has always been the greatest knight that ever lived, excluding his son. However, Lancelot knows God allowed him to accomplish this task because he should have failed. Malory’s appeal to strong emotion in this scene, a disjunction from most of Malory’s writing, signifies a possible personal connection to this moment. As a Christian example, Lancelot’s realization of his faults and his turn to God for assistance is logical and expected. However, Malory does not use Lancelot as a clichéd Christian example. His characterization of Lancelot, a man plagued by an unforgivable sin but continually turning to God, is complicated. The healing of Sir Urry forced Lancelot to rely on God for ability and in turn, becomes the moment that changes Lancelot’s view of his need for God. His realization that he wants to end his back-and-forth lifestyle proves Malory’s view that constant struggle with God is normal.

Lancelot wrestles with extreme guilt due to his past, allowing Malory to illustrate that the life of a man seeking redemption is not simple. Following the destruction of Arthur’s kingdom, Lancelot becomes a hermit and devotes the rest of his life to seeking God. During this time, Lancelot is seen “groveling on the tombe of Kyng Arthur and Quene Guenever” (Malory 695). Though his “groveling” may seem dramatic, Lancelot is grieving his sin and the loss of people he truly cared about, humbling him-

self before God to do so. Lancelot's time as a hermit and church official can be seen as a "great conversion [narrative] best known through the genre of the saint's life" (Cherewatuk 70). Malory's hero is pushing through a period of repentance, which increases his reliance on God. He accepted his failings and has become serious about mending his relationship with God. Lancelot achieves the redemption he sought by understanding the need of a Christian man to seek God for himself, rather than at the suggestion or teaching of someone else, as on the Grail Quest. The imagery of the groveling allows Malory to depict the human struggle with sin and the consequent lamentation for those sins, symbolizing the difficulty of repentance on the Christian journey.

In the scene following Lancelot's death, Malory solidifies his choice of Lancelot as a hero and effectively portrays him as a redeemed man of God. After Lancelot's death, Sir Ector eulogizes Lancelot and calls him "a synful man" and "the gode-lyest persone that ever cam emonge prees of knyghtes" (Malory 697). This description may seem contradictory, but in fact, it is not. Malory's Lancelot is definitely sinful, however, according to Christian doctrine, all men are sinful (*The Scofield Study Bible*, Rom 3.23). Malory's choice of words in this moment highlight the transformation of Lancelot over the course of his text. Lancelot overcomes his treasonous relationship with Guenevere to become a Christian man. Through Lancelot's example, Malory implies that every person, no matter their background or wrongdoing, can look to God for redemption and in the end be considered "good" both internally and externally. Malory's choice of Lancelot as a hero, instead of Arthur or Galahad, is not so striking in light of this narrative of reconciliation with God. Malory's Arthur never needed redemption; his sins were not by his own choice. Arthur was always a god-like figure, even his death can be read as the death of God, forcing Lancelot to reevaluate his past decisions and finally turn to his God at the destruction of the only institution he knew: the Round Table.

Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is on the surface a story of an almost perfect king's kingdom falling into destruction. However, Malory continually highlights the life of Lancelot, an adulterer, who is often considered the greatest knight who ever lived. Though Lancelot's actions throughout the narrative appear contradictory,

he is a mirror of human nature. Reading of *Le Morte D'Arthur* as a Christian journey allows for study of Malory's motives in writing the narrative. As an example of Christianity, Lancelot's journey is personal, not structured by church ritual. The creation of a redeemed hero allows Malory to justify his past sins and become a redeemed hero himself. As such, Lancelot's story is a deviation from Christian normalcy, emphasizing the change in religious thinking at the time. Malory's hero, though flawed, becomes a true hero both to himself and the reader, because in the end, Lancelot is known as both a great knight and truly godly man, the title Lancelot relentlessly pursued throughout Malory's text.

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Defining a Savage Passion: Post-Colonial Perceptions of the Colonial and Native American Women in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*

Sally Hobson

In Catharine Maria Sedgwick's colonial romance novel *Hope Leslie*, the two main female characters, British Hope Leslie and Pequod Magawisca, are truly women before their time. Hope and Magawisca are wild and strong as written by Margaret Higonnet in her article, "Comparative Reading: Catharine M. Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*": "Hope climbs mountains, engages in multiples rescues of innocent Indians from prison, and in the comic climax of the novel escapes kidnapping, rape, and death by explosion. Magawisca climbs a cliff to sacrifice her arm for the white man she loves, and defies puritan as well as Pequod notions of justice" (Higonnet 19). They are independent and intelligent, and they are female figures who passionately fight for justice. In the article, "Equal to Other Fortune": Sedgwick's Married or Single? and Feminism," author Deborah Gussman describes these two women's characters as an embodiment of female Republican values, writing, "In *Hope Leslie*, for instance, Sedgwick suggests that republican virtue comes naturally to both Hope and Magawisca, as their many acts on behalf of the public good, as their oratorical skills demonstrate" (258). These two women share many characteristics and seem to be similar on the surface; however, the one thing that sets them apart, despite their strength and intelligence, are their ethnic origins. Despite this, the divide does not seem to be a racial prejudice, since Magawisca has many universal traits, but seems to be due to her intensity of emotion and great passion for love and vengeance, traits which characterize many of the Native American characters as well as characters who do not fit the same republican values. Magawisca must leave Massachusetts and go west, while Hope can stay and marry the man of both of their dreams. Though Magawisca shares very similar positive characteristics to Hope Leslie in the novel, she is still other-ized

and deemed un-American by her portrayal as an emotional character driven by her intense passion. In doing this, Sedgwick is defining Hope as the true American female, specifying that emotional strength is as important as intellectual strength when defining the American female identity and developing a useable American history. Sedgwick uses her rejection of Magawisca and her passions as a reason behind the removal of unsuitable characters including both British colonists and the Native Americans in Massachusetts during colonization.

Everell Fletcher's decision to marry Hope Leslie instead of Magawisca serves as a representation of the marriage of the truly American couple. Everell is identified as a truly American male and the American ideal, and his merging with Hope helps her to become a true American also. He is one of the few main characters who were actually born in the American Colony; he is white, protestant, and a child of American Motherhood. While this text takes place much earlier than the emergence of this ideal, Everell's mother, Mrs. Fletcher tirelessly worked to ensure that her children had a good upbringing in order to make them good and intelligent: "... deem not that I overstep the modest bound of a woman's right in meddling with that which is thy prerogative—the ordering of our eldest son's education. Everell here hath few except spiritual privileges" (35). Mrs. Fletcher taught her son to be a good American man by educating him and teaching him religion long before American mothers were encouraged to do so. He is a considerate man who sympathizes with the horrors that Magawisca faces, instead of sympathizing with the violent oppressors. In his adulthood, he is described as having, "... unsubdued gaiety, the unconstrained freedom, and the air of a man of society" (141) and "there is an irresistible charm in (his) easy, simplicity, and frankness" (141). Everell is made up of admirable and good qualities, all of which would appeal to the people of the colonial society, particularly the young, single women. In Judith Fetterley's article, "'My Sister! My Sister!': The Rhetoric of Catharine Sedgwick's Hope Leslie", she describes, "Everell's 'universal' desirability—all the girls adore him—leads one to suspect that he functions less as an object of love than as the sign of being, a desired subjectivity. He is what girls want to be more than to have, the brother as mirror and ground for what

the American sister can also become” (84). Everell is an American ideal; the man that all new colonists want to become, male or female, and in the Puritan merging through marriage, and his wife can also be a part of this American ideal. Because of this, Everell must marry a woman who fits within these Republican values who can raise their children to uphold these same strength, intelligence, and sense of justice in order to preserve the new American Republic.

Despite her love, Everell cannot marry Magawisca due to her un-American nature, despite the strength that she shares with Hope, since Magawisca represents a savage passion towards him that Sedgwick would not appreciate. Both Hope and Magawisca are passionate for justice, but it is only in Magawisca’s passion for Everell that they differentiate. Magawisca is willing to give up her arm in a Christ-like sacrifice in order to save Everell’s life: “The chief raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca, springing from the precipitous side of the rock...the stroke aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm...” (97). Magawisca’s passion for Everell is what gives her strength and even when her arm is cut off, she can still scale back up the precipice in an action that Sedgwick describes as “such is the power of love, stronger than death” (98). Though this is passionate—and Hope is certainly determined—this intensity of love, especially in the romantic sense, is never portrayed by Hope. In the article, “History, Memory, and the Echoes of Equivalence in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie,” author Amanda Emerson describes this separation as saying, “Magawisca... calls forth possibilities that Sedgwick can image, but not quite incorporate into her projection of white womanhood (Sedgwick’s ideal). Independent and outspoken like Hope and self-sacrificing like Ester, Magawisca is also angry, vengeful, and proud” (31), all traits that Hope does not possess. Anger, vengeance, and pride separate her from the very important cultural factor of puritan religion. Hope does not sin in this way, since she is always portrayed as a good Christian character. Unlike Magawisca, Hope is a product of the Puritan religion in America, shaping her identity and her values. Hope is still vastly independent and intelligent, described as, “Her religion was pure and disinterested—no one, therefore, should doubt its intrinsic value...” (128). Though she is not strictly puritan, her

commitment to her religion, which doubtlessly would forbid the anger, vengeance, and pride of Magawisca, Hope's devotion simply adds to her list of good qualities, while Magawisca's lack of Christianity retracts them, condemning her a heathen who commits these intense sins. Because of how the other American Indians are portrayed when it comes to passion through love, Sedgwick defines this intense passion a negative trait, one that plays a strong role in the Pequod culture but also permeates throughout English culture also.

Sedgwick portrays this immense passion in other Native American characters, serving as a defining characteristic of the Pequod culture. When one of Magawisca's brothers gets murdered, her father, Chief Mononotto, seeks vengeance and is willing to murder children and a mother in order to avenge his son. When she fully rejects her heritage, and adopts the culture of the Pequods, Faith Leslie has done so due to her love for Oneco. For her, love is so strong that she would reject her family for an ethnic other and form an interracial relationship, an act certainly unacceptable during that time. Both Mr. Fletcher and Everell Fletcher serve as Mononotto's and Oneco's contrasts, respectively. Since Mr. Fletcher does not seek the same vengeance after the murder of his family, and instead, "Not a sound, nor a sigh, escaped the blasted man" (72) when he sees the sight of his family's murder, eventually accepting it, saying, "'God's will be done!'" (74). He accepts the death of his family in a stoic manner, not allowing his passions to rule him or lead him to vengeance like Mononotto. Everell, in his decision to marry Hope and not to fall in love with Magawisca, despite a considerable amount of opportunity, remains a very Sedgwick-defined American. He focuses his love on the most logical of partners, Hope, since she fits the ideal of an American woman, as she is driven by justice and independence, but still makes responsible decisions for the future. This direct cultural contrast shows the main difference in the two groups, since Sedgwick portrays the Republican Americans as Christian individuals who do not fall prey to ungodly passions and the Pequod Indians and the characters who are driven by vengeance and love. Since these characteristics represent the culture from which Magawisca came, and never truly assimilated out of, with Patricia Larson describing in her article, "Revisioning America's

(Literary) Past: Sedgwick's "Hope Leslie", arguing, "If Sedgwick is unable to depict a fully positive outcome for her Native American characters, she does not succumb to an assimilationist resolution. She does not have Magawisca stay to become a white-like woman, to become a noble savage by definition" (68). This quote suggests that this description of character through Magawisca's inability to conform to colonial American values as a way to justify, or make right, American history of violence towards Native Americans. This does not serve as justification of violence—it simply shows the Pequod's inability to assimilate completely into the new definition of American cultural morality that the Republican Americans portray.

The intense passion is not simply limited to the Native Americans, either. All of the passionate romances in the book are unsustainable, and the people within the logical relationships are able to stay in colonial American civilization while the other British colonists either die, go to the wilderness with the Pequods, or return to England. Esther must return to England as she is deeply in love with Everell, Alice Fletcher and William Fletcher cannot be together and she is violently forced from him, and Rosa commits suicide rather than to see Sir Philip with another woman. In fact, the only other productive relationship belongs to Mr. and Mrs. William Fletcher. Though their marriage occurs through puritan necessity and convenience, they live relatively happily and have many good children. Their partnership is the same natural marriage of Hope and Everell, described as, "She (Mrs. Fletcher) never magnified her love by words, but expressed it by that self-devoting, self-sacrificing conduct to her husband and children" (36). Mrs. Fletcher is not ruled by the same passion that Magawisca falls prey to. Instead, her love is exhibited in the same natural way (specifically natural maternal impulses) as Hope's connection with her son, Everell. Now it becomes evident that Sedgwick's bias is not racially driven, but towards people who are driven by intense passions of love. And none of those who fall prey to these passions can remain in the new nation, no matter their ethnic origins.

Hope Leslie, in her relationships with Everell, directly contrasts against Magawisca with this passion. She is portrayed as just as passionate as Magawisca for social justice, but she draws the

line with love. Her logic when it comes to love is representative of Sedgwick's own emotional views on marriage. In the article, "Equal to Other Fortune": Sedgwick's Married or Single? and Feminism," author Deborah Gussman characterizes the marriage of Hope and Everell as saying, "Hope Leslie ends somewhat atypically, for a work of nineteenth-century women's fiction... Her writing about the emotional and material realities of marriage is largely unromantic" (252). It is evident that Hope and Everell love each other immensely, but is described as easy and natural, not passionate and strong like Magawisca's, with Sedgwick writing, "and they talked of the past, the present, and the future, with spontaneous animation; their feelings according and harmonising (sic), as naturally as the music of the stars when they sang together" (148). Everell and Hope definitely have a great deal of love for each other, and seem to work well as a match. All of these characteristics seem to have more to do with forming a good partnership than some deep, burning sacrificial passion. In his article, "History and Romance Convention in Catharine Sedgwick's Hope Leslie", Michael Davitt Bell argues that, "But as Catharine Sedgwick portrays American History, neither European tyranny nor savage nature seduced American from her destiny. Thus Hope can no more marry Sir Philip than Everell can marry Magawisca" (219). This sustainable relationship is needed in order to make sure that America herself is sustainable, and Sedgwick sees that Hope and Everell's strong natural partnership is the relationship needed for this continuation of Republican values.

Magawisca's removal from Massachusetts serves as a metaphorical testament that she cannot remain in colonial society and be a fully assimilated white-like woman, showing how she cannot adopt the ways of the new republican Americans, and must leave because of it. Her removal speaks for itself: Hope can remain and build the new America while Magawisca cannot leave to establish this new nation, since she does not fit the criteria that Sedgwick presents through Hope. Magawisca describes this removal stating, "the law of vengeance is written on our (Pequod) hearts—you say you have a written rule of forgiveness—it may be better—if ye would be guided by it—it is not for us—the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night" (349). Magawisca, in this profound statement, shows how she simply

cannot accept the ideals of Christianity, and how she will leave with her family and people and continue to live by the laws of vengeance. Sedgwick characterizes this explanation of the removal by claiming that since the Pequod people refuse to overcome their intense, passionate nature, they will no longer be able to stay in emerging America. They do not have the values necessary for the continuation of the culture that she characterizes as sustainable and usable. In “Anachronistic Imaginings: “Hope Leslie”’s Challenge to Historicism,” Jeffrey Insko writes, “they (Pequods) choose obscurity over assimilation...Its reliance on the myth of the vanishing American may have less to do with the “constraints” of Sedgwick’s culture than with the formal constraints of the novel itself...” (199). While this likely serves as both a novel resolution and a way to fully explain the removal of the Indians in a way which makes the past more useable, however, the racial differences seem to serve as more of historical explanation that Sedgwick can use to show how a group of people, including a very republican and strong female, can no longer be a part of the American identity that Sedgwick is attempting to show. In this Sedgwick must confront the fact that in her historical novel, there is no room for Magawisca to remain, so she had to figure out how she may characterize this removal, and instead place some blame on the puritans, by saying, “you say you have a written rule of forgiveness—it may be better—if ye would be guided by it” (349), saying that the early colonists need to embody the rule of forgiveness that the Pequods reject. Both Hope and Everell embody this rule of forgiveness within their admirable qualities, since Hope comes to terms with the removal of her sister, and Everell does not bear anger against the girl whose father murdered half of his family. In contrast to vengeful, Pequod Magawisca, Hope and Everell adopt forgiveness, allowing them to be the perfect couple for emerging America, while Magawisca must leave with her people.

In ““My Sister! My Sister!”: The Rhetoric of Catharine Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie”, Judith Fetterley argues that Sedgwick is not necessarily racist in her descriptions of Native Americans, saying, “...it lies in the fact that Sedgwick has ultimately to confront her fear that her case for the equality of white women would be undermined if she made the same case for racially other women, that her argument for gender would be hopelessly compromised

by the issue of race” (95). It is true that Sedgwick is very involved in proto-feminist rhetoric throughout the text, and this factor is radical enough for her 1827 audience. The small descriptions of the ethnically violent passion stemming out a heathen religion of the Pequods may serve as this rhetoric that Fetterley presents. However, it likely also has to do with Sedgwick’s want to present a useable American past that shows how the American people have grown from the time where they killed and forced out numerous natives, ethnic groups that Sedgwick seemed to support along with rights for women. Sedgwick uses the inescapable past of the Indian removal and attempts to spin it in a way that represents a sustainable American history and culture. By passing off the Pequods and Native Americans as passionate to the point where they are vengeful, she can compare them with the republican values in order to show this unsustainability. Despite this passion and their removal, the noble Magawisca can still be a good character who imparts good, Christian advice and serves a metaphorical savior of the new republic when she makes the Pocahontas-like sacrifice of her arm to save the life of Everell Fletcher. Sedgwick’s reaction may reflect her own romantic struggles she faced through her personal life, or a mix of all three reasonings. Even so, in these arguments, Catharine Maria Sedgwick will define Hope, not Magawisca, as the true American woman. Though Magawisca was actually born on the North American continent, Sedgwick other-izes her by adding this important emotional differences between the two strong, independent women which both figurative and literally removes Magawisca from the new American republic.

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“Meet My Wife”: Bertha Mason as the Abject in *Jane Eyre* and its 2011 Film Translation

Abbie Smith

In Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*, Jane compares the despair she feels after learning of the existence of her fiancé's wife, Bertha Mason—a Jamaican British colonial woman with a familial history of insanity—to a “*livid corpse*, that could never survive” (emphasis added, Brontë 341). Interestingly, in her 1980 essay, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva analyzes what she calls the abject and compares this theory to a corpse. She describes the abject as the place where “meaning collapses” and where the boundary between one's self and “the other” blurs (1). Kristeva says the abject creates a negative feeling or response because it reminds us of our own mortality or breaks down the distinction between one's self and “the other,” forcing the viewer to identify with the loathed abject. Kristeva gives the corpse as the best example of the abject because “the corpse . . . upsets even more violently the one who confronts it . . . corpses show what [one] permanently thrusts aside in order to live” (Kristeva 2). Charlotte Brontë uses Bertha Mason, by way of Mr. Rochester's treatment of her and Jane's response to her, as a symbol of the abject; Bertha embodies the version of Jane that Jane does not want to become. The use of Bertha as the abject continues into the 21st century as Cary Fukunaga's 2011 translation of *Jane Eyre* presents through film the two women's similarities by showing Bertha mirror some of Jane's actions and even reflect Jane through what she wears. Roger Ebert reviews *Jane Eyre*, saying that Fukunaga shows “an emotional intensity between [main] characters who live mostly locked within themselves” (Ebert). Although Ebert only passingly refers to Bertha Mason in his review, he still picks up on Fukunaga's continuation of Brontë's treatment of Bertha as the abject by describing Jane as emotionally “locked” up just as Bertha remains locked inside the attic. Both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Cary Fukunaga's 2011 film translation of *Jane Eyre*

treat Bertha Mason as what Julia Kristeva defines as the abject, showing that, should Jane not marry Mr. Rochester on equal footing, she too would end up insane and oppressed, just like the first Mrs. Rochester.

The abject forces its viewer to blur the line between it and themselves just as, while looking at Bertha, Jane realizes how close she is to becoming like the first Mrs. Rochester. Kristeva says that when dealing with the abject, she is “at the border of [the] condition as a living being” (Kristeva 2). Here, Kristeva describes herself looking at the abject and seeing that she herself is facing the boundary between being a human and becoming “the other.” We fear the abject because it makes us question who we are. The corpse reveals how little difference exists between a living human and a dead one. Humans identify with the abject and fear it due to the instability it instills in their lives.

In order to justifiably symbolize the abject, Bertha must represent the “other” that Jane sees herself becoming. In the case of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha’s “other,” when juxtaposed with Jane and Rochester’s and her own failed attempts at marriage, embodies “a threat to domestic authority” that, should she follow in Bertha’s steps, Jane would become as well (Brock 4). Bronte describes Bertha as a “dark . . . wild” colonial woman who “was a big woman, in stature almost equaling her husband” and depicts her as opposite of the novel’s heroine who is “plain . . . and little” (Bronte 338, 292). When Jane sees Bertha Mason for the first time, she describes the other woman by saying, “the maniac bellowed; she parted her shaggy locks . . . and gazed wildly at her visitors” (Bronte 338). However, after describing Bertha as very much “other” than herself, Jane also says that she “recognized that purple face—those bloated features” (Bronte 338). While Jane physically recognizes Bertha from when the other woman snuck into her room and defiled her wedding veil, Jane arguably also recognizes her own emotional state in Bertha as she approaches the line—or wedding vow—that separates her from the first Mrs. Rochester’s fate. Through coming face to face with Bertha, the abject, Jane experiences what Kristeva describes as the “breaking down of a world that has erased its borders” (3). Her own almost-wifeness collides violently with Bertha’s domestic prison in the attic. Previously, Jane came close to entering a marriage where

she was the lesser partner. Similarly, Bertha's parents arranged her marriage with Rochester solely to gain a powerful husband "of a good race" (Bronte 352). In this scene, Jane recognizes the similarities in her situation to that of Bertha's fate.

Later, Jane acknowledges, "Bertha Mason is mad" but also asks herself, "Where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday? Where was her life?" (Bronte 341). Jane, after coming incredibly close to marrying Rochester on unequal footing, realizes she has lost herself, just as Bertha lost herself over time in her marriage to Rochester. She looks back on the gifts "Mr. Rochester had forced [her] to accept" with sadness but also acceptance that she had made the right decision, saying that the gift, along with the privileged, male dominated life it represented, "was not [hers]" (Bronte 368). Bertha entered a marriage with Rochester under oppressive and unequal circumstances. Jane almost does the same. Jane possesses no money to make herself independent of Rochester and Rochester himself still holds all the power in the relationship as he becomes Jane's "idol" and stands "between [her] and religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun" (Bronte 316). Rochester replaces God, the former ultimate power for Jane. Therefore, had Jane been able to follow through with her marriage to Rochester, she also would have ended up suppressed and unhappy with Rochester keeping her from the outside world and its light, just like Bertha. Furthermore, Rochester asks Jane to become his mistress, a move that would force Jane to reject the "law given by God; sanctioned by man," further showing his attempts to replace God as the higher power in Jane's life (Bronte 364). Instead, unlike Bertha, Jane decides to "care for [herself] . . . [she] will respect [herself]" by rejecting a domestic situation that would force her into Bertha's position (Bronte 365). Bertha symbolizes the version of Jane that Jane either wishes not to be or cannot in her current position become. Jane does not want to live suppressed like Bertha, but Bronte also pairs Bertha "with Jane to become the image of an alternate self to enact Jane's . . . rage" (Brock 4). Just as Jane sees herself becoming Bertha should she enter into an unequal marriage with Rochester, she also sees Bertha expressing the rage Jane feels after experiencing the unfairness of Rochester's domestic scheme. Through her shocking encounter with Bertha Mason, her lover's secret wife,

Jane experiences the violent confrontation of herself with “the other” as she simultaneously recognizes the blurring of the line separating them, solidifying Bertha’s symbolic place of the abject in *Jane Eyre*.

Cary Fukunaga continues Bronte’s use of Bertha Mason as the abject in his film translation of *Jane Eyre* by showing his viewers a blurred line between Jane and Rochester’s wife. After Mason ends Jane and Rochester’s wedding, Rochester drags Jane back to Thornfield while growling, “Meet my wife” (*Jane Eyre*). The wedding guests waiting to welcome the happy couple seem surprised and confused to hear Mr. Rochester inviting them and Jane—who wears a wedding dress and veil—to meet his wife. Here, Fukunaga blurs the viewer’s perceptions of Jane and Bertha. He forces the viewer to associate the two women together—the bride and the almost-bride in the wedding dress. Additionally, important scenes throughout the film involve Jane interacting with Rochester in a nightgown like Bertha wears when Jane enters her attic. Jane wears this domestic, wifely garment in the scene where she saves Mr. Rochester from the fire and also when she helps Rochester tend to Mason’s injuries. Both of these scenes show Rochester beginning to rely on Jane and the viewer also sees them begin to fall in love as they enter into a trusting relationship. However, by later showing Bertha in a similar white nightgown, Fukunaga discounts those earlier scenes and the intimacy that seems established. Jane was to be Rochester’s wife and these bonding scenes correspondingly show Jane becoming the next Bertha. Just as her wardrobe reflects the first Mrs. Rochester, Jane begins to mirror the woman’s life as well by agreeing to marry Mr. Rochester. To further merge the images of these two women together, Fukunaga places Bertha in the windowsill of her attic prison, referencing earlier shots where Jane sits in different windows at Thornfield and looks out at the world beyond Rochester’s mansion. The film also emphasizes the overarching similarity of the two women’s imprisonments inside oppressive homes—Bertha in Thornfield’s attic and Jane in the Reeds’ Red Room. Fukunaga underscores Bertha’s symbolic place as the abject through his wardrobe choices and his placement of Bertha in physical places similar to those of Jane. In doing so, he forces his viewers to associate the two women in nightgowns and with similar resting positions together.

He also shows the character of Jane, along with the audience, recognizing those similarities as Jane's face shows both shock and recognition when she sees Bertha for the first time. Just as Bronte uses language to symbolically place Bertha Mason as the abject, Cary Fukunaga uses visual cues in his film to show that Bertha represents the person Jane sees herself becoming should she not leave Thornfield and Mr. Rochester.

Additionally, the abject creates a reaction of horror in its observer just as Jane leaves her meeting with Bertha in fear that her "hopes were all dead" and she feels "weak and tired" (Bronte 341). Kristeva says, "the abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts . . . it kills in the name of life" (15). Consequently, after seeing "'I' become [the other], I give[s] birth to . . . vomit" (Kristeva 2). Identifying with abject creates a vomit-inducing reaction. It generates a response of horror that manifests in sickness. Kristeva goes so far as to say that the abject "is death infecting life" (Kristeva 4). The abject makes one feel "sickened, it rejects" (Kristeva 1). Because humans view the abject with horror when they begin to identify with it, they react with illness in an attempt to cope with their destabilized view of themselves.

To further place Bertha Mason in the place of the abject in *Jane Eyre*, Bronte shows Jane responding to her interaction with Bertha with horror and juxtaposes this obvious revulsion with Jane's calm reactions to earlier experiences with events that could have been illness-inducing. Throughout the novel, Jane remains relatively healthy, even throughout her time at the typhus-infested Lowood. Furthermore, when Mr. Rochester enlists Jane's help with the injured Mason, he asks her, "You don't turn sick at the sight of blood?" (Bronte 241). Mr. Rochester expects Jane to react with vomit or faintness when she sees blood. However, as Kristeva says, "a wound with blood . . . does not signify death" (2). Blood does not symbolize the abject, and Jane does not respond in the way she does when she experiences the true abject in the novel—Bertha Mason. Only after she comes face to face with Bertha does Jane tell Mr. Rochester, "I cannot; I am tired and sick" (Bronte 345). Jane admits her sickness to herself as well, although she shifts into the third person in an attempt to gain distance not only from herself and the abject but also her reaction to the

abject. Jane says, “Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent expectant woman—almost a bride—was a cold, solitary girl again” (Bronte 341). Bronte combines “cold” and “solitary” with the idea of Jane returning to those characteristics “again” to suggest a reversal into previous habits to cope with the horror she experiences in Rochester’s attic. That horror pushes Jane into a psychological place that suggests a physical illness. Just as someone who falls ill often feels chilled and must be isolated so not to infect anyone else, Jane feels cold, isolated, and both mentally and physically sick due to the horror she encounters with the abject. Jane goes so far as to say that she “lay faint, longing to be dead,” associating her reaction with a death-inducing illness as well as linking herself with a dead corpse (Bronte 342). Jane’s response to her encounter with the abject weakens her and instills in her a feeling of horror that reveals itself as a sickness that even Rochester can see. Jane must purge herself of the horror that results from her meeting with the abject. While her horror manifests in sickness, she also empties herself of the horror by leaving Thornfield and not eating for days, ridding herself of the need for vomiting. Although Bronte does not show Jane ever vomiting like Kristeva associates with the removal of the abject, she shows Jane going through a period of starvation, where no food with which to vomit enters her stomach. Instead, she sickens from “inanition” and therefore she “finds [her]self while purging the unwanted” (Brock 2, Bronte 343). Through Jane’s sickened reaction to her meeting with Bertha, Bronte further establishes Bertha’s symbolic role as the abject.

Fukunaga’s film also reflects the horror-and-illness inducing aspect of the abject in his film by lingering his camera on shots showing the sickness and shock that result from Jane’s encounter with Bertha Mason, which contrast sharply with his earlier portrayals of Jane’s healthiness. When Jane enters the attic and looks on while Bertha embraces Rochester, Bertha spits a black fly onto Jane’s wedding dress, soiling her virginal, white gown. Jane looks on their embrace as Bertha’s dark head takes up most of the frame and Jane’s white bonnet remains only barely in view on the right edge of the frame. Here, Fukunaga portrays the shock and immediate disgust that Jane feels after encountering Bertha while also emphasizing Bertha’s role in Jane’s future actions by

allowing Bertha to take over the shot. Jane looks down as the camera focuses on the one black spot on Jane's dress, suggesting that Jane's bridal dreams are over. Immediately after this confrontation, the previously healthy Jane runs to her bedroom and holds onto a bedpost to keep from collapsing. When she leaves her room later that night, she again begins to collapse and, for the first and only time in the film, Jane must lean on Rochester as he picks her up and brings her to a chair, marking a clear role-reversal from the scene of Jane's first encounter with Rochester where he uses Jane for physical support. The film, like the novel, shows the time after Jane meets Bertha as being the only time she gets physically ill. She first keeps herself standing by leaning on her bedpost, but when she again sees Rochester—a reminder of Bertha and the abject—she collapses again, remembering the connection to the other woman. Rochester asks her if she feels sick, and Jane replies, "I'll be well again soon" (*Jane Eyre*). Jane's suggestion that she currently feels ill but will be well again in the future shows her understanding that she must leave Thornfield to keep from becoming another Bertha. To further distance the viewer from Bertha and instead focus on the horror and sickness that she, as the abject, gives Jane, Fukunaga leaves out much of Bertha's backstory. In the film, Rochester only says that his father arranged their marriage, but leaves out her country of origin or any details about their life. Unlike the way Bronte reveals aspects of Bertha's backstory, "the precise nature of Bertha's violent mental malaise and the colonial Caribbean context in which her marriage to Rochester was brokered by his father are . . . assumed to be of no interest to its audiences" (Monk). The film, by taking away from the audience any concrete idea of where Bertha came from, makes it easier for a modern audience to understand the horror Jane feels after meeting her alter ego. Had Fukunaga, like Bronte, chosen for Rochester to give Jane details about Bertha, the audience would feel more sympathy with the more human Bertha and focus less on the horror Jane feels and, therefore, lessen the impact of Bertha's role as the abject. Instead, Fukunaga emphasizes the nature of Jane and Bertha's relationship by showing Jane's reaction of horror and sickness after their frightening encounter. Fukunaga shows Bertha's place as the abject in his film through his sudden but timely depiction of Jane experiencing illness and horror.

Finally, Kristeva depicts the abject as showing what one “thrust[s] aside in order to live” (Kristeva 2). As Kristeva describes, Jane thrusts aside her inner desire—to marry Mr. Rochester—in order to keep from becoming like Bertha and remain sane and moral in a society that esteems both sanity and morality. It is a marriage to Mr. Rochester on unequal terms that will make Jane become like Bertha, the abject. She thrusts aside the abject along with the desire that would cause her transformation into that abject in order to keep living safely. To deal with the abject—the “other” that one sees oneself becoming—humans must cast off the part of themselves they fear will merge into the abject in order to continue living.

In her novel, Brontë portrays Jane’s “thrusting aside” of her desires through not only Jane’s immediate need to leave Thornfield to abandon all that remains of her near transformation into the next Mrs. Rochester, but also Jane’s casting off of her feminist and radical ideas onto Bertha. After waking up from a deep sleep due to her traumatic wedding experience, Jane decides that she must “leave Thornfield at once” (Brontë 343). Jane realizes her unequal position with Mr. Rochester and understands that position’s connection with Bertha. Jane acknowledges the pain that will result from her abandonment of Thornfield and the man she loves; she first believes that the need to “leave him decidedly, instantly, entirely is intolerable. [She] cannot do it” (Brontë 343). However, Jane also knows that giving into her desire for Rochester would lead only to an “awful passage of further suffering” (Brontë 343). Should she remain with Rochester and live as his mistress and therefore in a similarly suppressive position as Bertha, Jane would become someone she did not respect. So instead, she chooses to “tear [herself] away” from Thornfield and all it represents (Brontë 343). By “tearing” herself from Thornfield, Jane accomplishes the “thrusting away” of her desires that Kristeva associates with the abject. Jane must tear away from her love of Mr. Rochester in order to avoid the death that lives inside his home. Jane understands the need for “purging the unwanted, the ‘other,’” in order to “[rearrange] the burdens of the self and what the self thinks it should be” (Brock 2). After beginning to thrust aside her desire for Rochester—the man who had taken the place of God in her life—Jane changes her inner perspec-

tive, saying, “that I am not Edward Rochester’s bride is the least part of my woe” (Bronte 343). She transitions from desiring to be Rochester’s wife to knowing that she could not let Rochester define her own identity. Correspondingly, Jane never allows the “Mrs. Rochester” tags onto her luggage before the wedding in an effort to figure out her own identity. However, her experience with the abject shows her that she must leave Rochester, establish her own identity beyond their relationship, and not enter into the marriage she so desired. Instead of mourning her loss of wifehood—the institution that caused Bertha’s imprisonment—Jane decides to leave behind the place that houses the symbolic abject and find her own, independent life.

Additionally, Bronte’s “narrative is able to cast off Jane’s revolutionary tendencies in the form of another character (Rochester’s first wife) to assimilate her story into British norms” (Brock 4). Just like Jane thrusts aside her desire for Rochester in order to avoid becoming a suppressed mistress in the same position as Bertha, Jane also casts aside her wishes and desire to express her revolutionary thoughts so that her society does not suppress her in its own way. Should she give into the “passions” that “rage furiously,” society would ostracize her, just like they did to Bertha (Bronte 233). Bertha, unlike Jane, expresses outwardly the horror that Jane feels inside after her lover betrays her. England’s patriarchal society imprisons both Bertha and Jane. Bertha’s prison, however, confines its prisoner with physical walls. Jane’s prison results from her inequality with Rochester, but she avoids marrying him while in that inequality. Because Bertha lives in a physical prison, her expression of her frustration with the patriarchal society that suppresses her also reveals itself physically. She reacts to Rochester and Mason’s presence with indignation and violence. Jane, however, does not outwardly express this frustration. Instead, Jane, because she is not physically imprisoned, can leave Thornfield’s patriarchal walls and find a way to make herself an independent woman. Jane only happily marries Rochester once she thrusts aside her desire for immediate happiness and instead finds a way to come back to Rochester on equal footing, defeating the possibility of him having any upper hand in her life.

Fukunaga craftily portrays Jane’s thrusting aside of her desires in order to avoid the abject through his use of shots showing

Jane removing her wedding gown. In doing so, he emphasizes the importance of Jane's decision to leave Thornfield. When Jane leaves Bertha's attic prison, she runs to her room. The camera zooms close-up on the back of Jane's wedding dress as she pulls the strings that hold the gown to her body as quickly as possible. She hurriedly pushes the gown off and onto the floor. Jane rushes to remove the white wedding gown that connects her to Bertha in multiple ways. During the attic scene, both women wear white. Jane also learns that Bertha, not she, possesses the title of Mrs. Rochester, and she rips off the dress that insinuates their shared identity as Rochester's bride. In this scene, the music becomes louder, increasing the scene's tension and carrying the climactic feel from the attic reveal into Jane's casting off of her wedding gown. While the attic scene may seem the most climactic because of its revelations, Fukunaga extends that climax into Jane's room, further underscoring Jane's need to thrust aside all that reminds her of Bertha, the abject. This emphasis on Jane's removal of her wedding gown, which symbolizes her decision to leave Thornfield, forces the viewer both to associate the two women together and to understand that Jane's choice coincides with her realization of that connection as well. The need for Jane to leave Thornfield permeates the film from the start. Fukunaga begins the film at the time of Jane's flight from Thornfield. The film finally "catches up" from the flashback-like portrayal of Jane's life following the failed wedding. This emphasizes the need for Jane to leave Thornfield in order to find a happy ending with Rochester. Through stressing Jane's casting off of her wedding gown and then focusing on her trek from Thornfield, Fukunaga shows that Jane must leave, despite her desire to stay with Rochester, in order to gain the independence she needs to truly be happy.

Edward Rochester describes his life with his wife, Bertha Mason, as little better than death. He tells Jane, "as well might you refer me to some corpse in yonder churchyard" (Bronte 364). Rochester associates his living but insane wife with a corpse in a graveyard just as Julia Kristeva uses the corpse as the ultimate example of the abject—the "other" that forces a person to confront their mortality. Jane Eyre comes face to face with Bertha Mason, a physical representation of the abject in *Jane Eyre*, and realizes that she sees herself in this imprisoned woman. As the

abject, Bertha “cannot be assimilated” (Kristeva 1). She refuses to conform to Rochester’s version of femininity or domesticity. She chooses to fall into insanity rather than assimilate to the idea that she, as a woman, was of a lower station than her husband. Jane comes close to becoming like Bertha. She almost marries Rochester in a position of inferiority of class and stature. Before her doomed wedding day, Jane reflects on her soon-to-be name and says that Mrs. Rochester, “did not exist” (Bronte 317). Jane later finds out that Mrs. Rochester does indeed exist, but Jane just is not her. Through the portrayal of Bertha as the “other” that Jane sees herself becoming, the emphasis on Jane’s illness after meeting Bertha, and the efforts of Jane to cast off Thornfield and Bertha despite her desire for Rochester, Charlotte Bronte and Cary Fukunaga both affix Bertha Mason as the symbol of the abject. However, while Bertha lives and she herself lives inferior to Rochester, Jane refuses to succumb to her desires. By leaving Thornfield and finding her own independence through both new finances and a renewed spirit, Jane returns to Rochester on equal footing, which allows her to live a life radically different from that of Bertha Mason’s.

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Disabled, Disgusting Bodies: Their Unfortunate Asymmetry

Taylor O'Kelly

A strange attraction resides in the gross and mysterious. Consider the popularity of medical TV dramas or sci-fi novels that incorporate machines into the human body. Regardless of genre, a fascination with human body parts—the real and unreal—is evident in our past, as well as our future; as technology advances, prosthetics open up new routes of physical efficiency for those in need. In Mark Twain's short story "Jim Blaine and His Grandfather's Ram," prosthetics of sorts are introduced only in relation to women, a rather unexpected subject given the story's title. After many persuasions to ask Jim Blaine about his grandfather's ram, the narrator finally succumbs to his buddies' wishes, describing Blaine in his many stages of inadequate drunkenness until Blaine is finally perfectly drunk. The narrator describes Jim as "symmetrically" drunk (101), which indicates a harmonious balance and wholeness, a state of being that some of the other characters in the story lack. Throughout the brief, drunken narrative that only mentions the ram in the first few sentences, Blaine follows his stream of consciousness to other people and events, eventually describing in great detail the unsymmetrical physical characteristics of three women whose parts, when borrowed, temporarily make a woman named Miss Wagner whole: Miss Jefferson's "awful" and "scary" glass eye that doesn't fit or work well (102), Miss Higgins's wooden leg that is "shorter" than Miss Wagner's natural limb (103), and Miss Jacobs's wig that covers her bald head (103). While each woman has a supplement intended to aid in her artificial symmetry, Blaine goes even further in his narrative to describe the inadequacies of each prosthetic and the general fear and discomfort that the prosthetics cause in the community of onlookers. Similarly, "Twain" narrates another story, "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," in which he receives a personal letter from a young woman who contemplates ending her engagement due to her fiancé's consistent loss of limbs, the

process of which “Twain” describes as a “dilemma,” “sad story,” “career,” “trial,” “unnatural disposition,” and “process of reduction” (“Aurelia”). In this brief story, Aurelia’s fiancé, Williamson Breckinridge Caruthers, manages to scar his handsome face, lose his legs, arms, and the function of an eye, as well as be scalped by Indians. Unlike Miss Wagner, however, it remains unclear whether or not Aurelia will be able to “afford the expense” of such “valuables” as “wooden arms and wooden legs, and a glass eye and a wig” (“Aurelia” para. 10). In both stories, “Twain” comments on the lack of wholeness of a person’s body, going so far as to call Caruthers “two-thirds of a man” and actually blaming him for his injuries (“Aurelia” para. 10). Such a portrayal of artificial limbs reveals the commonly held views of disabilities and prosthetics in society, that those in need of prosthetics are “Other” and, as a result, not whole or symmetrical like the rest of society. Further, the stories reveal an ongoing discussion between notions of the “uncanny” and ideologies behind manhood and womanhood that can only be discussed through veiled humor, intoxication, or private letter in order to relieve societal discomforts.

Disability Theory, in conjunction with Identity Theory, branches out into a subfield called Feminist Disability Theory, which reveals how notions of femininity and masculinity are defined through the concepts of Disabilities Studies much the same way that Gender Studies seeks to explore notions of womanhood and manhood. Purveyors of these fields of study seek to find an answer to the question “What makes you *you*?” Ultimately, a person’s physical body and abilities relate to a person’s identity, self-worth, and value. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson explains the progression as follows:

Over the last several years, disability studies has moved out of the applied fields of medicine, social work, and rehabilitation to become a vibrant new field of inquiry within the critical genre of identity studies. (1)

Academics continue “broadening our collective inquiries [and] questioning our assumptions” (Garland-Thompson 4). As a result, it has become clear that “disability is a culturally fabricated *narrative* of the body” (emphasis added, Garland-Thompson 5), a

“pervasive cultural system that stigmatizes certain kinds of bodily variations” (Garland-Thompson 5). In other words, our responses to disability is a product of a particular culture’s construction, and is essentially a type of fairy tale. Fairy tale narratives function as tools for literary socialization that instruct society, among other things, on proper gender roles, which becomes even more complex when disabilities are brought into the body politics. Eli Bower, author of *The Handicapped in Literature: A Psychosocial Perspective*, describes how disabilities can affect the entire person—mentally, emotionally, and physically, yet it is the physical—the *visible*—disabilities that disturb much of society (8). By examining representations of disability alongside Gender Identity Theory, concepts of womanhood and manhood relate to society’s assumptions about the biological body. How does a person properly function as a man or a woman? How much of a person’s body is required for them to be considered whole? Joan Chrisler argues that manhood and womanhood are little more than social constructions that require strict gendered performances: men must perform only “masculine-type activities,” like playing sports and fathering children (117), and women must aspire to “beauty and becoming ‘good’ mothers” (117). She discusses how theorists approach such gender roles as “either social constructionists (i.e., both men and women must learn their gender roles and then perform the actions...) or essentialists (i.e., both women and men are fairly closely aligned to gender stereotypes because of biological predispositions)” (117). Is womanhood and manhood something that can be lost? For essentialists, a person can no sooner lose their womanhood or manhood as they could their race. But if notions of manhood and womanhood rely upon socially-constructed proofs of existence through performative displays, then they can, in fact, be “lost.” In the case of disability, notions of womanhood and manhood are even more in jeopardy when performative actions are required.

Sigmund Freud’s theory of the “uncanny” offers an avenue through which fears of failed performance can be read alongside Disability Theory, specifically as it is represented in Twain’s two short stories. The term “uncanny” comes from the German word *unheimlich*, which means the opposite of “‘familiar,’ ‘native,’ [and] ‘belonging to the home.’ [Something] ‘uncanny’ is frightening

precisely because it is *not* known and familiar” (Freud 419). Freud provides a definition from Schelling to explain: “*Unheimlich*’ is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . . hidden and secret and has become visible” (420). In other words, people do not like to discuss what makes them uncomfortable, so they simply term the experience as “uncanny.” According to Freud, most examples of the “uncanny” relate to aspects of the body. For example, dolls and robots that appear human (Freud 321), the possibility of “self-blinding” or losing one’s sight (Freud 424), a “double,” such as “twins” or “looking alike” (Freud 425), or any sort of repetition, like *déjà vu*, French for “to have already seen” (Freud 427). Such fear results, according to Freud, when the “unconscious” is unwittingly “repressed” (429). Although society attempts to repress their thoughts and discussions of the disabled body and prosthetics, its “uncanny” effects periodically resurface from the collective unconscious in a type of dream state, as evidenced in “Jim Blaine and His Grandfather’s Ram” and “Aurelia’s Unfortunate Young Man.” Ultimately, Twain’s stories and Freud’s theories reveal the looming fear behind body politics: the loss of control. Based on Freud’s theory, when people look in fear at a doll, they subconsciously view themselves as if they were dead, revealing their fear of the unknown, as well as the fear of the loss of bodily function, which represents autonomy, power, and control. The “Body” is the source through which humans express power and agency. In order to interrogate the importance of the body in each story, “Twain” employs humor in his storytelling that lets uncomfortable truths be revealed without being taken too seriously. Similarly, his intoxicated narrator speaks what is on his mind without fear of whether or not it is appropriate, and the format of Aurelia’s private letter reveals her reservations for discussing the topic publicly; however, “Twain” publicizes the story and retells it with tragic jest, attempting to lighten the mood of the serious subject at hand. Each technique makes visible what should have “*remained . . . hidden and secret*” (Freud 420).

In “Jim Blaine and His Grandfather’s Ram,” Twain’s intoxicated narrator unwittingly connects disability and womanhood. Once Jim Blaine is perfectly and “symmetrically” drunk (“Jim” 101), he tells of the *asymmetry* of Miss Wagner. The list of prosthetics that Blaine describes reveals how society views disability

and, more specifically, disability in relation to the specific expectations of a woman's gendered performance. Bruce Bartholow, in his 2012 article on the effects of alcohol on cognitive processes, explains how alcohol limits the function of "self-regulatory control of behavior" when ingested in large quantities (173). Ultimately, alcohol has the potential to serve as a type of truth serum when ingested in the right amount, as Jim Blaine certainly does. Had he been "symmetrically" *sober*, Blaine may have left out his story of Miss Wagner, perhaps actually telling the story of the ram. But, in his state of intoxication, Blaine reveals some truths from society that would be considered too "uncanny" to discuss in another setting. It appears that prosthetics are better left unseen and unmentioned, as evidenced by today's attempts to blend them as seamlessly as possible into the natural body. Before the great strides of science, however, prosthetics and other supplemental aids were more obvious and more uncomfortable for the people wearing them and, apparently, the people observing them. The first form of prosthetics that Blaine mentions is Miss Jefferson's glass eye that Miss Wagner borrows. Blaine describes the eye as ill-fitting, often "twist[ing] around in the socket" and looking "every which way" ("Jim" 102), creating a terrifying spectacle. In fact, Blaine says the children were in particularly fearful of the "awful" and "scary" eye, causing them to cry ("Jim" 102). Then, Blaine describes how Miss Wagner attempts to stabilize her borrowed eye by "packing it in raw cotton" ("Jim" 102), an image that brings to mind an old-fashioned doll whose seams no longer retain the stuffing. According to Freud, fear results from the unknown in themselves, the fear of self-blinding and loss of control of one's sight. The horrific result made anyone who looked at Miss Wagner "oncomfortable," ("Jim" 102) as they subconsciously considered their own bodily agency.

Next, Blaine briefly mentions the wooden leg that Miss Wagner borrows from Miss Higgins to "stump around on" when she has company. According to Miss Wagner, "she couldn't abide crutches when she had company, becuz they were so slow," and "when things had to be done," she wanted to do those things herself ("Jim" 103). Although the prosthetic is not symmetrical to her leg, Miss Wagner voluntarily ignores the inconvenience and discomfort with the sole purpose of hospitality ("Jim" 103),

which is considered a trait of womanhood. In order to keep her status as a “woman” in the eyes of society, and in spite of her disabled condition, Miss Wagner works extra hard to perform her gendered duties. Yet, not only does Miss Wagner make use of her friends’ glass eye and wooden leg, but she also “used to borrow Miss Jacobs’s wig” because she is as “bald as a jug” (“Jim” 103), as Blaine so delicately puts it. This is the final and shortest description of one of Miss Wagner’s proofs of asymmetry. Only two lines are devoted to Miss Jacobs’s wig, surprisingly, considering how lengthy Twain’s descriptions can be, probably because a wig serves no essential purpose to the body. In other words, a wig is a simple, unnecessary “prosthetic” that serves only to give the appearance of wholeness while not actually providing for more practical purposes. A wig is an aesthetic prop that completes the image of a woman. Thus, the wooden leg, wig, and glass eye in a socket of cotton creates an image of a female doll, which looks like a woman but without the *real*, without *life*. Similarly, Miss Wagner makes attempts to hide her lack of symmetry the same way that designers create dolls to look alive, by replacing “broken” or missing parts with the semblance of whole parts. In spite of Miss Wagner’s asymmetry, and in the face of a community that acknowledges her limitations with a fearful scurrying of their eyes, she still attempts to maintain her “womanly” role in society as she pops in the eye, straps on the leg and the wig, and goes about her business as best she can. While Blaine and the community may see Miss Wagner as someone who is not whole, Miss Wagner is not bound by her limitations. Further, Miss Wagner is not simply a doll set on the shelf to be observed: she functions as a mobile, independent woman who thrives with the help of her female peers. Unfortunately, however, Miss Wagner’s blatant attempts at hiding the “uncanny” reductions of her “broken” body do not fully repress her unwholeness to the unconsciousness of society; otherwise, Blaine would have no story to tell. Throughout the story, Blaine narrates the details of these lacking women through humor, which reveals how society during this period (and perhaps still some today) regard prosthetics; the idea of prosthetics is still Other and unknown. Humor operates as a release valve for discussing uncomfortable topics like prosthetics. The effect can sometimes come across as harsh or inconsiderate, as if the

women he describes are as void of feeling as their artificial limbs. Similarly, "Twain" tells the "sad story" of "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man" ("Aurelia" para. 1).

Although this is a story of love, marriage, and privacy, "Twain" approaches the situation with a purely scientific, practical air. As a result, his recommendations for Aurelia make her situation sound like a business transaction instead of a discussion on the love of her life. What is meant to be a private letter, "Twain" publishes for an audience. Like Jim Blaine's drunkenness, the format of a private letter allowed Aurelia to discuss an uncomfortable topic that she would have otherwise kept to herself, and clearly from anyone else since the letter was intended for him alone. Instead of honoring that wish, "Twain" himself serves as the truth serum that brings to the public issues of the "uncanny" and body politics, displaying Aurelia's concern of her fiancé's diminishing manhood. Twain does not respond to Aurelia, instead speaking *about* her to the public. "Twain" opens with the "facts" of Aurelia's "case" that "came to [him] by letter" ("Aurelia" para. 1). He then goes on to discuss her "dilemma" and "sad story" ("Aurelia" para. 1), going so far as to call the engagement a "career" in jeopardy because her fiancé is undergoing a "process of reduction" ("Aurelia" para. 2, 4). It is difficult to discern whether or not Aurelia initially employed the language of business in her letter. In any case, "Twain" becomes the spokesperson for her. At one point, "Twain" explains how Aurelia gave Caruthers "another chance to reform" as if Caruthers had any control over his situation ("Aurelia" para. 3). To go so far as to compare Aurelia to "brokers who hold on and lose," confirms "Twain's" opinion on the matter ("Aurelia" para. 4): Caruthers's body equates to a collection of objects that must retain their symmetry in order to maintain his value. Even the title suggests as much: "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man." Clearly, Aurelia is the possessor, and the young man becomes objectified and demeaned.

In the course of the ten short paragraphs of "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," "Twain" manages to devalue Caruthers with each loss of his limbs, revealing how notions of manhood are tied to the body the same way womanhood is. Caruthers begins Aurelia's story as a much "loved" "young man" ("Aurelia" para. 2) before consecutively transforming into an "unfortunate" and "mutilated

lover” (“Aurelia” para. 2, 10), then “friend” (“Aurelia” para. 4) who might or might not become an “unfortunate husband” (“Aurelia” para. 10). As Caruthers’s literal bodily possessions disappear, so does his individual value. Eventually, the hypothetical prosthetics that “Twain” recommends to Aurelia hold more value than the man himself. “Twain” describes Aurelia’s options as if Caruthers is a doll that can be replaced, not a man she intends to marry:

How would it do to *build* him? If Aurelia can afford the expense, let her *furnish* her mutilated lover with wooden arms and wooden legs, and a glass eye and a wig, and give him another *show*... it does not seem to me that there is much risk, anyway, Aurelia ... you are safe, married or single. If married, the wooden legs and such other *valuables* ... revert to the widow, and you see you sustain no actual loss save the cherished *fragment* of a noble but most unfortunate husband. (“Aurelia” para. 10)

With each successive loss of limb, “Twain” hints at the true fear behind Aurelia’s letter: how much more can Caruthers lose before he is no longer capable of being a husband? In other words, if he loses his male appendage—an unclear amount of his body remains—does he retain any value to Aurelia as a man? According to the concept of manhood, the ability to father children is the ultimate form of masculinity, so the fear of castration reveals the fear of losing one’s manhood. Without the ability to father children or the ability to work, does Caruthers possess any other value that would interest Aurelia? If Caruthers lacks symmetry as a man, he will cause asymmetry in Aurelia as a woman who will then not be able to have children, thus not performing her gender expectations either. The stories of Miss Wagner and Caruthers, each employing the same basic forms of prosthetics, indicate a societal fear of how to function as men and women with disabilities. The fear of asymmetry is a universal one.

Issues of wholeness and belonging affect men and women who are not diagnosed as “disabled” in a literal sense. Men and women today attempt to supplement their body with types of prosthetics: makeup, breast and pec implants, face lifts, high heels, Rogaine, pushup bras, hair dye, etc. Despite the fear of the uncanny, people

attempt to turn themselves into what is essentially a type of doll in order to achieve a socially-accepted standard of beauty and wholeness. While Twain attempts to suppress (or release?) this discussion through humor, the everyday presentation of such efforts is far from funny. In fact, it reveals a cultural identity disorder. Caring about one's appearance is natural. Rumsey and Harcourt explain how the "psychology of appearance" is perpetuated through the need to feel valued and because of the fear of difference (8). Using make-up and similar items also masks the aging process, ultimately suppressing the fear of eventual death and offering a semblance of more time. Prosthetics of all sorts allow individuals more freedom and function, the ability to pass through society without strange looks, and a feeling of wholeness, yet society feels the need to use prosthetics as a type of mask that hides otherness. Mark Twain successfully resurrects this discussion from the deepest recesses of society's collective unconscious when he includes it in his stories. Thus, Twain successfully performs the *unheimlich* maneuver on society when he makes "*everything that ought to have remained ... hidden and secret ... visible*" (Freud 420).

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Phallacies behind Assenting Behavior

Marla Williams

In *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros alludes to multiple readings of windows and the women concealed behind them. Throughout the novel, Cisneros references several women who are imprisoned by men, usually either fathers or husbands. The younger girls of the novel aspire to be the women they watch behind the windows, and they accept their future placement in this role; however, Esperanza, the protagonist of the novel, recognizes the connection and desires to resist the trap set by men. Taking away the independence of a woman and generalizing all women into one category of lust and passivity, patriarchal societies ultimately set the framework in which women are immersed. Cisneros's text brings light to the normalized infantilizing of women. Although these ideals and limitations are constructed by men, women subconsciously adapt the warped, phallic perspective and subsequently impose the same harsh implications amongst themselves. In "Wrestling with Imperial Patriarchy," Mukti Barton develops her theory of this role reversal: "This combination I name imperial patriarchy; I find that white feminist theologians often present an analysis that still stems from an imperial/colonial mind-set" (7). Additionally, in *Ways of Seeing* John Berger claims, "This unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that it still structures the consciousness of many women. They do to themselves what men do to them. They survey, like men, their own femininity" (63). The novel traces Esperanza's consciousness as she becomes cognizant of this unrighteous manipulation and helps bring awareness to the patriarchal system. She sees the limitations of misogyny and longs for women to recognize and overcome the cycle imprisoning them.

While shoes metaphorically represent growing up for the girls in *The House on Mango Street*, male fetishes of feet eroticism limit the girls' ability to discover their own sexuality. The mother in "the family of little feet" casually gives the girls a bag of worn and firmly molded high-heeled shoes. In doing this, she attempts

handing the girls their sexuality in a formed mechanism designed by men that impedes women from walking properly. Likewise, this impedance eliminates female independence, further titillating man's desire to have women fully submissive. When they receive the shoes, the girls are ecstatic because their "feet fit exactly," like in a princess fairytale; thus the supremacy and rigidity of the patriarchal mold is introduced (Cisneros 40). The "magic" shoes transform the girls immediately from innocent children into elongated, sexual women by stripping away their desire to play jump rope and initiating them into adulthood. Once they step out of the domestic barrier and onto the street, all heads instantly turn towards them; from Mr. Benny's interrogation, the catcalling boy, the six jealous girls in front of the laundromat, and the bum man, the girls receive far more sexualized attention than they have ever experienced. Michelle Sugiyama articulates this connection: "This power begins to frighten them... this power is ultimately a trap for the women of Mango Street" (2). Thereafter, the shoes get thrown away, and "no one complains" (Cisneros 42). Even though they rid themselves of the contaminated perspective, it is only a temporary delay of the inevitable system.

The infantilizing of women further manifests in the description of Sire's girlfriend, Lois. She is strangely incapable of tying her own shoes and "is compared to a baby three times in the same paragraph" (Sugiyama 6). Men subconsciously link certain features of women to a submissive behavior, and Lois's depiction and incapability epitomize the state of vulnerability that men find attractive. Expounding upon the "infantilized and glamorized," Sika Dagbovie-Mullins claims, "they are simultaneously loud and silenced, aggressive and abject, commanding and helpless" (2-3). Lois is helpless and reliant on her boyfriend to assist her. The obedience she embodies is depicted as "she holds his hand, and he stops sometimes to tie her shoes" (Cisneros 73). She holds his hand much like a child would hold a mother's hand when crossing the street. Instead of the couple holding hands to display affection, she grips onto his hand tightly for guidance into her socially-determined femininity. Her feet evoke the dependence females have become accustomed to as a result of the undermining male continuously overseeing the priorities of women. Again, the reference to feet, particularly dainty feet, shows how the men

ultimately control women, while keeping the women blind of the transaction. Male control masquerades as chivalry.

Greatly challenging these stereotypical aesthetics, Esperanza's feet are in complete opposition to submissive Lois's. While at her cousin's baptism party, Esperanza harshly illustrates her brown and white shoes declaring, "My feet scuffed and round... my feet swell big and heavy like plungers... I drag them" (Cisneros 47). Sugiyama cross-references this with Chinese imperialism when making her assertion, "On Mango Street, as in Old China, female beauty is associated with foot size" (3). The imagery of her feet becomes phallic. This disturbing language signals her evolving awareness of the patriarchal mindset and the grim limitations of self-discovery it brings. While everyone else is dancing, Esperanza sits at the table and conceals her shoes. She does not move until her uncle, who is previously proven a liar, uses his authoritative persuasion to convince her, saying, "you are the prettiest girl here" (Cisneros 47). Esperanza reflects, "but I believe him, and yes, we are dancing... only I don't want to at first" (Cisneros 47). At this young age she does not know why, but she feels trapped underneath that table. Esperanza believes she cannot be both sexually seductive and intellectually dominant. She is forced to choose.

Continuing the application of Chinese history, the female dependence on men directly correlates with the expectations placed on the women in *The House on Mango Street* to be subservient to their fathers and husbands as "footbinding was practiced... for precisely this reason: to make women weak" (Sugiyama 3). The crippling effect evokes female reliance on men. However, "It is not female movement per se but rather female sexuality that the men in the text are trying to control" (Sugiyama 4). Men assemble the epitome of femininity, then bind a compliant personality to those characteristics. A curvy, feminine woman displaying dainty characteristics is far more likely to draw a man's attention rather than a gallant, rugged woman with sharp exteriors; men correlate the petite delicacy to passivity and dependence, leaving the latter to be independent and strong-willed. Therefore, a male is going to be more inclined to pursue the woman he can persuade and manipulate into something satisfactory for himself.

The men set up an unrealistic, ideal look that all women are expected to embody; then the men set a literal trap to detain

the women. In addition to molding the women's feet to fit the imperial regime, the men also bind the women to the domesticity of household interiors. Throughout the novel, a recurring image of women being imprisoned by men, from father to husband, surfaces. The younger girls aspire to be the women they have watched behind the windows, and they accept their future placement in this role. As Esperanza is enhancing her awareness of this unrighteous manipulation, she reads her name and concludes, "It means sadness, it means waiting" (Cisneros 10). At a very young age she starts to realize her life will revolve around waiting on a man and never delivering herself. She will wait on a man to come rescue her from the house of a different man, alluding to the deceiving fairytale anticipations that adolescent girls adopt. She is named after her great-grandmother, because according to the Chinese calendar, they were both born horse women, defying the expectations of submissiveness: "which is to be bad luck if you're born female... because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong" (Cisneros 10). This reference to luck implies that only males hold empowerment. Faruk Kalay points out, "the women consent to their destiny when considered from the feminine point of view" (119). Consistently applying the horse analogy, Esperanza starts linking the arrangement: "My great-grandmother... a wild horse of a woman... until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off" (Cisneros 11). Blinding her was the only way to undermine her persistence. After being manipulated, her vision was the only thing connecting her to the outside world: "She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow" (Cisneros 11). Furthering her connections, Esperanza claims, "I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window" (Cisneros 11). As she matures, Esperanza further comprehends the correlation of assenting women to the constraint men enforce upon them.

As Esperanza gets older, she becomes more and more aware of this male inflicted restraint. She ponders the life of Rafaela, "who is still young but getting old from leaning out the window so much" (Cisneros 79). Like Esperanza's great-grandmother, Rafaela leans on that same elbow of sadness, waiting on her husband to arrive and yielding to his command. Continuously

tracing the simulacrum, Esperanza thinks, "And then Rafaela... gets locked indoors because her husband is afraid Rafaela will run away since she is too beautiful to look at" (Cisneros 79). Her husband convinces her through a restrained comment resembling a compliment. It is expected for women to conform to the limitations set up for them by the men in their lives. As Rafaela "dreams her hair is like Rapunzel's," she subconsciously associates the stereotypical aesthetics of beauty with the success of freedom. Pursuing this seductively dangerous ideology, she tosses down money from her upstairs window and asks Esperanza and her friends to buy juice for her. Esperanza senses the reference and thinks, "we send it up to her in a paper shopping bag she lets down with clothesline" (Cisneros 80). Advancing the imposed infantilizing, Rafaela's clothesline acts as an umbilical cord linking her to the unreachable outside world as she is obtaining nourishment through it. There is an interesting role reversal within this dynamic. In keeping the women domesticized, the men adapt a warped sense of maternalization, imprisoning the women inside a metaphorical, patriarchal womb. The men oppressively keep the women locked inside an embryonic space of the home, the window being the only portal within those four walls.

Unfortunately, Rafaela's husband is not the only one who assigns beauty to such danger. Sally's father falsely assumes "to be this beautiful is trouble" (Cisneros 81). Esperanza's mother also proclaims, "to wear black so young is dangerous" (Cisneros 82). The real trouble here is not the beauty itself but the sexual innuendos men prescribe to the beauty. Sally is immensely caught in the masculine web spun by her abusive father. Esperanza sees through the smeared "blue paint [on Sally's] eyelids" and into the shattered heart Sally tries so hard to conceal (Cisneros 82). Esperanza, in her early hopes of bringing women into the light of the patriarchal mold, begins questioning Sally while subconsciously threading these implications of dangerous beauty into her own life. She asks her, "why do you always have to go straight home after school... Sally, do you sometimes wish you didn't have to go home?" (Cisneros 82). Esperanza even assertively confronts Sally about her single-minded behavior: "You look at your feet and walk fast to the house you can't come out from" (Cisneros 82). The girls are hesitantly discovering the encumbrance of the metaphorical

womb as a preexisting condition that will strive to follow them wherever they go. Sally flees her father's abusive home only to fall again into the patriarchal mold which allows no room for her to delve into her own desires. After Sally gets married upon entering the eighth grade, her husband "doesn't let her look out the window" (Cisneros 102). Stripping away her portal, he does not even allow her to look at the freedom residing in the outside world. Instead, "She likes looking at the walls, at how neatly their corners meet" persistently trying to make her world straight when she ultimately knows it is anything but seamless (Cisneros 102).

Corresponding to Sugiyama's assertion of the book elaborating "primarily on the rigid control of women by men," Cisneros's novel uses the enforcement of patriarchal hegemony to propose the notion of women's assent over time developing into women oppressing other women instead of men single-handedly committing the unjust practices (2). After all, the book is dedicated "To the Women" (Cisneros vii). Cisneros acknowledges this unrighteous manipulation and tries to shed light onto the contradiction. While men are enforcing an inferior behavior, the women are consistently assenting without rebuttal. Although men undoubtedly set the trap, women begin voluntarily walking into the setup, luring other women with them. Again, in "Wresting with Imperial Patriarchy," Mukti Barton more directly defines this paradox in reference to Chinese foot-binding as compared to Victorian corset bondage:

Women's bodies were sculpted for male sexual gratification. They both started from the middle classes to prove their superiority, but then women from other classes desiring upward mobility followed suit. Mothers imposed this custom on the younger generation thinking that they could not ruin the future of their daughters as acceptable brides. Sexism and classism worked in both these cultural practices. Racism and imperialism added another dimension to the Victorian dress. (23)

Women teaching this objectification makes the women oppressors of themselves, thereby taking away the work from the men. Women have ultimately inverted the roles. Although the foot

binding ensues male dominance, Victorian women condemning the Chinese were doing so hypocritically when taking into account their similar practices. Over generations women have implanted the expectations of beauty into other women. Women have their daughters go to extraneous lengths to ensure that they marry into a prestigious family rather than teaching their daughters to resist from the male cultivated framework and marry a just, moral man.

This philosophy of women passing down oppressive roles to succeeding generations is easily linked to the mother passing down the bag of shoes to Esperanza and her friends, as previously mentioned. Judith Fetterley pursues, “Intellectually male, sexually female, one is in effect no one, nowhere, immasculated” (xxii). Through Fetterley’s vision of imasculation, she reveals the source of the conformed phallic behavior. When the girls begin playing dress up with the shoes, they are ultimately setting up the roles for which they will fulfill in the near future. Women teach their daughters how to objectify themselves; women pass down the roles as quickly as the men develop the framework. Just as the mother passes down her placement in the system of bondage, Rachel also “teaches [them] how to walk down to the corner so that the shoes talk back... with every step” (Cisneros 40). Men set up the aesthetic ideals, but women are so subservient that they unconsciously begin teaching other females how to perform exceptionally in the eyes of a male. Subsequently, and indeed ironically, the females encumbered into the system of falsities adopt this “male design” as a pedagogy (Fetterley xii).

Esperanza first consciously experiences the confinement herself when she desires to eat lunch in the canteen like a majority of her peers. Ironically, her first conscious encounter of male inflicted prejudice is acted out through a woman. Esperanza is called to the seat of judgment in Sister Superior’s office: “My turn came and I stood in front of the big desk with holy pictures under the glass while the Sister Superior read my letter” (Cisneros 45). Her description of the event reflects much upon the idea of Judgment Day—a day all people will go before God to receive His verdict of their decisions made while on earth. The preservation of the holy pictures under the glass in her office signals her supremacy, deeming her perspective as right and being of God’s. The place-

ment of the pictures beneath the glass mimics Sister Superior's placement under God's reign, framing her within the construction of a patriarchal, religious regime. Therefore, her judgment of Esperanza must directly correlate with God's judgment of her, and if God Himself does not have mercy upon her, who will? After disapprovingly reading the letter from Esperanza's mother, Sister Superior tries her hardest to keep Esperanza from staying at the school: "You don't live far... I bet I can see your house from my window" (Cisneros 45). Carelessly pointing to a house that is not even Esperanza's, Sister Superior judges the house from afar, looking again through the manmade window, through the male lens, and ultimately asserting Esperanza unworthy compared to the normalized vision of material success. Barton elaborates: "The imperial/colonial Christian patriarchy taught us to look down on our neighbors" (10). Sister Superior is so far immersed into the system that she loses sight of her proposed placement of assistance and condemns Esperanza through the male lens herself. Although the control is being administered by a woman, Sister Superior's perspective is warped to comport to that of a man's. She enacts the male gaze.

Not only are the women responsible for teaching the construct, women also assent and adapt to the paralyzing framework of the metaphorical womb. These impediments are embedded into the minds of children, male and female. In the very beginning of the novel, Esperanza semi-consciously witnesses the implantation: "The boys and girls live in separate worlds... boys in their universe and we in ours... My brothers... They've got plenty to say... inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls" (Cisneros 8). Likewise, throughout Esperanza's budding resistance to this conformity, she realizes she is alone in her desire to break-away from the system. Sally is being raped by Tito, an older boy from their neighborhood, in the garden outside, where the men recharge their unfailing dominance. Esperanza, severely unnerved by the encounter, soon realizes she is the only one who sees the event as treacherous. She is frantically relaying the account and, "his mother was ironing shirts... not looking up from her ironing... And kept on ironing" (Cisneros 97). Tito's mom keeps driving out the uprising faults of the system with the only way she knows how: through a domestic chore. His mom des-

perately fails at ironing out the wrinkles society has paradoxically placed upon itself, and Esperanza is left feeling helpless.

Again, just the same as great-grandmother Esperanza has a bag thrown over her head, the only way to tear down a persistent woman is through her eyesight. By literally diminishing her vision of a prosperous future, a woman will be forced to become a lump of clay, easily manipulated by the male potter. Esperanza's Aunt Guadalupe greatly opposes the dependent and fragile archetype women are expected to embody. This connection is easily denoted from Sugiyama's reference that "A crippled woman is easier to control than a woman with healthy limbs" (3). As a woman of astounding vigor, she is clearly marked, ideologically "diseased" and taken out of the system upon defying it. "Hard to imagine her legs once strong, the bones hard and parting water... not bent and wrinkled like a baby, not drowning under the sticky yellow light" (Cisneros 59). Refusing encumbrance into the system of falsities, Aunt Lupe is disease stricken, infantilized by a force far outside of her reign. Keeping the power of the male perspective within her control ultimately left her with a doomed fate. Her resistance was detected and annihilated, rendering her physically handicapped and entirely dependent upon someone else. Consequently, she is one of the strongest influences on Esperanza, encouraging her to form a resistance in her writing: "keep writing... it will set you free, and [Esperanza] said yes, but at that time [she] didn't know what [Aunt Lupe] meant" (Cisneros 61). Though Esperanza does not yet realize the value of this advice, her Aunt foretells of the great patriarchal confictions that lie ahead.

From the beginning of the novel, Esperanza is relayed as a resisting character: "... me, my hair is lazy. It ever obeys barrettes or bands" (Cisneros 6). As she grows older she steadily becomes aware of her differences from the other women surrounding her in that she sees the male inflicted rigidity for what it is – a corrupted role reversal initiated by imperial design and instilled into the minds of women. Assuming much of the coercion derives from the men of her community, Esperanza reaches out to various women for help only to realize that they are equally devious. The problem with this binary is that the women are unconscious of the juxtaposition. As most of the women adopt pedagogical practices of oppression, Esperanza conversely aspires to teach other women

to be aware of the system in hopes of refuting it and bringing about social change. She ultimately decides to resist and help the other women, bringing them into awareness; although, the step out of conformity is one they will have to consciously make on their own. As Esperanza tries to subvert, Barton also emphasizes that the system is not corrupting only one race, one class, one religion – we are all doing it to ourselves: “When we are united in this struggle, we shall better be able to support one another in our work towards ending sexism in all its manifestations in each and every culture” (25). In leaving her house on Mango Street and adopting pedagogical practices of resistance through her writing, Esperanza envisions a house she will utilize in pushing all women over the brink of liberation.

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Mental Illness, Transgenderism, and Society's Silence: Abjection in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Mackenzie Campbell

Through its use of mental illness and transgenderism, Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* creates a sense of the "other" and gives it a feeling of horror. The film takes two seemingly normal characters, Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter, and gives them two traits that automatically make them horror figures. By using mental illness and transgenderism, *The Silence of the Lambs* depicts the high priority on which society places boundaries and the "norm." Two other horror films provide similar counts of dehumanization and "otherizing." Scott's *Hannibal* details the life of Lecter after his escape, thus his cannibalism appears more often. The film then depicts him as much less human because of his taboo acts of cannibalism. The example of Whale's *Frankenstein* using a disfigured man as a monster presents the concept of physical "othering"; however, the "monster" appears as harmless. The film sets him apart from the rest of society simply because of his physical appearance. The impact of societal expectations presents itself in the ways in which they affect those who do not meet them; Bill's homicidal acts were potentially set in motion by his being denied a sex change operation by several institutions, and Lecter's cannibalism symbolizes the "savage" stigma that comes with mental illness. Therefore, *The Silence of the Lambs* provides a glimpse into the ways in which society, or "nurture," plays a role in the development and behavior of human beings both in mental and physical ways.

Lecter and Buffalo Bill appear as the outsiders of society and thus do not fit into any part of the community because of their conditions. Throughout Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, the idea of abjection—something that helps place Lecter and Bill into a position in society—appears as several things: the physical reaction to a repulsive object or action, the loss of self, the unconscious desires, and the uncanny. *The Silence of the Lambs* depicts Buffalo

Bill and Lecter as the abject through their lifestyles, sexuality, and mental illness. Because the two characters do not fit into society's acceptable boundaries—heterosexuality and mental stability—the two characters appear as “others.” Both characters can be described through Kristeva's idea of abjection:

The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder (8).

Hannibal Lecter represents the animalistic behaviors of the id that society teaches as something that should be repressed while Buffalo Bill represents the elements of “sex and murder” that society teaches its members to avoid at all costs. Lecter's cannibalism and mental illness give him the characteristics of the savage animal, thus he appears as the abject. Buffalo Bill's transgenderism identifies him as the abject because he does not fit into a specific binary—heterosexual or homosexual—thus he is “in between” the two and therefore the image of the abject. Kristeva's concept of abjection then encompasses Lecter and Bill and identifies them as the “other” through the elements of alternative sexuality and mental illness.

Lecter's mental illness and cannibalistic actions identify him as the abject. Because mental illness creates a boundary between Lecter and society, he becomes an outsider. His cannibalism then further separates him from society and places a barrier between the two. In her article “Discrimination against Individuals with Mental Illness,” Sue Noe explains the separation between society and the “other”: “As rated by a social distance survey, Tringo found that individuals with mental illness were rated as the least desirable group of individuals with disabilities...” Noe's use of the social distance survey depicts the reality of mental illness and the ways in which society places stigmas on those who suffer from mental illness. One stigma of mental illness is that of violence. Noe's article describes the violence stigma placed on those with mental illness through societal constructs. She goes further to

say that, "This stereotype has been sustained by the media when mental illness is linked to violence in movies such as *The Silence of the Lambs* (Torrey, 1994)." The stigma with mental illness involves violence, especially in *The Silence of the Lambs*; Lecter's behavior cannibalistic behavior stems from his mental illness, thus the idea is that those who suffer from mental illness are inherently violence. In this way, Demme's film goes along with the stigma that all sufferers of mental illness are or become violent. However, Lecter's cannibalistic, homicidal behavior creates a dramatization of the effects of mental illness; therefore, his character acts as the embodiment of mental illness as the way society views it. The film depicts him as an intelligent but mentally unstable man, thus he is locked away in a high security facility. The film dehumanizes Lecter because of his mental illness and the violence that stems from it. However, Clarice's treatment of him humanizes him for the audience, and he becomes identifiable and worthy of sympathy. Lecter acts courteously towards her as if she were a guest in his home. He later appears to address his own mental illness: "A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti" (Demme 1991). By showing the way her reacted to an attempted "labeling" of himself, Lecter demonstrates that mental illness is not simply "black and white" but rather very complex. The film then identifies Lecter as the "other" because of his mental illness and further sets him apart from society. Through doing this, *The Silence of the Lambs* then creates a sense of horror through mental illness, thus intensifying society's negative beliefs regarding the mentally ill.

The film juxtaposes Lecter and Buffalo Bill as Bill appears as the "other" and the abject simply because of his transgenderism rather than a mental illness. In Noe's article, it is said that many would rather associate with someone who is mentally retarded than mentally ill. This suggests that mentally ill people are even less desirable than those who are sexually deviant. Buffalo Bill presents his sexuality through his "dance" and appearance. While preparing to film himself dancing nude, he applies brow powder, lipstick, and jewelry. Although makeup and jewelry are not inherently feminine, societal constructs regarding masculinity and femininity identify them as such. One necklace appears as a set of geometric shapes, perhaps showing his incomplete identity

because he was not allowed a sex change. His second necklace has a charm resembling the goddess of fertility and therefore representing Bill's desire to become a woman. This preparation then shows that although men and women differ biologically, gender does not rely on biological sex. After preparation, Bill performs a nude dance in front of a camera. He asks, "Would you fuck me?" after applying lipstick; his voice is very deep and masculine therefore furthering the idea that gender is not reliant upon sex. In "Consuming Community" Kendall Phillips identifies the importance of gender and sexuality in *The Silence of the Lambs* and their relationship regarding the individual and the community. The film represents the ways in which Buffalo Bill and Hannibal appear as the abject; they represent the separation between self and other and object and subject. Phillips uses Bliss and Banks' explanation of Bill's actions as they react to societal norms:

"When we see Bill at work in his basement it is alone at his sewing machine or asking his mirror image if he is desirable, or dancing in front of a video camcorder to create an illusion of femininity. Bill... 'hates his own identity' and learns to 'cover the identity of those around him...'"

Bill's absence from the community visually defines him as the "other." This absence then relates Bill to Lecter in that both have been forcibly removed from society whether through prison or the act of abandonment. Phillips and Kristeva's ideas of the abject, deviance, and isolation then relate Bill and Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* and identify them as the "other." The loss of community by Bill and Lecter cause them to be the abject as they depict the loss of distinction between self and other through the breakdown of society. This invokes a sense of horror in society, thus the stigma of danger that attaches itself to mental illness and transgenderism is enforced by societal standards and social norms.

Buffalo Bill's character is then juxtaposed with Lecter's in that both appear as outsiders and "monsters" because of their social deviance (mental illness and transgenderism), but neither have "problems" that relate the two directly. Although mental illness and transgenderism are separate ideas altogether, the

two are treated similarly. Society places Lecter into isolation as punishment and forces Bill into isolation because of his deviance. It appears as though society feels as though the “other” should disappear from society and never be allowed to rejoin the community. This relates back to the origins of the monster in Whale’s *Frankenstein*. The monster becomes exiled because of his appearance and deviance from societal expectations; Lecter and Bill receive similar treatments from society in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Whale’s film depicts a “scary” monster through its physical differences. Although the film portrays the monster as dangerous, it exists through the lens of societal standards during the 1930s. That is, the film is meant to further “otherize” those who differ from society’s standards. This relates to *The Silence of the Lambs* through the “horrific” appearances and behaviors of Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill. Although the two appear monstrous for different reasons than Frankenstein’s monster, they are monsters because of things that set them apart from the community. Frankenstein’s monster then depicts the struggles of both Lecter and Bill in that he represents the mental illness of Lecter through his inability to join community and his lack of speech. Although Lecter can speak—quite well, actually—he cannot communicate in a way that would allow him to become accepted into society. The continued isolation faced by both the monster and Lecter demonstrates the ways in which nurture, or society, plays a role in behavior. Both the monster and Lecter could be reintroduced to the community and perhaps helped in a way that would allow them to be “normal.” The monster also represents the sexual deviance of Bill through his physical differences. Although Bill is a biological male, he is, in his mind, a woman. The monster appears deformed, whereas Bill’s body does not fit the gender that he has assigned to himself, thus his physical image is not “correct.” In this way, Bill and Frankenstein’s monster are essentially the same, although their appearances differ. Identifying others as the “other” or the abject because of social deviance has been engrained into society, thus instances of this appear in original horror films as well as in contemporary examples.

In the sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs*, Lecter’s cannibalism is much more apparent. The film creates a sense of abjection as the human reaction through its graphic depictions of his cannibalism

and mental illness. For instance, the film shows Lecter cutting open a man's head, sautéing part of his brain, and feeding it to the victim. This is meant to further "otherize" Lecter. The film presents Lecter's character as much more unstable now that he is out in society. However, he appears to cope quite well. He uses minute details against his victims, showing that he is much more stable than society would believe. This implies that societal norms do not dictate the ways in which people behave, but rather they seek to limit them. Isolation then serves as a means of protecting society from the "other" rather than protecting the "other" from society. Lecter's character demonstrates the effects of isolation while his counterpart, Buffalo Bill, demonstrates the effects of shunning sexual deviance and alternative sexual identity. *The Silence of the Lambs* then presents the argument of nature versus nurture regarding mental illness and transgenderism. Kathy Livingston conducted an experiment with her students to better understand society's treatment of those with mental illness, violence, and sexual deviance with a focus on Demme's film. In this experiment, "Viewing Popular Films about Mental Illness," students found several relevant themes such as "the use of medication and institutionalization to sedate people who displayed nonconformist behavior," "patients in psychiatric hospitals as serial killers," and "the stigmatizing effect of labeling a person as their disorder (i.e. 'psycho,' 'schizo')." Livingston's exercise shows the effects of social subjectivity and social norms that are imposed upon those with mental illness. She demonstrates the ways in which society teaches others to view those who do not meet societal standards as the "other," even if they are outside of the norm because of a mental or medical condition. In this sense, people like Lecter become the abject and are seen as horror figures. Even in this exercise, the students noticed that people in mental institutions are often seen as serial killers like Lecter. This shows that the idea was not just an invention of Demme's film, but rather it is a trope that exists throughout society as a stigma of mental illness.

Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* depicts its characters as "other" because of their social deviance, thus the characters appear as horror figures. The film takes two characters, one who suffers from mental illness and one who identifies as transgender, and turns their differences into horror tropes by exaggerating the danger

that they pose to society. The film uses homicide and cannibalism to imply the danger posed to society through social deviance. By using mental illness and transgenderism, *The Silence of the Lambs* presents the priority that society places on the “norm.” From Whale’s *Frankenstein* in 1931 to present-day films, “othering” because of physical appearance or taboo actions has been present in society in such a way that *The Silence of the Lambs* makes apparent. The impact of society’s expectations presents itself through the community’s treatment of Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill; Lecter’s cannibalism symbolizes the savage and animalistic trope of mental illness while Bill’s homicidal acts appear as the effects of transgenderism. The film then provides insight into the ways in which society, or “nurture,” plays a role in the development and behavior, or “nature,” of human beings in psychological and physical ways.

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Superiority Theory, Humor's Messianic Power, and Changing the Situation in *Forrest Gump*

Kristen Leonard

There are countless characteristics and qualities that separate different cultures, but humor is universal—something all cultures can relate to. Humor is essentially a part of our innate nature. Why we laugh and the things we laugh at varies, but the fact still remains that humor changes the way people view the world whether we realize that at first or not. Laughter is so powerful that it sometimes creates this tension between expectation and reality. This tension begins when humor functions in a way that challenges what we assume to be true versus what really is the truth, or simply, according to philosopher Simon Critchley, it challenges our understanding of “the way things are and the way they are represented in [humor]” (1). One way that humor does this is by changing the situation that we find ourselves in. True humor does more than elicit comic relief; instead it teaches us something about ourselves—about who we are as people, what we represent together and individually, and the circumstances that help shape our reality. In fact, true humor helps us come to terms with the person we wish to become and the person we wish to elude. In Robert Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump*, the audience gets a clear sense of how the humor in the film changes the situation. For years we have been taught not to laugh at people like Forrest because of his intellectual disability. Some of us, though, find ourselves laughing anyway because we find it funny the amount of determination and drive he has despite his low IQ. The comedic aspect of the film, however, shows us that by laughing at Forrest, we are also laughing ourselves. Even with Forrest's disability, he still manages to accomplish and overcome just as much if not more than the man with the higher IQ. The humor in this film, then, ultimately challenges how we view opportunity in America by allowing the audience to possess a more open-minded and optimistic outlook on success and capability.

In this film, it is interesting to think about how the superiority theory is represented as a way for the audience to understand why some people may find it okay to laugh at the film's main character Forrest. Being that Forrest is extremely slow-witted and naïve, some people may find themselves poking fun at the fact that he and his mother have such high hopes for his future. This is the case because, often times, society considers people with a mental or physical disability as "other" or as having a negative identity that people who consider themselves superior work hard to prevent. In their article "Disparagement Humor: A Theoretical And Empirical Review Of Psychoanalytic, Superiority, And Social Identity Theories," Mark Ferguson and Thomas Ford argue, "When we find humor in something, we laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect, suddenly revealed in someone else, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel 'superior' since we are not, at that moment, unfortunate, stupid, clumsy, morally or culturally defective and so on. To feel superior in this way is 'to feel good'; it is to 'get what you want.' It is to win!" (289). In other words, whenever we laugh at people we consider less than, it makes us feel better about who we are and our own circumstances. Society would sometime prefer to poke fun at someone else than actually take time to come to terms with who they are and to consider what is about them that makes them want to make fun of others. Forrest, though, problematizes this representation of the superiority theory in the film because he is such an optimistic character who chooses to combat the limitations that society places on him because of his learning disability. The audience slowly but surely starts to reject this superiority theory the more we recognize Forrest as an admirable character (because of how successful and lucky he is in life) instead of "other" or one that we are superior to; he begins to teach us a lot about the type of people we are, and we start to question whether we are the inferior ones, considering the fact that all the people deemed "normal" in the film are in some ways less fortunate than him. We ultimately see how the film deconstructs the superiority theory and makes it impossible for the audience to stick to it and consider it fact.

To elaborate further, the audience is able to see how Forrest problematizes the representation of the superiority theory in more ways than one and ultimately changes his situation. Toward the

beginning of the film, a group of boys who constantly bully and make fun of Forrest chase him down the road; they throw rocks at him and insult him by saying, "Hey dummy, are you retarded or just plain stupid?" (15:42). But, what they did not know is, despite having braces, Forrest's legs were strong, and he "could run like the wind blows" (17:00). Forrest recognizes that as an advantage and considers it a miracle. He said that "miracles happen every day. Some people don't think so, but they do" (15:34). Essentially, Forrest rejects this superiority theory that the film sets up because he realizes that, even though he has a disability in some areas, there are aspects of him that make him remarkable like being extremely fast and extremely lucky. Through it all, he still manages to maintain an optimistic outlook on life, and he is still able to overcome tough situations that "inferior people" would normally be considered incapable of doing. This superiority theory that people in the film and even the audience try to engage in is easily dismissed because his advantages are sure to overpower his disadvantages. This realization ultimately changes the situation; it teaches us that there is sometime power in places that we overlook because we spend so much time thinking of ourselves as being better, or laughing at people who simply cannot control the inadequacies that life imposes on them. *Forrest Gump*, then, sets the audience up to think that we are superior when we might actually represent the opposite in the film.

Several times throughout the film, Forrest continues to reject the superiority theory by being able to accomplish the unexpected. Seeing how he does this, we are able to get a clear sense of the fact that the superiority is just simply the way some people have chosen to make themselves "feel good" and "to get what [they] want" (Ferguson 289)—a state of mind—not really anybody's truth or actuality, which the film teaches us over and over again. The first time is in the scene with that group of boys. The fact that Forrest is able to get away from them by being able to run fast switches this mode of superiority that causes the boys to be classified as the inferior ones. This is the film's way of representing the superiority theory as being two sided, which means it can easily be flipped in the favor of those considered inferior; this is simply because it is not unique to one individual and can apply to anyone at any moment. We see how the film's rejects the su-

periority theory once again when Forrest is older, and that same group of boys chases him again. Forrest said, "Now it used to be that I ran to get to where I was going. I never thought it would take me anywhere" (20:58). Like the time when he was younger, his fast running enables him to get away from the boys a second time, but this time it awarded him an opportunity to be a part of a college football team. Even though society still called him out for being slow-witted and the "local idiot" (21:23), the film still combats this idea that "normal" people are always superior because it is not every day that people with disabilities like Forrest's earn a college diploma and play for a college football team. Forrest goes off to accomplish other phenomenal opportunities such as serving as a war hero in Vietnam and winning the Congressional Medal of Honor for saving a lot of his platoon mates. The joke about Forrest's disability changes the situation by allowing us to see "the familiar defamiliarized, the ordinary made extraordinary" (Critchley 10). This contrast gets people to recognize that one bad circumstance does not equate to a bad or miserable life. Because, essentially, while those people who are considered to be completely "normal" start to experience these unfortunate events like death and disease, Forrest continues to win at life and never once let his disability become a hindrance.

Also, there is something humorous about the fact that Forrest finds a way to relate his mom's wisdom to every aspect of his life; her wisdom becomes a guide for him throughout life and essentially changes how we start to think about our own lives. His mom's wisdom, though really deep when you think about the meaning behind a lot of her idioms, are often representative of her funny sense of humor. Her sense of humor is what enables Forrest to have this optimistic and positive response toward life, despite his shortcomings. In the opening scene, when Forrest offers a random lady a piece of chocolate and then tells her that his mom always said, "Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get" (3:40), we are able to see how he undoubtedly uses every piece of advice his mom gives him. This fact is quite hilarious because it is almost like his mom is the little voice that he carries around with him everywhere he goes in order to look at life in a more positive light. A moment later he says to the woman, "Those must be comfortable shoes. I bet

you can walk all day in shoes like that and not feel a thing,” and when she says “My feet hurt,” he responds with “Mama always said it’s an awful lot you can tell about a person by their shoes” (4:04). Though we find it funny that Forrest constantly recollects the things he learns from his mom, it helps change the way we view Forrest in comparison to our own lives. We are reminded every time he accomplishes a task that Ms. Gump was right: life does have a way of surprising us because in the film Forrest does just that. In his essay “Forrest Gump,” Richard Blake points out, “Even [Forrest’s] ill-fortune has its bright side” and that “in most horrible circumstances, [he] is incapable of resentment. He is, in fact, a giant of optimism, loyalty, compassion and love” (5)—which is everything his mom teaches him to be. This further changes the situation because it proves that, while Forrest may have a disability, he is still able to learn the true value of life and use his knowledge to make a difference in the world.

To continue, the audience may be in disbelief at how accomplished Forrest becomes, considering his unfortunate circumstances. This makes us reconsider the limitations we try to place on others and makes us look at Forrest as a man of remarkable growth and not as someone who has a disability. In Arnie Cann and Chantal Collettea’s article “Sense of Humor, Stable Affect, and Psychological Well-Being,” they state, “Being happy is associated with many desirable outcomes, including better relationships, stronger immune responses, and greater creativity; and individuals’ happiness is at least partially under their control... Some of the behaviors identified as enhancing happiness [include] expressing gratitude, engaging in altruism, counting one’s blessings, and maintaining an optimistic outlook” (465). Forrest creates his own happiness by being in control of his own life. This changes the situation even more by prompting the audience to think about whether or not we, too, have chosen to be happy for ourselves and to live like good, decent people are supposed to, even if society continually tries to combat that. Because of the fact that the humor in this text seeks to change the situation, the audience is able to understand laughter’s messianic power. Critchley argues that “the tiny explosions of humor that we call jokes return us to a common, familiar world of shared practices, the background meanings implicit in culture in a culture and

how those practices might be transformed, or perfected, how things might be otherwise. Humor both reveals the situation, and indicates how that situation might be changed. That is to say, laughter has a certain redemptive or messianic power” (16). Humor has the ability to change our perceptions and help us make better decisions. Forrest’s personality and reactions are somewhat unusual but rather comic at times, but it in fact goes way beyond comic satire. Forrest’s characterization—a man who is genuinely good-hearted and good-spirited—is what allows him to become a redeemer for all those weaker, less loving, and impure souls that he come in contact with. This is easily noted in his relationship with Jenny. Even after she becomes extremely involved with the hippie movement and drug culture and ultimately embarks on this destructive path, Forrest’s love for her never dies. He goes out of his way to show her unconditional love and to prove that he will do anything to protect her, and before she dies, they get married and have a child. Forrest ultimately helps Jenny change her life around before she passes. He becomes for her, and for a few other people in the film, a sort of savior that enables them to get back on the right path.

Forrest’s ability to act a savior for many people in the film reveals to the audience that, as Critchley puts it, “the consolations of humor comes from acknowledging that this is the only world and, imperfect as it is and we are, it is only here that we can make a difference” (17). However, that is not to say that it saves us in the way that Christian humor would, but it does save us in terms of the way we think about ourselves and places that we exist. For many of us, acknowledging the fact that we are not living the way we should be transforms our perception of ourselves and makes us realize what we refused to realize or understand once before. Forrest’s humorous responses and actions such as always relating his mom’s idioms to various parts of his life help set up the foundation for the way people wish to live their lives. Because of that, it does not matter that they appear to be over-the-top and dramatic at times. That is what true humor does—it changes how we respond to cultural and social ideologies about life. It enables us to break away from these restricting categories and stereotypes that we impose on others. Without Forrest’s humorous personality, we would not understand the power of true

humor. True humor “affords an opportunity for realizing that an accepted pattern has no necessity” (10). In seeing how Forrest helped change the lives of the people around him—Jenny, his platoon, and platoon leader especially—we are able to see that he does have a purpose and that there is no logical reason for judging him because he proves over and over again that he can be just as successful as the next person even with a low IQ and below normal learning ability. By rejecting these cultural constructions, our culture begins to make a difference, and people like Forrest play a huge role in that. Forrest, then, saves us, not in a religious aspect, but in terms of how we reconsider the lives we live and the culture that shapes who we are as people.

All in all, *Forrest Gump* is a powerful film that reinforces this notion of possibility; this film suggests that possibilities are endless when people believe in themselves and create a better life than one society limits people to through these repressive expectations. What makes this film so compelling is Forrest’s ability to overcome his shortcomings through his humorous personality, unique running ability, and genuine spirit; he essentially rejects the notion of superiority, redeems himself and those around him, and constantly changes the situation in which he exists by refusing to give in to those who deem themselves superior. If there is one thing that Forrest teaches everyone it is that society does not have the final say so; destiny and chance is all up to the individual. He shows us that using the very things the people hold against us as our motivation is the way to overcome them. Forrest Gump might not be super intelligent, but he lives a brilliant life because his shortcomings never minimize his possibilities.

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Foreign War Portrayals: Objectivism and Othering in HBO's *Band of Brothers*

Olivia McGregor

Every generation sees a new revival in the war narrative. Whether in books or magazines, the silver screen or the television, war narratives and the travel they entail continue to fascinate the American public. One of the more successful war portrayals of late is HBO's ten part mini-series, *Band of Brothers*. Based on the book by Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers* chronicles the war experiences of E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne as they travel from Normandy on D-Day to Hitler's Eagle's Nest in April of 1945. The men of E Company, also called Easy Company, having been immersed in foreign war, have quite possibly one of the most accurate views of World War Two due to their interactions with the Other. Because of the violent nature of war, traveling for purposes of foreign war results in an enriched objectivism as well as a heightened aspect of othering due to the incorporation of war-time biases and mentalities. Traveling for foreign war results in a contrasting portrayals of foreign travel during times of war and times of peace, in that wartime depictions tend to focus primarily on the horrors of war and the monstrosity of the enemy as opposed to appreciating the foreign culture for what it is.

During times of peace, examining other people and cultures at face value remains easier as the overtones of fear and survival are not at play. The act of creating a biased persona for people of different cultures, or othering, is an aspect present in most travel narratives. In his book *Travel Writing*, Carl Thompson defines othering as "the process by which the members of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and members of another culture" (132). When lives are not at stake, the degree of othering remains minimal; a mere observation of the ways in which one's native culture differs from the host culture. Leisurely travel creates an air of adventure and freedom, forming experiences that do not require an astute knowledge of the host

culture in order to survive. When survival factors into the equation, however, the act of othering becomes more essential. Traveling abroad for deployment shifts the aspect of othering and provides soldiers a means with which “to generate or reinforce a range of prejudicial, ethnocentric attitudes” (Thompson 133). While the omission of humanity may seem normal and necessary during wartime, it is important to realize that these actions still remain a form of othering. By reinforcing prejudicial attitudes and feelings of superiority, foreign travel for the purpose of combat requires one to set aside the humanity they may otherwise see in the enemy army and citizens in order to accomplish the mission at hand. In the final episode of HBO’s mini-series *Band of Brothers* entitled “Points”, Staff Sergeant Shifty Powers of Easy Company reflects on his views of the German soldiers as the war drew to a close:

A lot of those soldiers, I’ve thought about this often – that man and I might’ve been good friends. We might’ve had a lot in common. We might’ve liked to fish, you know; he might’ve liked to hunt. You never know. Course they were doing what they were supposed to do and I was trying to do what I was supposed to do, but, uh, under different circumstances we might’ve been good friends.

In his reflection, Powers notes specifically that the one circumstance preventing any type of friendship between himself and the German soldiers is the war. Realistically, orders must be followed, and the main goal for Easy Company is to bring their military operations in Europe to a close and to await orders regarding deployment to the Pacific. As Powers mentions, both sides were doing what their respective countries required of them and in order to do so, the aspect of extreme othering must remain intact.

Foreign war, which by nature dictates traveling abroad, relies on the ally/enemy dichotomy to cultivate fear and portray foreigners in a more savage and hostile light. The promotion of fear surrounding the brutality of the German army served as justification for the othering that occurred as this portrayal necessitated retaliation and violence.

In her article “‘Will this Picture Help Win the War’?: *Band of Brothers* and the Mythology of World War II”, Anne Mørk

touches on the aspect of violence and killing as portrayed in HBO's miniseries. While soldiers, such as Major Richard Winters, who struggle with the act of killing someone, "[t]he trauma of killing is only dealt with in one episode (...) the act of killing is often portrayed as necessary" (Mørk 62). Without the savage Others and the need to protect one's self and one's unit from destruction at the hands of hostile forces, the act of killing no longer exists as a necessary course of action. In times of peace, some people view killing as positive only when it exists as a necessary act of self-defense which, as in wartimes, subjects the enemy to an extreme level of othering. Reliance on the ally/enemy dichotomy is dealt with early on in *Band of Brothers*. As Winters and some of the Easy Company men make their way to find the rest of their group after landing miles from their Drop Zone on D-Day, they pass a group of German POWs. One of the company members tells Technical Sergeant Donald Malarkey to "stop fraternizing with the enemy" when he encounters and converses with a German soldier from Eugene, Oregon who was "wearing a Kraut uniform" because his family "answered the call...to return the fatherland" ("Day of Days"). The conversation with the American POW whose family returned to German at the start of the war stands as a prime example of the way in which the concept of a hostile enemy affects how one person labels another as Other. Under normal circumstances such a conversation would not have posed a problem. However, the POW wears a German uniform so automatically they lump him in with the enemy and as such is othered to the same extreme degree as the rest of the Germans. The act of othering based solely on fear was so well accepted that the men of Easy Company maintained the drive to fight the Germans despite having never encountered any Germans directly. In his book *Band of Brothers*, Stephen Ambrose notes that by the time the men of Easy Company arrived in Germany in April 1945 "[t]hey would be coming as conquerors who had been told to distrust all Germans and (...) they would soon see for themselves whether all the Germans were Nazis and if the Nazis were as bad as the Allied press and radio said they were" (Ambrose 247). The power of fear and the desire to survive play a huge role in the act of othering. The men of Easy Company rely on the fear instilled by the wartime biases as well as the innate

desire to return home as the basis for their actions, despite having no direct contact with the Germans up to this point. It is in this moment that the power of othering is illuminated and the degree to which war and wartime biases impact how the Other is portrayed becomes clear.

The hostile view of the Other during wartime remains a necessity as innate evil is seen as a threat, and thus justifies acts of violence against the Other. As Easy Company nears the end of its tour in Europe, the extreme othering that took place during the height of combat is no longer necessary due to Germany's surrender. Shifting the portrayal of the enemy occurs because the war on the European front has come to a close and the fear of death and desire to survive are less immediate. Major Winters is the most attuned to this shift as he treats a surrendering German officer with respect and not only allows the officer to keep his weapon, but also allows the officer to speak to his men after the surrender. Fluent in German, Joseph Liebgott, a T-5 in Easy Company, translates the officer's speech for Major Winters and Captain Lewis Nixon. Liebgott quotes the German officer as saying his men "deserve 'long and happy lives in peace,'" thus illuminating that "the values of the German soldiers are the same as the Americans—loyalty, comradeship, etc. It is war that forces these young men to become enemies" (Mørk 66). Both the American and the German soldiers value loyalty, comradeship, and many other similar values. Both armies desire peace, yet due to the extreme level of wartime othering, their leaders force them into combat against one another. This sentiment echoes that of Staff Sergeant Powers, in that comradeship between the German and American soldiers had the possibility of existing if not for the war. Powers is not the only member of Easy Company to reflect on how the overall view of the Germans shifted after V-E Day. In his interview segment during the final episode of *Band of Brothers*, Corporal Earl "One-Lung" McClung says, "I think we thought that the Germans were probably the vilest people in the world. But as the war went along, we found out also that it wasn't the Germans per say" ("Points"). The revelation that they were misguided in their original views of the Germans, proves the power and influence that fear had over Easy Company regarding the othering of the enemy, in this case the German army. This

shift in perspective not only highlights the power that foreign war has over othering, but also illuminates the extent to which conflict colors the retelling of war narratives.

When removed from a wartime environment, the sense of othering lessens but still affects the portrayal of the war narrative. The common cliché regarding the past, hindsight is 20-20, is not applicable when it comes to the retelling of war narratives. These narratives exist so far out of the realm of normal experiences that their retellings often come across as stories as opposed to actual retellings. Ambrose highlights this sentiment when he quotes Tom Gibson as saying “We all know war stories seem to have a life of their own. They have a way of growing, of being embellished. Whether the details are precise or not there must be a kernel of truth for such a story to ever have been told the first time” (206). The kernel of truth remains the most important part when studying war narratives. These kernels come from men and women who experience these battles first hand and who relay the events using not only the so-called perfect hindsight but also draw on the experience of having been immersed in the event. While one classifies *Band of Brothers* as a series of war stories, it remains important to remember that the authors themselves tell the stories—the men who lived through the battles and, in some aspects, relive those battles every time they tell the story. The intense othering may no longer be at play but the reality of it lives in the memories of the men of Easy Company. Such memories enrich and, in a way, authenticate the war narrative that make up *Band of Brothers*. Thomas Schatz critiques the narrative authenticity of the mini-series in his article “Old War/New War: Band of Brothers and the Revival of the WWII Film”:

Each episode opens with a prologue of sorts, in which the actual members of Easy Company (men now in their 70s and 80s), recollect various events and incidents related to that particular episode. The effect of this narrative device is quite striking, at once personalizing the narrative and injecting a sense of documentary realism. (77).

Schatz’s attention to the effect of the narrative prologue before each episode highlights just how integral first-hand knowledge

and experience is when it comes to effectively authenticating and personalizing war narratives. The heightened sense of objectivism only thrives from having experienced a shift in the handling of othering. To look back on the events that took place in Europe and not only realize where and how they were misguided, but also see the value both perspectives put on the men of Easy Company. They give both an objective and a personal account of their time fighting abroad in World War II. When interviewing Staff Sergeant William “Wild Bill” Guarnere regarding an incident in which he shot a group of prisoners, Ambrose quotes Guarnere as responding, “No remorse,(...) It was as easy as stepping on a bug.’ After a pause, he added, ‘We are different people now than we were then’” (77). In this instance, Guarnere’s unique ability to view the incident from both a personal and objective viewpoint not only makes his story authentic, but also paints him and the members of Easy as a trustworthy and unbiased narrators. Having experienced World War II abroad, the men of Easy Company see not only the Americanized perspective of the Germans and generalized perception of the war, but also the reality of the war that pervaded Europe. Staff Sergeant Guarnere, along with the rest of E Company, relays not only the America’s view of the Germans, but also the views of various European countries. This astute ability to view different perspectives enhances the objectivity of the war narrative told by E Company as the men provide multiple viewpoints of the war and of the Germans themselves.

Wartime biases serve as a launching point when evaluating the cultures and people encountered while fighting abroad and camouflages the othering process. Throughout its tour in Europe, Easy Company traveled to a total of six countries; four before entering Germany. The experiences Easy Company had in each country were unique, each one serving as a baseline for the next. Their views on the first four countries varied, ranging from excellent to dismal:

The men had liked the Britain and the English people enormously. They did not like the French, who seemed to them ungrateful, sullen, lazy and dirty. They had a special relationship with the Belgians because of their intimate association with the civilians of Bastogne, who had done

whatever they could to support the Americans. They loved the Dutch. Brave, resourceful, overwhelmingly grateful, the best organized underground in Europe, cellars full of food hidden from the Germans but given to the Americans, clean, hardworking, honest were only some of the compliments the men showered on the Dutch. (Ambrose 246)

The varying experiences Easy Company have in England, France, Belgium, and Holland all serve as launching points from which to assess the Germans and Austrians once Easy Company make its way into Germany and eventually Austria. The English make a good impression on the men of Easy Company, as do the Belgians and the Dutch. These three populations accept and desire the American presence and assistance to neutralize the hostile and somewhat uncivilized German population. On the contrary, the French come across as ungrateful and apathetic, content to let the Germans do as they please. Ultimately, these experiences impact how the members of Easy Company approach the act of othering when it comes to the German soldiers. The men of Easy Company see the fear and apathy that the countries they are stationed in exhibit regarding Germany and the German army. Personal reactions, coupled with the fear and hatred brought over from the states, emphasize the role of Germany as the hostile, savage Other. Negative wartime associations led to the increase in the severity of othering regarding the Germans, an act which ultimately provides the men of Easy Company the unique ability to see the war from both fronts. Traveling abroad for the purpose of combat necessitates an extreme level of othering and, when coupled with the wartime biases both observed and experienced by the soldiers, foreign war provides a level of objectivity that is normally out of reach. The ability to draw on both personal experience and objective viewpoints not only adds authenticity to a war narrative, but also makes the narrator, and the story itself, more relatable to those on the receiving end. While narratives and memoirs from veterans remain valuable for creating accurate historical records, they are also valuable in that they carry on the legacy of the triumphs and horrors that accompany them. However, just because veterans provide the most objective of narratives, does not necessarily mean they will jump at the chance to share

them. After all, what stands as a retelling of an event for the reader or listener, remains for veterans, a decision to relive those events and all of the corresponding emotions.

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Too Ideal to be Real: A Marxist Inspired Critique on M.T Anderson's *Feed* and 21st Century Society

Brianna Russell

In M.T. Anderson's book, *Feed*, two main characters undergo transitions into new levels of social awareness. According to Karl Marx's theory, there are three levels: False Consciousness, Class Consciousness, and Revolutionary Consciousness. Marx established his theory to explain to those ignorant of their social position and status that their abilities are not why they are positioned where they are, rather it is outside forces that determine a person's class structure: events, opinions, laws, etc. I believe that this theory is heavily idealized in that by creating three stages, there is an implied success when one enters the third stage of conscious awareness. The outcome of *Feed* suggests that Anderson did not fully agree with the idealistic concept, but did agree with its ugly underbelly: there are forces at work to keep "us" in place, and it is necessary to recognize them. This idea is elaborated further by Anderson in an interview he had after the release of his book. Conscious awareness theoretically introduces sympathy and social acknowledgement, especially in cases when structures should become transparent in favor of human compassion. Idealistically, when struck by tragedy a society would unite, leaning on one another for moral support. Unfortunately, Anderson predicts and people reinforce the opposite of this to be true. It is as if a person struck by tragedy that does not directly affect them would rather protect themselves within a smaller world, primarily through the means of technology. As Anderson puts it, "We turn away. We refuse to be confronted."

In *Feed*, the human mind becomes an object that "the man" probes for consumerism information and influences potential purchases in favor of what the market is selling. The mind becomes so watered down by constant bombardments of propaganda compiled with bits of information which the mind accepts as knowledge. By reading this book through a Marxist lens, it can

be inferred that because the mind is continuously battered with outside material conditions, that a person's cognition mirrors those same physical surroundings. Karl Marx said, "With me . . . the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought" (Economic Manuscripts). The level of reflection and acceptance of these material things ultimately decides the level of consciousness the person susceptible to the Feed has achieved. For some people, the brain becomes so dependent on this leachy system, that it loses its ability to understand virtually anything without assistance from the Feed. Titus, who was implanted with the Feed at birth, is a perfect representation of the loss of independence. Violet is an example of a mind that was independent for a long duration of time before the Feed was implanted. Her free thinking influenced Titus. Both characters represent parallel examples of their vulnerable and easily influenced mentality.

The same concept can be applied to the real world. Lately, technology has become virtually implanted into our everyday lives. It has become as if our cell phones are physical extensions of our bodies. Similarly to Titus and his shallow friends, the result has become that as a race, people are acting a lot less like people. It was not until the early twenty-first century that people entered a codependent relationship with technology. In fact, even when laptops were introduced just a few decades ago it was not common for a person to spend hours on end on social media sites or communicating with people for hours whilst in the presence of someone in the flesh. In fact, according to a study ran by the Pew Research Center, 64% of American adults own a smartphone as of October 2014. Now, it is estimated that "as of January 2015: 90% of American adults own a cell phone, 32% of American adults own an e-reader, 42% of American adults own a tablet computer" (Pew Research Center). Researchers found that:

67% of cell owners find themselves checking their phone for messages, alerts, or calls—even when they don't notice their phone ringing or vibrating. 44% of cell owners have slept with their phone next to their bed . . . 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as 'something they can't imagine living without' (PRC).

This sudden attachment to technology could be responsible for the recent impersonal personalities of the millennial generation. This is certainly what Anderson's futuristic novel would suggest when analyzed using the Marxist lens. Even when one acknowledges their attachment and rightfully attributes it to the reasoning behind their social behavior and placement, not everyone is willing to break free of that physical bind. This would allow for them to achieve the mental freedom that would liberate them from their parasitical relationship with technology.

Anderson's implied negative correlation between humans and technology made in *Feed* are mainly represented by Titus and Violet. Both of which, as stated above, are intended to also validate the Marxist theory. Before observing the parallel representation between Titus and Violet, it is first imperative to fully comprehend the Marxist Theory of Consciousness. This theory is of course idealized, so the observations made regarding the theory in relation to *Feed* will be set assuming that Titus and Violet do indeed represent different levels of consciousness. Marx basis of his theory is similar to that listed above: "man himself is a product of Nature, which has developed in and along with its environment; hence it is self-evident that the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis also products of Nature, do not contradict the rest of Nature's interconnections but are in correspondence with them..." Baring this foundation in mind, here are the three stages of consciousness: false consciousness, class consciousness, and revolutionary consciousness. The first stage, false consciousness, is when a person has not come to recognize their surroundings as reasoning for their condition. Because they are blind to the outside world, they are unable to recognize oppression, mistreatment, or overall social conditions. In general, this is the least sophisticated level of consciousness because for a person to remain in a state of false consciousness, they would have to live their lives with blinders on; accepting their state as fact without further investigation. To remove those blinders would bring a person into the second stage: class consciousness. For a person to achieve a ranking in the second stage, they must acknowledge their position in the social order and find solidarity in that position while simultaneously accepting the circumstances that have positioned them within that social order. The final stage

is revolutionary consciousness. For a person to reach this state of consciousness they must want to defy their position in society, basically break their feeling of solidarity and seek better conditions. They must be consciously aware that outside forces direct social change and that by removing the blinders, acknowledging, and rebelling against the causes for their condition, they can make change happen.

This breed of social awareness becomes particularly evident in a person after a tragedy. In *Feed*, Violet achieves revolutionary consciousness at the expense of her life. Seeing Violet's cataclysmic end ultimately persuades Titus away from embracing his potential freedom from the Feed in favor of remaining in his perception of solidarity within the second stage. Similar reactions can be seen in the nonfiction world as well. In an ideal world, Titus would have viewed Violet as a martyr and fought for his mental liberty as well. He would have achieved victory over the Feed in the interest of satisfying the desire for individual freedom. However, the human need to suppress the unconfrontable caused Titus to refrain from pursuing his mental liberation. He shows examples of this need to suppress the unconfrontable throughout the novel, primarily in his rejection of using the very system that could enlighten him to the world around him. He could achieve Violet's social awareness if he would use the Feed for something beyond keeping to-date with the latest trends. Even when Violet is dying, he chooses to cope by drowning himself in some retail therapy, purchasing jeans over and over again. Anderson saw examples of similar suppression styles before finishing *Feed* soon after the attack on September 11th. He saw people, primarily the youths, retreating into the world of technology, burrowing themselves into a parallel universe where tragedy and mourning were subdued. In his interview with James Blasingame, Anderson explains what he saw on the Friday following the attack:

On the Friday after the attacks, I was standing in a used CD store, just an hour or two after the memorial services that had been held . . . And a young man walked in and said, "Dude! I think the truffle is totally undervalued." A while later, I overheard a young woman talking into a cellular phone, saying, "God, but he never pukes when he

chugalugs.” It was as if nothing had ever happened. Of course, it’s completely unfair to judge these people by these fragments overheard . . . Still, these two statements stuck in my head as a graphic illustration of what so many of us do when confronted with disaster (Balsingame Interview).

Scientific research has actually been conducted to support the idea that the human condition actually favors suppression mechanisms rather than confrontational actions that would work in favor of opposing a negative condition. One of these mechanisms was demonstrated by the youth that Anderson witnessed shortly after the fatal attacks on 9/11. It is the “direct suppression, [which] disengages episodic retrieval through the systemic inhibition of hippocampal processing that originates from right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex” that inhibits people from acknowledging pain or tragedy (Oppressing Mechanisms). Their brains literally suppress the memory of it, in turn suppressing the feeling that memory triggers. The opposite mechanism is similar to the coping method that Titus uses when Violet dies. Instead of acknowledging the pain introduced by her loss and then by the recognition of his entrapment, he embraces the substitution mechanism. His mechanism of choice favors “thought substitution-- engages retrieval processes to occupy the limited focus of awareness with a substitute memory. It is mediated by interactions between left caudal and midventrolateral PFC that support the selective retrieval of substitutes in the context of prepotent, unwanted memories” (OM). In lament terms, he rejects reality in favor of something more flattering to the mind.

Prior to Violet’s death, Titus did show promising signs that originally implied that he was capable of enrichment and thereby taking a more direct approach to the final level of consciousness. He takes steps in the direction that could have ultimately led him to revival. However, where Anderson begins the relationship between the two main characters, Titus was in the first stage of the Marxist theory: false consciousness. He is of a higher social status than Violet but did not recognize his money or material possessions as reasons for his elevation in status. His indifferent, or ignorant, response to when Violet asks about the cost it takes to get to the moon represents that he still has his blinders on. During

their dinner conversation, Titus inquired as to why Violet's dad would not be flying to moon. When she asked "Do you know how much it costs to fly someone to the moon?" Titus responded with, "a lot" (Page 103). Titus even asking Violet why her father wasn't going to the moon was a silly question. Violet is clearly not of equal social standings as him. Yet, he does not recognize this. At least he does not hold money responsible for the reason of her lower social status. He does not recognize the differences between social classes. His response is another example of how he still is blind to social conditioning. "A lot" suggests a sort of indifference towards the actual amount of money that it would cost to go to the moon. This indifference suggests that he is not aware of the gravity that his position within his class holds in comparison to the position held in the working class. This indifference is seen later in the book, again in reference to Violet. He said "Violet chatted me to say she couldn't talk, she was, I don't know, learning ancient Swahili or building a replica of Carthage out of iron filings or finding the cure for entropy of some shit, and I was sitting around, staring at a corner of a room" (115). The meaning behind language in this statement speaks louder than the words. The words are just riddled with indifference. "Some shit" and "I don't know" represent his lack of caring towards the reasoning behind her inability to chat and also how little he understands about how fantastic all of those excuses really are. This quote represents how unappreciative he is, really of anything and how he understands little.

On the contrary, Anderson introduces Violet when she is already in the second stage of consciousness. Assuming that her seven years spent free of the Feed is the reason for her ability to think freely and observe the factors of her social surrounding, it can be inferred that she will continue to grow out of her class consciousness and into revolutionary consciousness. Just her asking Titus about the cost of flying someone to the moon implies that she understands the power of money and that it is not something easily gotten. The other example used above from page 115, also acknowledges her general awareness. If she really is doing any of the things that Titus lists off, then she is culturally intoned. Aside from that, she is just generally aware of her surrounding and grasps a deeper understanding of the world than most of the

characters in the book. It was her influence that eventually led him to that: to class consciousness. To being aware of his position within the matrix and why it was important to understand it. Titus becomes infatuated with the idea that he may be dumb. He recognizes that he is just not as smart as Violet, and begins acknowledging points of time where he cannot think of something without assistance from the Feed. Eventually Titus begins to notice that trends are stupid. This is a step in the direction of class consciousness. Violet is certainly behind his new “cultural eye.” When Titus notices the giant artificial lesion on the back of Calista’s neck, he and Quendy discuss how gruesome and repulsive it is. Titus tells Quendy, “Whoa! I got to tell Violet about this . . . she’s always looking for like evidence of the decline of civilization” (184). Just the fact that he recognizes that Violet would accept this as evidence of a civil decline shows that Titus can recognize a decline for himself. In order to do so he must have an original standard for civilization and acknowledge that there are factors which alter it. So, he has removed his blinders and seen that trends, products of propaganda and specifically the Feed, are the material forces that Marx would hold accountable for alterations in the social condition. He has by this point in the novel reached class consciousness.

Because of the time he spent with Violet, Titus recognized forces at work that directly influence how a person acts, feels, and where they are placed in the order of things. Calista represents the sort of person he no longer wants to be; he chooses to recognize the trends as dumb and even holds the Feed accountable for his own stupidity by recognizing how it alters his trains of thought. For example, the car adds that flipped through his head. He recognized that by enhancing his perception of Violet while driving the car, that the corporations were using his own infatuations to alter his mental tendencies. But in her gradual deterioration, Violet discourages him from going beyond this stage. He began to really like her and seeing her body shut down made resisting the Feed all the more repulsive. In the chapter, “Seashore,” his reaction to her telling him that her body was continually failing while looking over the dead ocean sparks this theory. He points out the irony in her siding with the hacker seeing that now she is paying for his actions with her life. When she begins describing

her physical state, Titus becomes overwhelmed and says “Oh shit. Don’t tell me this. Oh shit” (180). His feelings for her prevent him from fully agreeing with the actions she’s taking to resist the Feed. Her death ultimately solidifies his position in consciousness.

This remarkable step forward does not lead him to entering the idealistically final stage of consciousness. It can be assumed that he will never leave his feeling of solidarity behind to seek out a potentially fatal revolutionary consciousness. Her death discouraged him from extending his awareness because in her life, she had already pulled him out of his blissfully ignorant existence. He chooses to suppress his memories and emotions in favor of remaining in his ignorance. It is as if his defense mechanism towards tragedy is his security blanket, just as technology is for millennials. It is apparent that the use of technology as a security blanket is inhibiting the direction of our evolution, primarily in regards to sociability. This of course is the entire point of Anderson’s novel, which is to illustrate the deterioration of social conditions because of a decline in social interactions. As Albert Einstein said, “it has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity” (Forbes). The idea that technology is a security blanket, and in accordance with Einstein’s statement, is actually becoming true beyond just the social standard. Companies are now altering insurance policies and car sales in favor of charging more for at hand conveniences because corporations are acknowledging that virtually everyone has a phone. Because everyone has a phone, companies are begging the question, “why should I spend money to help you when you can phone a friend?” Apparently some car companies are not including spare tires in vehicle purchases anymore. That feature is now considered an upgrade because of the convenience offered in the cell phone (i.e calling AAA). This is a prediction directly made in *Feed*. This book was written over a decade ago and is based in an undetermined distance in the future. The scary part is how near it actually seems when one actually acknowledges the World’s dependence on technology. Nations are actually being classified as well developed based not on how well their people are fed or how well structured their social or economic system is. Rather, they are being classified as well developed based on how well they integrate technology into their national social entity.

Overall, the two characters in Anderson's book represent a less idealistic spin of Marx's theory. Ideally, both characters would successfully resist the existing social order and achieve mental freedom from the bond of the Feed. However, because both characters did not begin on equal footing and were subjected to different social circumstances and conditioning, neither character could ultimately have the same outcome. Realistically, Violet had to die. She had to represent a martyr for the cause. Without a martyr, there is no real or urgent necessity to fix a "problem in the system." Society needs to feel the urgency. On the other hand, Titus had to resist the temptation to revolt. He has to represent the other side: the side that favors sanctuary over freedom. In reality, there must be two perspectives and two separate outcomes.

It is appalling how relevant the correlations Anderson's book makes are to our modern society. The graphic details he makes in Titus and Violet's personalities as parallels not only to the Marxist social consciousness theory, but also to the modern social structure really creates the realistic scheme he was aiming for. The dynamic between the two characters and the society in which they live directly mirrors the future that the World is heading towards if it is to remain on its current course. Unfortunately, a change in that course is more than likely not going to happen. In accordance to recent studies, our dependence on technology is only growing. The late Steve Jobs interpreted our dependence to technology as "the bicycles of the mind" (Forbes). Though technology is convenient, its ability to make our lives easier is more of an illusion rather than a viable solution. As stated above and as well implied in *Feed*, technology deteriorates the human condition by strengthening the weaker mechanism's power over the decision making process. For the young people that Anderson witnessed outside of the CD shop, the cell phone was their suppression mechanism that enabled them to forget evidence of the preceding disaster surrounding them. In a nation that is well endowed to be a world police force, the citizens of the state would ultimately rather forget than to feel and sympathize; would rather engulf themselves in social media than research culture, politics, and current events. All of this research which could ultimately spawn new ideas and solutions. The same is with Titus. His character begs the question, "Why use technology as an invaluable World changing resource,

when it can be used to uphold social commodification?” The later of course being the easier and most popular option. *Feed* is just a small fictional depiction of the future, for now. But one must wonder if at the rate society is growing so much more invested in guarding themselves behind the safety of technology, at what point will the novel become prophetic?

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Policing the “Pagan”: Postcolonial Divisionism in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*

Sam McCracken

In *Purple Hibiscus*, her debut novel of 2003, Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie explores the generational trauma of colonialism through her text’s fictional upper-class family, the Achikes. Told from the perspective of Kambili, the family’s taciturn teenage daughter, the novel chiefly features the cross-cultural tensions between those who invite and embody Western ideologies and a number of Nigerians who seek to maintain and practice their own indigenous African traditions. Adichie equips *Purple Hibiscus* with a domineering, overzealous and ascetic father, Eugene—or Papa—whose suffocating take on Catholicism leads to the indiscriminate alienation of anything and anyone he deems “pagan,” (Adichie 81) including his own father, Papa-Nnukwu. Through Kambili’s first-person account, Adichie’s audience intimately comes to understand the stringent order Eugene imposes upon his family, a system predicated upon knowledge, vision, and surveillance and made permanent through the enduring threat of physical violence. Moreover, in the spaces that he controls, Eugene enacts a guiding English value system that he has internalized and come to enforce as law: one that subordinates Nigerian ethnicity, the complex composite of race, language, religion, and point of origin to which Eugene himself belongs. Ultimately, Papa works in this manner to preserve the colonially fostered binary between African peoples and their colonizers. This essay aims to mediate a discussion of these kinds of social mechanisms as they appear in the text, explicating them alongside their theoretical and historical contexts, as well as point to a number of competing instances in which the novel reverses or subverts them in interesting ways. In particular, I posit that Adichie uses Eugene—and his death by poison at the novel’s conclusion—as a larger metonymy for English colonialism, blighted slowly and literally by his wife and symbolically through his children’s gradual movement away from him.

In the same manner as the English invaders who ruled Nigeria from the turn of the 20th century to around 1960, Eugene's policing of cultures operates to keep separate two entities often dichotomized in discussions of colonialism: the African and the Western. Eugene, with his ethics of violence, attacks like an antibody any explicitly non-Christian entity that makes its way into his domain. One telling example follows Kambili's smuggling of a portrait of her Odinani grandfather into the Achike home. Eugene's children understand their father's animosity toward symbols of the non-Western, but in this instance, believing that Papa "[would] not come in" (208) as they looked upon the painting, they take a chance; fittingly, Papa bursts in soon after, catching sight of the portrait and exclaiming, "What is that? Have you all converted to heathen ways?" (209), before beginning a physical tirade that results in Kambili's hospitalization and the portrait in tatters. Believing that his Igbo father's African influence might corrupt his children's beliefs, Eugene takes matters into his own hands and physically eliminates the threat. In her study of *Purple Hibiscus*, Manisha Basu references "the implacable opposites of colonial thought: tradition and modernity, darkness and light, self and other" (78), which are called into play at varying lengths throughout Adichie's text. Basu argues that these dichotomies are "neither kept stringently binarized such that they may only be dialectically resolved nor allowed to settle into a fatal fusion" (78), which calls attention to the presence of two competing poles in Adichie's novel: one that aims to preserve these binaries and one that seeks to collapse them. Eugene, in this example and others, exists symbolically as the perpetuator of Basu's highlighted binary divisions, maintaining them as absolutes that his children learn to follow. He centralizes his residence, specifically, as the source from which this power most operates, expelling any "worshipper of idols" from his home until they pass "through the gates" (70).

Eugene's method of patrol greatly resembles Michel Foucault's discourse in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) concerning the panopticon, a jailing structure envisioned by the 18th century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham that provides the seamless maintenance of power through the manipulation of both sight and knowledge. In short, the circular penitentiary allows for a single figure at the building's center to view any inmate at a given time,

but through a kind of masking agent, the inmates remain unable to view their observer (Foucault 200). Accordingly, because the inmates have no way of determining whether or not they are under surveillance, this type of system forces them into a position of self-policing behavior, causing them to maintain the expectations of their oppressor in times that they are without his direct threat (Foucault 201). Separating the panopticon's ordering system from the physical building itself, Foucault writes: "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (205). Adichie evokes an iteration of the panopticon in *Purple Hibiscus* in the Achike home, maintained principally through Papa's "daily schedule[s]" (23), which designate in great detail the tasks Eugene has lain out for Kambili and her brother, Jaja. Through these kinds of itineraries, Eugene retains order over his family from a distance; despite his active role as a company owner and community figure, he trains his children to follow the schedules and thus regulates where he expects them to be—while his children stay without the knowledge of when their father might decide to check-in on them—ensuring their obedience in the same manner as a prisoner's in Bentham's panopticon. More still, these schedules seem to lock his children into roles defined by their involvement with the church and obligations to their studies, two elements that will come to be emblematic of colonial rule in later discussions of English systems of colonial indoctrination. And though Foucault terms panopticism "polyvalent in its applications," its manifestation in *Purple Hibiscus* proves to have its limitations, failing to function at full strength when Eugene's subjects leave the family home or exit his watchful gaze.

In terms of British imperialism, panoptic structures existed as potent colonizing forces across Britain's African strongholds, usually in the form of schools and prisons. Interestingly, the Western-born structures functioned to regulate authority and also worked to preserve and pass on values inscribed by whiteness. One historian of colonial punitive systems describes that, as early as the 1930s, British rulers in western African countries were constructing panoptic jails in areas including the "centre[s] of large white settlements in order to counter urban delinquency and petty criminality" (Bernault 66), which would seem to func-

tion as twofold panopties: comprised of one that keeps its housed prisoners subdued through a physical structure itself and another that is imposed by the racial majority of the town that encloses the former. Another researcher of African history argues that, through “measures of discipline and panoptic strategic control,” an “emphasis on education, religion, and morality [was] directed” toward the “indigenous youth of the African colony,” ideally resulting in “their becoming the instruments of extensive benefit to Africa” (Caulker 70). Through Caulker’s commentary, it becomes viable to think of Eugene, someone born under British rule, as the indoctrinated product of colonial infrastructure, someone who has become the “instrument of extensive benefit” in the most imperial sense, as he comes to replicate upon his children the panoptic mechanisms in part responsible for his beliefs. But more than just circulate his ideologies in the same form as his colonizers, Eugene also internalizes and takes on performative characteristics of the English, speaking in an accent that “sound[s] British” (46) when he communicates with representatives of the church, subsequently serving as a didactic model for his children who have been taught to look to him for instruction. Because of his history of violence toward them, as well as his conditioning of them to his ordering system, Eugene’s children and wife self-enforce and perpetuate the schedules and itineraries without Papa’s direct oversight. As Kambili finds herself without a schedule to follow, she expresses a high degree of anxiety and describes herself as split, doubly-conscious: “...the real me was studying in my room in Enugu, my schedule posted above me” (125), making her conformity to Papa’s rule all the stronger by her use of “real.” In similar fashion, one might wonder if Mama, the key recipient of Papa’s violence, has internalized her husband’s “[like for] order,” as Adichie writes: “We had a menu on the kitchen wall that Mama changed twice a month” (23). Both of these examples consciously affix Papa’s order to the space that he controls, his home, resulting in an abrupt difference when his children are able to leave.

When Kambili and Jaja stay in Nsukka with their aunt Ifeoma near the beginning of the novel, it is the first time the two of them have been away from their father “for more than a day” (109). As they leave the Achike home, he supplies them with “schedules for the week” (108), attempting to maintain his rule over them

through a familiar list of expectations, but when the two arrive, Eugene's sister Ifeoma laughs, asking: "Eugene gave you a schedule to follow when you're here?" (124). She then takes the schedules from them and remarks, "If you do not tell Eugene, eh, then how will he know that you did not follow the schedule, *gbo?*" (124); in this exchange, Ifeoma brings to light a form of consent between the oppressed, Kambili and Jaja, and their oppressor, Eugene, implying that the two have the power to subvert Papa through the information they choose to express. This proves to be a point of self-conflict for the novel's narrator, as Kambili time and again worries that "Papa would [find out]" that she undermined his wishes (Adichie 149). But as Kambili's stay with her aunt unfolds, *Purple Hibiscus* recurrently constructs Ifeoma as a character capable of dismantling Eugene's panoptic control, establishing her as the ontological antithesis to her brother. Thinking of the duo as symbolic absolutes, Eugene and Ifeoma share a similar trajectory, raised by their "traditionalist" (81) father until Eugene turned to "follow [some] missionaries" (83); and though Ifeoma is quick to counter and say that she, too, went to a Catholic school, Papa-Nnukwu points to the differences between she and Eugene that would privilege him within a Christian system, replying: "But you are a woman. You do not count" (83).

Immediately following the encounter wherein Ifeoma takes away their portable schedules, Jaja and Kambili are made to take part in new kind of Catholic ritual, one that Eugene would oppose. Ifeoma emerges from her bedroom with a set of rosary beads, but after reciting their final Hail Mary, Amaka, Kambili's cousin, bursts into an Igbo song, soon joined by her brother Obiora and Ifeoma (125). Jaja comments that they "don't sing at home," and Ifeoma's curt response makes clear the spatial politics at play in *Purple Hibiscus*, saying: "We do here" (125). It is in this instance that Ifeoma becomes a counter-stand-in to Eugene's role as the enforcer of a cultural binary between the Western and the African. Instead, her expressed ideologies place her in the camp opposite Eugene's: as a proponent of cultural hybridity. At her essence, Ifeoma straddles the two worlds, working as a university professor of African culture, but through her children's behavior—in the same manner that Kambili and Jaja, at the novel's beginning, uphold and represent their father's ideologies—Ifeoma exists as

an anti-metonymy to Eugene and his convictions. A first glimmer of opposition emerges during the traditional *mmuo* ritual that Jaja does not understand; while Ifeoma remarks that “Obiora did the [*ima mmuo*] ... in his father’s hometown” and was thus initiated into Igbo male culture, Kambili references Papa’s take on the matter, contending that “Christians who let their sons do it were confused, that they would end up in hellfire” (87). More blatantly, Amaka, later in the story, fights actively against taking an Anglicized name at the time of her baptism, retorting: “[the missionaries] didn’t think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn’t we be moving ahead?” (272). And though Amaka’s rebellion here would seem to oppose Christianity in such a way that would further a schism between the Western and the African, Ifeoma escalates the matter further, arguing, “Just do it and get confirmed, nobody says you have to use the name,” and effectively deconstructs the binary by pointing to the ceremony’s lack of real significance, implying that any dissonance between her Catholic teachings and her identity as an Igbo woman would have no real bearing on Amaka. In the spaces that Ifeoma inhabits, her belief in cultural hybridity works to tear down notions of cultural dichotomy in as much as Papa does the opposite in his domain; while they stay at Ifeoma’s home, Kambili and Jaja are reminded that “it is [her] house, so they will follow [her] rules” (124). But by the end of their stay, Kambili appears to identify more with Nsukka than her home, thinking: “Nsukka could free something in your belly that would rise up your throat and come out as a freedom song. As laughter” (299).

In this regard, as spatial divisions emerge in *Purple Hibiscus*, Papa’s role as a synecdoche for British rule proves more impactful. As his children move to the outskirts of his control, they encounter and come to resonate with a figure who stands opposite of the one responsible for their beliefs held early in life, leading to the moment of Eugene’s death. This narrative move nicely mimics the decay of British rule in Nigeria, fueled in part by the coalition of disparate Nigerians of mixed backgrounds and belief systems that were located outside of major English hubs (Luckham 206-207). Robin Luckham, in his catalogue of the factors contributing to Nigerian colonial revolt, argues that Nigerian independence fol-

lowed the “mobilizing [of] the [Nigerian] periphery against the colonial power” (207). At least in terms of spatial construction, then, *Purple Hibiscus* conjures its country of origin’s history and fight for sovereignty. Considering Ifeoma and Eugene as competing symbolic figures, Adichie establishes one character, Eugene, representative of Eurocentric beliefs, at the center of a network that seeks to enculturate its subjects into thinking of Western and African ideologies as separate, subordinating the latter beneath the former. On the fringe of the first figure’s influence lies another character, Ifeoma, who, in her own right, dismantles the ideals of the first and replaces them with an alternate model, one that advocates for the blending of cultures and that eventually removes Eugene’s subjects from his power. It is in this way and others that Adichie posits Eugene as a clear symbolic referent for colonial rule in Nigeria, pitting him against burgeoning nationalist interests at the time of Nigerian independence; in establishing two of her characters as larger metonymies relating to colonial rule, Adichie, whose novel appeared some forty years post-independence, accentuates the influence English colonialism continue to hold on since-liberated Nigeria. Moreover, in the way that her characters communicate their ideals and pass them down generationally, Adichie demonstrates the persistence of ideological legacies that—like trauma—continue to shape Nigerian’s cultural consciousness.

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What Kind of Bird Are You?: Redefining Bildungsroman in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*

Shelby Hearn

The tumultuous adventures of Suzy Bishop and Sam Shakusky in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* begin with a question: "What kind of bird are you?" Lurking in a dressing room, Sam points out Suzy among several other girls, all of whom are decked out in costumed plumage in preparation for *Noye's Fludde* (Anderson 2012). As Sam puzzles over Suzy's species of bird, Anderson's viewers too are left to question what species of story Anderson has crafted. An experiment in a well-known genre, Anderson uses *Moonrise Kingdom* to redefine the rules surrounding a *bildungsroman*. Typically a text falling under the *bildungsroman* genre follows an archetypal path from childhood to maturation. The world of literature is rife with these coming of age tales that typically seek to reconcile tension between a character's desire for individualism and their social realities. Marianne Gottfried defines *bildungsroman* as a genre that "maintains a peculiar balance between the social and the personal" (Gottfried 122). Where many traditional coming-of-age tales tip the balance in favor of society at the end, Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* creates a new "bird" of a *bildungsroman* by readjusting the balance towards the personal.

A key point in any *bildungsroman* text is the protagonist's flight from home. Home is commonly found in the country, a small town, or a sixteen-mile wide New England island such as New Penzance. In the cases of Suzy Bishop and Sam Shakusky, home is even smaller than sixteen miles. Suzy's home is confined to a corner of the island called Summer's End where she spends much of her time indoors with binoculars affixed to her eyes as she peers out the windows. Sam, as an orphan rejected by his foster family, has only the Khaki Scout outpost Camp Ivanhoe to call home. In Northrop Frye's *The Educated Imagination* he discusses the archetypal journey and the universal experience of a "world

we don't like and want to get away from" (*The Educated Imagination* 55). Summer's End and Camp Ivanhoe are the worlds from which Sam and Suzy wish to escape. As growing adolescents, the pair's developing identities and personal values increasingly differ from what their societies desire of them. A *bildungsroman* protagonist's desire to flee home portends a personal conflict with society; the protagonist's values and desires clash with their world so they must go in search of a new one.

In keeping with a traditional *bildungsroman*, Anderson's adolescent protagonists depart from worlds with which they are at odds, but his fundamental divergence is in developing two protagonists rather than one. Suzy and Sam originally exist in separate worlds, but flee together into an entirely new space. Sam's flight is the more traditional of the two as an orphaned male protagonist. Clashing with whatever society he inhabits, Sam is practically forced into his escape or else he must face the judgment of Social Services. At the Billingsley Foster Family for Boys, Sam struggles to earn the acceptance of his foster parents and brothers. Sam recalls in one letter to Suzy that he accidentally set fire to a doghouse while sleepwalking; "I have no memory of this," he claims, "but my foster parents think I am lying" (Anderson 2012). Sam explains that while he tries to make friends, he understands that people do not seem to like his personality. Those who seem to dislike Sam's personality persist beyond the Billingsley's home. It is quickly apparent that Sam's fellow Khaki Scouts do not feel any more affection for him than his foster family did. As the scouts prepare for their mission to find Sam, they gossip about his orphaned status and theorize that his parents' death is "probably why he's crazy" (Anderson). The scouts then arm themselves with all manners of weaponry from spiked clubs to hatchets, ready for any reason to use them against Sam Shakusky. These instances of social exclusion push Sam to the edge of discontent and drive his desire to leave. After Scout Master Ward discovers Sam's absence, the film cuts to the twelve year old navigating a river in a stolen mini canoe. The image of Sam afloat in his canoe is reminiscent of the first phase of the archetypal journey: the hero's birth. Frye describes the hero as "often placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 198). While Anderson does not

offer viewers the literal birth of his protagonists, he affords Sam a rebirth via his flight from Camp Ivanhoe.

On the opposite shore of New Penzance, Suzy Bishop prepares to leave home. Suzy, like Sam, feels like an outcast in her community. In her letters to Sam, she describes several instances in which she clashes with her family and her peers. In one letter she explains that she is “in trouble again” for throwing a rock through the window at her mother. In another, Suzy writes: “Dear Sam, now I am getting suspended because I got in a fight with Molly. She says I go berserk. Our principal is against me” (Anderson). The shots accompanying Suzy’s letters often depict her violent outbursts or their repercussions, lending some truth to Molly’s accusation. Suzy’s relationship with her world is one modern viewers are more familiar with. Suzy epitomizes the pre-teen female who is experimenting with make up, fights with her brothers and parents, and gets in trouble at school. Suzy’s escape diverts from the traditional *bildungsroman* text when her note for her brother implies that her escape is not permanent. One of the three Bishop brothers, Lionel, outs Suzy’s runaway plan because she has taken his record player. In the note she leaves for Lionel, Suzy explains that she is borrowing it specifically for ten days and that she will provide him with new batteries upon her return (Anderson). The typical *bildungsroman* hero expresses intentions of leaving their world permanently, only to have circumstance bring them back to the society they thought they hated. Suzy is aware that she will return after her ten-day journey, matured and ready to rejoin her family.

As Suzy and Sam depart from Summer’s End, the expected course of their coming-of-age is for their metaphorical summer of childhood to end. In leaving Summer’s End behind, Sam and Suzy are walking away from their childhoods in pursuit of adulthood in their new world. With Sam leading their hike, the protagonists enter the second phase of their journey. Frye writes that this phase of crossing the threshold from the old world into the new “presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, [and] the moon” (*Anatomy*, 199-200). The color schemes present in this phase are paramount as well. The pastoral scenes are typically “green and gold, traditionally the colors of

vanishing youth” (Frye, *Anatomy*, 200). In shots leading up to Sam and Suzy’s journey into the wilderness, yellow hues already dominate the frame. The Billingsley house is saturated in yellow as Mr. Billingsley informs Scout Master Ward and Captain Sharp that Sam is not welcome back to their foster home. The Khaki Scout camp and uniforms involve heavy yellow hues as well, from their tents to the bandanas neatly tied around their necks. The yellow-green of New Penzance’s wilderness is the final symbol of Sam and Suzy’s departure from childhood.

The act of characters leaving behind their adolescence allows for more adult obstacles to stand in their way. In stepping into the woods, Sam and Suzy begin what Frye describes as “the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures” (*Anatomy* 190). From a viewer’s perspective, the children’s journey is not especially perilous. In fact, their trek seems to come quite easy. Sam and Suzy hardly break a sweat as they navigate creeks and scale cliff sides with relative ease. While in more traditional texts, the dangerous obstacles the hero faces serve as representations of societal expectations, Anderson veers from tradition and decides to pit Sam and Suzy against their societal conflicts head on.

The first of these conflicts arises in the woods. Armed and officially deputized by Captain Sharp, Troop 55 locates and surrounds Sam and Suzy. They are under strict orders from the adults who rule society to bring the fugitive couple back. Once more, the scouts echo their sentiment that Sam is crazy, but that he must be brought into custody. The scouts’ battle preparations versus Sam’s nonviolent nature reestablishes the disconnect between him and his social order. It is because Sam is different that the Khaki Scouts view him as a threat worthy of violent force, not because he has any proven history of violence himself. In fact, when the scouts find Sam and Suzy, the more fearsome contender in their battle is Suzy armed with lefty scissors. This, too, displays how Suzy’s character clashes with how society expects her to be. As a female, Suzy is assumed to be a damsel figure, a victim of a beige lunatic’s abduction. Wielding an air rifle and lefty scissors, respectively, Sam and Suzy fight back against the scouts and fend off society. In some tales this first conflict might be the last between protagonist and society, but as the scouts return to the adults injured, they merely redouble their efforts to find and control the couple.

Having flouted society, Sam and Suzy continue through the pastoral phase of their journey and arrive at Mile 3.25 Tidal Inlet, later named Moonrise Kingdom. While Anderson's film does not provide viewers with a moonrise shot, the simple name of Sam and Suzy's chosen world harkens back to Frye's depiction of the pastoral phase. That the runaways have reached their personal kingdom with little more than one major obstacle implies that they have not yet reached the middle of their journey, let alone the end. For the time, however, Moonrise Kingdom offers Sam and Suzy the freedom they desire. As they arrive, Sam declares, "This is our land!" To which Suzy responds, "Yes it is" (Anderson). In taking ownership of Moonrise Kingdom, Sam and Suzy are able to take ownership of themselves as well, a definitive part of transitioning into adulthood. Anderson once more uses water as a transition for his characters. On the count of three, Sam and Suzy jump into the ocean. The scene then transitions back to shore, where the couple has shed their clothing and effectively their former society's rules and restrictions so they can be themselves free of judgment or consequence. Because the rules of society have changed, Sam and Suzy's romantic encounter does not carry the weight of adulthood for them that it does for the audience. In fact, far more significance lies in the act of piercing Suzy's ears. Using fishhooks and beetles, Sam crafts a pair of earrings as a gift for Suzy, but she has not yet had her ears pierced. The shot of Sam piercing Suzy's ears is more symbolic of a loss of virginity than their experiments in French kissing. Sam literally penetrates Suzy's flesh, eliciting gasps and drawing blood. After the first is finished, Suzy turns to Sam and confidently tells him to "do the other one" (Anderson). This pivotal scene, emblematic of a traditional *bildungsroman* loss of virginity, is what officially ends Sam and Suzy's childhood and their pastoral phase in their journey.

In many stories, the second conflict would be the final one as the protagonists are brought back into the folds of society and learn to reconcile their individualistic needs with social reality. However, Sam and Suzy have scarcely begun their voyage of personal growth when they awaken to find themselves face-to-face with the societies they fled. Instead of continuing their archetypal journey through their new world, enduring trials and self-reflection so that they might return to society without continued

conflict, Sam and Suzy are forced back to their ordinary world prematurely. Deemed a “traitor to [her] family” Suzy is brought home where her family attempts to erase all traces of what she has accomplished (Anderson). In venturing into the wilderness with a boy, Suzy has gone against what some might consider a proper coming-of-age process for a young girl. *Bildungsroman* texts that feature female protagonists typically depict them as seeking out an education with marriage as the ultimate goal to bring them back into society. As she sits in a bathtub, her mother attempts to cleanse Suzy of any traces of her journey. However, just as the scene prepares to cut away, Suzy’s mother laments the troublesome beetle earrings. These remnants of Suzy’s ascent into her own brand of womanhood are literally hooked into her flesh, unable to be removed without doing serious damage. Suzy’s beetle earrings are tangible evidence that she cannot be forced into society’s mold. To compel her to do so would permanently damage who Suzy is as a person, just as removing the earrings would do her physical harm.

Across the island, Sam’s fate hangs in the balance. He cannot return to the folds of either social order, foster home or camp, because he has strayed too far from their individual values. Instead the looming Social Services threatens to take him away for a reintegration process, in Sam’s case this being electric shock therapy. A key shift in the coming-of-age structure is found in Sam’s circumstances. Instead of blithely allowing Sam to be taken away, pillars of these social orders choose to look at him in a different light. Instead of viewing Sam as a troubled orphan, bound for tomfoolery and social disruption, Scout Master Ward and Captain Sharp see Sam not only as one of their own, but as a child needing their help. In a classic archetypal journey, characters like Sharp and Ward are sinister villains. They would likely fill the role of “a false father...who seeks the child’s death” (Frye, *Anatomy* 199). Instead, Captain Sharp specifically takes on a paternal role and it is under his care that Sam’s character sees an essential moment of growth not found in the wilderness. Additionally, the scouts whom once scorned and vilified Sam, experience a turn in their own attitudes. They too discover that Sam is not against them or worthy of scorn. He is and should be counted among their social order as Khaki Scouts, and because of this he deserves their help.

The turning opinion of Sam's social circle begins a critical difference in Wes Anderson's coming-of-age tale. Instead of Sam bending his individualistic desires to societal expectation, society bends to accommodate Sam's reality. Where the scouts once sought Sam out in conflict, they now seek him out in a genuine sense of brotherhood. With their help, Sam and Suzy return to their initial flight and their critical journey toward maturation.

Despite society's growing acceptance of Sam, his and Suzy's journey must go on. As the story's protagonists and lovers, Sam and Suzy come as a package deal. One cannot fully return to society without the other. With the help of the rogue Khaki Scouts, the children make another daring escape right under the adults' noses. As the wind picks up in anticipation of the coming storm, Anderson redirects the story back to Suzy's home where winds are also shifting. Mr. and Mrs. Bishop lay in bed, first discussing work but suddenly transition into their relationship with each other and their children. As these adults, the viewer's only representatives of the society Suzy is running from, dwell in self-pity and criticism, Anderson asks his viewers to recognize that they are not the standard any child should be held to. The Bishops realize this themselves as Mrs. Bishop declares, "We're all they've got, Walt." Mr. Bishop responds, "That's not enough" (Anderson). In contrast to the dysfunctional Bishop family, Anderson brings viewers back to Suzy, Sam, and the Scouts. As the boys gather around Suzy to listen to one of her stories, Anderson presents viewers with an alternative to the society the Bishops represent. In comparing these two scenes, viewers are able to see what Suzy and Sam can do to improve society if allowed to exist outside predetermined molds.

With the historic Black Beacon storm at their heels, the children arrive on the shore of St. Jack Wood Island, at the Khaki Scout headquarters Fort Lebanon. It is here that Sam and Suzy seek their final escape. At Fort Lebanon they meet up with Cousin Ben, the only adult in the film to support Sam and Suzy's quest. Once more, the children have traveled beyond the grasps of their normal society and so rules and restrictions have changed. When Sam declares his want to make Suzy his wife no one bats an eye because in this special world they achieved adulthood in their founding of Moonrise Kingdom. Marriage is

the logical next step despite their age. Sam and Suzy's marriage "won't hold up in the state, the county or [...] any courtroom in the world" when considered by ordinary society's standards. However, Sam and Suzy's vows carry an important weight within themselves, as Cousin Ben explains (Anderson). The significance of a marriage that matters only to the two parties involved returns to the natural tension of a traditional *bildungsroman* text: conflict between individualism and social reality. Anderson offers genuine validity to Sam and Suzy's marriage, thereby putting emphasis on individual desire before social realities.

Following their marriage, Sam and Suzy are able to move into the second stage of Northrop Frye's description of a successful quest: the crucial struggle. Compared to the conflicts during the minor adventures of the first stage, this crucial struggle typically involves "some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die" (*Anatomy* 190). Wes Anderson's version of the crucial struggle comes in two forms, though both involve a lightning strike. As has been a commonality in Anderson's film, Sam takes on the first and more closely traditional conflict. On the cusp of escape, it is noticed that Suzy left her binoculars behind. Because the binoculars are what the children believe to be Suzy's magic power, it is vital that Sam retrieve them. In his return to the chapel, Sam is confronted by Redford, the Scout who suffered a wound from Suzy's lefty scissors. Redford is also the last remaining character who is genuinely opposed to Sam as a person. In Frye's model of the archetypal story, the protagonist has an antagonist who is his moral opposite (*Anatomy* 193). Redford, however, does not stand for any specific moral cause against Sam. As the two boys stand off against each other, Sam poses the question: "Why do you consider me your enemy?" Redford's first response returns to Suzy and her scissors, but Sam corrects him. Why did Redford not like Sam from the very beginning? The scout shrugs as he leans on one crutch, "Why should I? Nobody else does" (Anderson). With this simple retort, Anderson sets Redford up as the example of a character that conforms to society's norms. With Sam presented as a character that will not conform, Redford is created to be his antithesis. Despite being natural literary enemies, Sam and Redford's fight lasts mere seconds before Sam breaks away with the other's shouts of "the

fugitive is here!” (Anderson). The remainder of Fort Lebanon gathers in mass to hunt down Sam as the last remaining shreds of the society he has escaped. In a last ditch effort to find freedom, Sam sprints directly onto the lightening field. As he turns to face the horde of beige, yellow and green, lightning strikes. Thrown off his feet with his shoes on fire, Sam sits up and proclaims, “I’m okay” (Anderson). Once more, Anderson depicts a situation in which his protagonists exist outside the typical rules of society, even when it comes to death. While the mob of Fort Lebanon scouts stands shocked at what they have witnessed, Sam and Suzy make a break for it towards St. Jack Wood Church, thus bringing their story full circle from the moment the couple first met.

While Sam and Suzy hide in plain sight, their societal representatives clash between the church pews. With the storm swoops in Social Services, present to not only forcefully direct Sam to socially appropriate behavior, but to act as an outside judge of the other societal representatives present. Specifically at odds with Social Services is Captain Sharp, who has decided to advocate for Sam. While society appears to fall apart beneath them, Sam and Suzy look on until discovered and they make one final effort at escape. With the “most destructive meteorological event” raging around them, Sam and Suzy climb the church’s steeple with nowhere to go but down. This critical spot is Anderson’s version of “the point of epiphany.” Northrop Frye describes this point as commonly being “the mountain-top, the island, the tower, and lighthouse, and the ladder or staircase” (*Anatomy* 202). As Sam and Suzy contemplate jumping into the floodwaters and the adults argue with Social Services, the steeple serves as the point of epiphany where the children’s special world comes into alignment with their ordinary society. As Sam agrees to let Captain Sharp become his foster father, lightning strikes yet again, serving to officially combine the ordinary and the special worlds while Sharp and the kids hang precariously from the church (Anderson).

As the Black Beacon storm fades Anderson concludes his coming-of-age tale by demonstrating that all was not back to normal, as would be seen in a traditional *bildungsroman*. Sam and Suzy are not brought home and expected to be any different than who they are, they do not return mature enough to see that society was right all along, but rather all parties have grown

to see where they could learn from each other. Wes Anderson's focus on Sam and Suzy's individualism is what separates his film from a traditional *bildungsroman* text, but not in such a way that it is removed from the genre, but rather Anderson redefines the coming-of-age story to highlight individualistic merits.

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Exchange of Play in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*

Leah Mirabella

“**W**hat we need is not great works but playful ones . . . A story is a game someone has played so you can play it too” (56-57), Ronald Sukenick claims in his book, *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories*, and one thing to be said about Wes Anderson’s 2011 film *Moonrise Kingdom*, is that it captures the entire essence of the word “playful.” In his film, Anderson creates an extremely elaborate, yet entirely fictional world on the 16-mile island of New Penzance. Within Anderson’s whimsical world, twelve-year-olds Sam and Suzy plot to run away together and establish their own little kingdom on the shore of 3.25-mile tidal inlet of the Chickchaw migration trail. Delving even further, in Sam and Suzy’s kingdom sits a yellow suitcase full of stolen library books—each pertaining to alternate worlds, universes, or kingdoms of their own. Anderson’s elaborate layering of realms becomes metafictional; combined with the inclusion of the fantasy books within the film’s make-believe world and an interactive narrator, his auteur consistently calls attention to the fact that the film is a work of fiction. Anderson creates a film that examines the extent in which “we each ‘play’ our own realities,” and ultimately encourages the audience to not only participate in this exchange of play, but also to engage in creation of their own (Waugh 35).

According to Patricia Waugh, “Metafiction is a term given to a fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship of fiction to reality” (2). While *Moonrise Kingdom* may not technically be in writing, Anderson shapes his film so that it reads as a work of literature. In an interview, Anderson comments, “Over the course of [packing Suzy’s suitcase] I started thinking that the movie ought to feel like it could be in that suitcase and could be one of these young adult fantasy books.” Anderson crafts his film in such a way that the viewers are never “deluded into believing” that real-life is taking place; he

“[constructs] an alternative reality by manipulating the relation between a set of signs as ‘message’ and the context or frame of that message” (Waugh 35). His fanciful world constantly seems to “[carry] the more or less explicit message: ‘this is make-believe’ or ‘this is play’” (Waugh 35). Anderson’s film highlights the value of engaging in pretend play; he acknowledges that “play is facilitated by rules and roles, and [that] metafiction operates by exploring fictional rules to discover the role of fictions in life” (Waugh 35).

Wes Anderson possesses a very unique auteur, which plays an essential role in his metafictional process. His doll-house-style sets and perfection of the dolly shot are only a small part of the overall grandeur of style that has so iconically defined him over the expanse of his film career; *Moonrise Kingdom* proves to be a prime example of his unique design. As Guillaume Campeau-Dupras, a professor of cinema at Cégep Marie-Victorin, notes in his initial draft of “Notes on style and narration in *Moonrise Kingdom*,” Wes Anderson devotes much of his film to the “planimetric shot,” which “means that the camera stays straight in front of its subjects with the walls right behind them.” David Bordwell, a film theorist, compares the imagery of this shot to “characters strung across the frame like clothes on a line.” This style of shot stands out so distantly to Anderson because most filmmakers generally try to avoid it; the planimetric shot endangers the “invisibility of the camera” and tends to come across as “flat or static” (Campeau-Dupras). Anderson uses planimetric shots to reveal his characters awareness of the camera, and he also makes the viewers aware of the manipulation of the *mise-en-scène*. Shot after shot, the characters and objects within the frame are carefully and meticulously posed as if they were paper dolls. For instance, the khaki scouts unnaturally sit on a single side of a long table for their breakfast. Positioned in a line, they all face the camera. Through this Anderson creates a “linear universe” (Campeau-Dupras). Anderson continuously composes shots that are “static and frontal, where characters seem line up one against the others in a very squared manner, or where the compositions tends to favor horizontal or vertical lines instead of diagonals” (Campeau-Dupras). He uses this unconventional film imagery to place an emphasis on his overall control of the character’s placement—and their role—in the film. When Sam and Suzy are discovered on the beach, the

Bishop family, Scout Master Ward, and Captain sharp all line up in a layered and artful fashion that results in a very two-dimensional feel. The shots have readability—he lays out little bits of information for the viewer to take in piece by piece. He also consistently utilizes a technique called the “god’s eye close-up,” which is an angle “looking directly down on something from what seems to be god’s point of view... [that] usually shows what the characters in the film are looking at or touching” and mimics God looking down on his creation (Martin 63). This technique is used to present the contents of Suzy’s suitcase, the letters that were exchanged between the 12-year-olds, Sam’s watercolors, and the maps used throughout the film. This allows the audience to see the items presented in the god’s eye close-up as tangible creations within Anderson’s contrived world.

To further emphasize the readability and linear perspective, Anderson makes use of “lateral traveling,” where the camera moves horizontally on a dolly instead of moving towards the subject. Often Anderson’s dolly shots follow the path of left to right, which literally mimics the process of reading a book—instead of words on a page, Anderson forces viewers to read the signs in his film. Even when the camera swivels around the surroundings appear to be linear and lack depth. The characters, setting, and props almost appear to be like the illustrations in children’s books. An overwhelming tone of control is present within these scenes; Anderson seems to be playing with characters as if they were actually dolls in his imaginary island of New Penzance—and he is inviting the audience to play with him.

Anderson pours an immense amount of detail into every frame of his film. From the badges on Sam’s uniform, to the face of the Khaki Scout’s Head Quarters on the stamps of the stationary, he hides little tidbits and secrets throughout the film so elaborately that viewers can discover something new almost every time the movie is re-watched. Because Anderson packs his world with so much detail, he often manipulates and directs the viewers’ attention to emphasize his ability to not only play with the characters within his film, but also with the audience. For instance, when Sam and Suzy meet in the meadow, they stand almost completely still while a windmill spins perfectly in the middle off in the distance behind them. The windmill has been there the entire time, but

it is not the primary focus or even initially noticeable. Another instance of this happens when Sam goes in the corridors of the church in search of Suzy. While the audience focuses on the left of the frame where children sit perfectly positioned on the staircase playing recorders off-key, Sam walks by, ignoring them, and instead turns on the water fountain situated on the right of the frame without actually drinking from it. The water fountain is practically invisible before Sam activates it; this “seems to be used only for play, to acknowledge the right side of the frame that was once empty at this moment, to make something happen on this side where nothing had happened yet” (Campeau-Dupras). Another instance is when Cousin Ben insists that Sam and Suzy discuss the weighty decision of marriage; the two youngsters step aside and begin to talk. They proceed to chat in the bottom left corner of the frame, and on the right side of the frame a Khaki Scout jumps over a balcony onto a trampoline. The noises of flipping and bouncing beside them drown out the conversation. Anderson “activates” both sides of the frames in a playful and unconventional way. The audience’s eyes can never be sure of where exactly to look; Anderson makes the viewer “[discover] at the end of a shot what [he or she] should have seen first” (Campeau-Dupras). Through Anderson’s application of this technique, the audience can perceive that “somebody is playing with [them]... and that it seems like a pure perceptual game, where [they] are looking at those shots unfolding themselves” (Campeau-Dupras). While there is an aspect of discovery by the spectators of the film, a more important aspect is that those things were intentionally put there to be discovered, to be perceived, and ultimately to be played with.

In order to further the metafictional aspects of the film, Anderson plays with the viewer’s suspension of disbelief. This concept is when the audience “know[s] that what [they are watching] is not ‘real’, but [they] suppress the knowledge in order to increase enjoyment” (Waugh 33). Anderson continuously goes against this conventional relationship by employing it against itself, and “instead of reinforcing [the viewer’s] sense of a continuous reality, [he] splits it open, to expose the levels of illusion”; he forces the audience to “recall that [their] ‘real’ world can never be the ‘real’ world of the [film]” (Waugh 33). Matt Herzog discusses this technique in his article “Does This Seem Fake?": Wes An-

derson's Kingdom Of Visual Absurdity," by pointing out specific scenes where Anderson reminds the audience that what they are watching is entirely outside the realm of reality. Whether it is a "a young boy running from his scout troop [to] be suddenly struck by cartoonish lightning to no serious injury," or Scout master Ward heroically jumping across the rushing waters from a burning tent with an injured man in his arms, these "comically over-the-top manner[s] blatantly call attention to [the film's] artificiality" (Herzog 66). Even the top-heavy and absurdly tall tree house barely holding onto the peak of skinny pine tree during the first Khaki Scout scene immediately calls viewers to acknowledge the unrealistic qualities of Anderson's make-believe world. The grand-finale of the film with Captain Sharp, Sam, and Suzy dangling off of the church steeple in the midst of a lightning storm and still surviving continues to emphasize this. As soon as the audience begins to suspend their disbelief, Anderson throws something with just the right amount of whimsy and absurdity to draw them back into his realm of fiction. Instead of attempting to blur the lines between fiction and reality, Anderson plays with and pushes the boundaries of the viewers' perceptions.

Anderson constantly draws attention to "theory of fiction through the practice of [crafting and creating] fiction" with film-making; the narrative structure of *Moonrise Kingdom* along with the absence of a true "fourth wall" highlights this. Throughout the film, there are several instances of characters breaking the fourth wall, which allows the audience to engage in the story. Within the opening sequence of the film, as Suzy walks outside to check the mail, she proceeds to sit at the bus stop, read a letter from Sam Shukusky, and briefly peer into the camera. Her secretive glare at the audience beckons viewers to acknowledge the exchange of play beginning to take place within the film. Just as Suzy says the deer "knows someone's watching him" (*Moonrise Kingdom*) as she peers through her binoculars, the characters in the film seem to know they are being watched which practically eliminates a separation between the audience and the action. The narrator, who also doubles as the local librarian, serves as another intriguing example of Anderson playing with the concept of the fourth-wall. After the opening sequence at the Bishop house, a map appears on the screen while the narrator begins to set the scene—he's

looking directly into the camera just as Suzy did seconds before. He then describes the island as the scenery changes behind him, and he ends his first narrative point by saying, “The year is 1965. We are on the far edge of Black Beacon Sound, famous for the ferocious and well-documented storm which will strike from the east on the fifth of September—in three day’s time” (*Moonrise Kingdom*). His omniscience of an event that has yet to take place immediately sets him apart as the narrator; his presence within the film initially calls attention to *Moonrise Kingdom* as a piece of literature. However, Anderson complicates this by allowing him to interact with the characters and ultimately play a part in the plot progression instead of merely narrating it. At the midpoint of the movie, as tensions are building, and the adults are becoming aggressive against one another, a voice is heard off-screen yelling, “Excuse me!” (*Moonrise Kingdom*). Everyone stops the action to turn their attention to the gnome-like narrator who proceeds to say, “As some of you know, I taught Sam for the cartography Accomplishment Patch... What I’m getting at is this: I think I know where they’re going,” (*Moonrise Kingdom*) and he pulls out a map showing the 3.25-mile tidal inlet. His abrupt interjection to the story serves to remind the audience that Anderson constructs the narrator just as he does the other characters—there is no part of this film that was not intentionally crafted by its creator.

Additionally, one of the most elaborate creations Anderson instills in film dwells in Suzy’s chunky yellow suitcase that she carries along with her when she runs away from home. While doing inventory, Sam discovers that she packed it full of stolen library books. These novels serve as the most apparent sign of metafictionality within *Moonrise Kingdom*. Each one of these books is fictional in multiple ways. First, Anderson created them for Suzy’s suitcase; the books do not exist outside the realm of the film. In an interview Anderson said, “I sort of wrote a little paragraph of text from each book because she reads them, and then we had different artists draw the covers, and we sort of invented this little series of books.” Second, the books themselves are works of fiction; Suzy tells Sam, “These are my books. I like stories with magic powers in them. Either in kingdoms on earth or on foreign planets” (*Moonrise Kingdom*). Scattered throughout the film, Suzy reads from these different books to both Sam and

the Khaki Scouts. Each of them is entirely separate, but all are dealing with the idea of leaving one's current situation, disappearing, living on a different planet, or establishing a new kingdom. Anderson crafts these so that Sam and Suzy's narrative of running away from their less than desirable situations to create their own "Moonrise Kingdom" fits in perfectly alongside the other narratives as if were a young adult novel itself. This once again draws attention to the story of these two adolescents as one of fiction. In an interesting twist, within Anderson's overall story, the characters aim to create story of their own. While creating their own story, they literally carry with them these other stories—works of fiction that ultimately inspire them to create their own "kingdom."

This layering of worlds, or layering of fictions, shows the depth of how Anderson metafictionally manipulates his own alternate reality—he makes his process known. He uses "play as a means of discovering new communicative possibilities," which allows viewers to "discover how they can manipulate behavior and contexts" (Waugh 36) in their own realities just as Anderson has done in his alternate reality. The storybook presentation of his imaginary, quirky world cues a semiotic reading of even the tiniest of details. Overall, these signs and signals combine to create extensive levels of fiction, which ultimately comments on the process and practice of creating fiction itself. According to Waugh, "All play and fiction require levels which explain the transition from one context to another and set up a hierarchy of contexts and meanings. In metafiction this level is foregrounded to a considerable extent because the main concern of metafiction is precisely the implications of the shift from the context of 'reality' to that of 'fiction' and the complicated interpenetration of the two" (36). Anderson's complex complications within his own fictions serve to question the complex complications of reality, and bring attentions to the fictions in the viewers' own realities.

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