

10
WATERMARK

Watermark accepts submissions annually between October and February. We are dedicated to publishing original critical and theoretical essays concerned with literature of all genres and periods, as well as works representing current issues in the fields of rhetoric and composition. Reviews of current works of literary criticism or theory are also welcome.

All submissions must be accompanied by a cover letter that includes the author's name, phone number, email address, and the title of the essay or book review. All essay submissions should be approximately 12-15 pages and must be typed in MLA format with a standard 12 pt. font. Book reviews ought to be 750-1,000 words in length. As this journal is intended to provide a forum for emerging voices, only student work will be considered for publication. Submissions will not be returned. Please direct all questions to editor@watermarkjournal.com and address all submissions to:

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WATERMARK 10

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A Note from *Watermark's* Editor

I feel fortunate to have the honor of writing the opening note for *Watermark* in its decennary volume. By some strange and arbitrary alignment of place and timing, I find myself in a position to be marking a momentous occasion in the life of this journal. What is not a matter of chance, however, is the fact that *Watermark* has achieved the level of success that it has.

For ten years now, dozens of graduate students in the English department at CSULB have committed their time and energies to the publication of this journal. To show our appreciation of all those who came before us, we decided to dedicate our cover to all the outstanding students who have been involved in the creation of *Watermark* over the years. For this reason, the names of every *Watermark* staff member and faculty advisor from the last ten years have been included on the cover of this volume. This is our way of saying thank you for building *Watermark* into the success that it has become.

We not only want to reflect on where we've come from, but we'd also like to take the opportunity on our 10th anniversary to look forward. We were amazed by the number, range, and especially the quality of the submissions we received this year. Our inbox was flooded with excellent essays from students here at CSULB and around the globe. The essays we've selected for this issue explore new territories in literary study, and we're proud to continue the tradition of publishing important new approaches in the field of English studies. From Chaucer to Cherrie Moraga, the essays within challenge dominant narratives of race, gender, and sexuality and suggest approaches to the study of language and narrative that will inspire continued critical inquiry in these areas.

Finally, on behalf of the entire *Watermark* staff, we'd like to thank our submitters and readers for their continued interest and support in our journal.

Nicole Bennett
Executive Editor

Contents

9

Queering the Postmodern: Dennis Cooper's *George Miles Pentalogy*
Adam Burgess

28

Pachucas, Cholas, and Disaffected Youth: Age and National Identity in Cherrie Moraga's Giving up the Ghost
Donald Burke

39

Making (Non)sense of Walter's "merveilleous desir":
Sinthomosexuality in the Clerk's Tale
Robert Di Pardo

55

"Free! Body and Soul Free!": The Docile Female Body in
Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"
Kristin Distel

71

Homonormative Desire: Investigating Male-Male
Relationships in Anglo-Saxon Literature
Kimberlee Flack

83

Rage Against the Machine: Examining Identity,
Ideology, and Politics in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*
Erika Gavitt

99

Mothers, Sisters, and Daughters: The Hybrid Identities
of Women in *Shadow of a Man*
Sara Gonzalez

114

"Enter this antechamber of birth": An Exploration of
the Hospital and the Brothel in James Joyce's *Ulysses*
Layla Hendow

131

"Preservation in Destruction": Eschatological Anxieties
in *Bleak House*
James McAdams

143

Street Cred: Economies of Shame and Homosociality in
Much Ado about Nothing
Grace McCarthy

152

Los Angeles as Post-National Palimpsest in Karen Tei
Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*
Meagan Meylor

161

Colonial Discourse as an Instrument of Empire in
Shakespeare's *The Tempest*
Michelle Moreno

174

Gulliver's Travels: Does the Family Matter?
Nataliya Shplova-Saeed

193

Laughter's Abject Underbelly and the Discursive
Potential of *Nightwood*
Kristen Skjonsby

205

Under the Overpass: Coloniality and History-from-
Below in Helena María Viramontes's
Their Dogs Came with Them
Cera Smith

217

Can the Traumatized Speak? Narrating Trauma in Tsitsi
Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*
Peter Smith

Queering the Postmodern: Dennis Cooper's George Miles Pentalogy

Adam W. Burgess

Postmodern and queer narratives make interesting bedfellows, but little attempt has been made at marrying the two. This is partially because narrative texts arising from both modes, without necessarily being mutually exclusive, lend themselves to multiple interpretations while resisting attempts at being rigidly defined. Still, it is important to note that queer and postmodern texts do share some common interests. For instance, they establish themselves as the “anti” or “other” to heteronormative thematic traditions and they veer from modern structural and philosophical customs. Dennis Cooper's George Miles cycle, specifically *Closer* (1989) and *Period* (2000), the introductory and concluding books in the series, can be read from both postmodern and queer perspectives; as such, the cycle, and its comprising works, may fulfill the criteria for a queer-postmodern narrative, the foundations for which have yet to be established. Ultimately, this essay will argue that distinctively queer-postmodern narratives exist, and it will leave open for discussion the possibility of establishing a queer-postmodern narrative tradition.

Before commencing an evaluation of the queer and postmodern

elements of these two Cooper novels, it is necessary to provide background on the novels and the series which they bookend. The George Miles cycle consists of five books which, as a whole, take the form of one single novel being slowly and methodically deconstructed into nothingness. The end brings the reader back to the beginning. The first novel, *Closer*, acts as the body for the larger narrative. It develops the mood, style, subjects, and themes which will then reappear in the four subsequent books. Between *Closer* and *Period*, which are the bookends to the cycle, are the second, third, and fourth novels. *Frisk* (1991), the second in the series, focuses on and elevates the sexual and erotic elements of the complete narrative. Some of the questions it asks include how and why the narrator, who is exposed through the characters who respond to George, is aroused. In addition, the question of difference between literary erotica and pornography is raised. The next in the series is *Try* (1994), whose priority is the emotional and asks: what are the emotional responses to George's addiction, mental breakdown, and sexual abuse? The fourth book, *Guide* (1997), is the analytical response to these same conditions. It sets aside emotional reactions to George's plight and instead focuses on the cold, intellectual—almost scientific—response. The cycle then ends with *Period*, which is the muddle that is left over from the decimation of form brought on by the violent sexual, emotional, and cerebral interrogations of George's story. *Period* becomes the mirror image of the first book, burdened with the task of solidifying the cycle's decimated form and realizing all of its pre-established themes.

The purpose of this essay is to discuss how Cooper's *Closer* and *Period* can be read from a certain perspective and then to pose an argument as to how they might represent a type of text that could exist within a conjoined philosophy heretofore unexplored (except, perhaps, by Kaja Silverman and Donald Morton); therefore, an attempt at defining these terms must be made before positing how those terms function for this argument's purposes. The first question, then, is what is postmodernism? According to Todd Gitlin:

Postmodernism usually refers to a certain

constellation of styles and tones in cultural works: pastiche; blankness; a sense of exhaustion; a mixture of levels, forms, styles; a relish for copies and repetition; a knowingness that dissolves commitment into irony; acute self-consciousness about the formal constructed nature of the work; pleasure in the play of surfaces; a rejection of history. (67)

While all of these descriptors are valid, this paper focuses on those pertaining to form, blankness, the “relish for copies and repetition,” the “self-consciousness about the formal constructed nature of the work” and, finally, the “pleasure in the play of surfaces.” That leaves the second question: What is a queer narrative? Given the fact that queer theory is by nature resistant to definition, this becomes difficult to answer; however, Annamarie Jagose, informed by David Halperin, Judith Butler and Lee Edelman, argues that queer theory’s “most enabling characteristic may well be its potential for looking forward without anticipating the future” (131). The queer-postmodern narrative may set itself apart from other contemporary works via innovations in form and theme, for example, without necessarily attempting to define a specific direction or outcome for the genre. I also concur with Judith Butler, who indicates that defining “queer” or “gender” may not be the point at all. Instead, a key purpose is to disrupt patriarchal heteronormativity by displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble . . . through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity. (46)

Thus, we must look to the future without incorrectly assuming “a utopian beyond” and to disrupt gender normativity by subversion and transgression. Dennis Cooper clearly meets these criteria, as demonstrated by his anti-heteronormative style choices, his play

with language, his focus on Lacanian ideas of death and lack, and his works' immersions into the realm of cyberpunk, a definitively queer genre. After reading Cooper from postmodern and queer perspectives, it may then be possible to draw conclusions as to what a distinctly queer-postmodern narrative might look like and to look toward the future in anticipating the potential for establishing a queer-postmodern narrative tradition.

One of the most important elements of Cooper's George Miles cycle is its form. As Timothy Bewes argues, quoting Jean-Francois Lyotard, "the postmodern artist or writer 'is working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event'" (6). Indeed, this is the case with Cooper, whose cycle of novels is crafted specifically as one larger narrative and whose creation is executed specifically to be destroyed. Thus, Cooper eschews traditional concepts of form by flattening his narrative in order to make the narrative itself the event. *Closer* is the form, the physical body, for the entire cycle, leaving the latter novels increasingly formless, consisting only of material which decomposes dramatically from novel to novel, as the ravages of drugs, violence, and depression take their toll on the novels' characters.

At the start of the cycle, the narrative is fully-realized, with lengthy chapters, wholly crafted sentences, and traditional paragraph form. By the end of the cycle, however, the narrative has been reduced to near-nothingness. Dialogue has become clipped and erratic, oftentimes reduced to progressively truncated sentences, such as "He likes me. He does. Thinking about it. Thinking" (10). Danny Kennedy explains that the form is "a narrative contained in five books that responds in its construction to the beaten, abraded, ruined and ruining body of the immature" (70). He adds that "form becomes the necessity of [Cooper's] narrative to express and represent extreme states of experience" (76). While emotionally and physically immature, the protagonist engages in "extreme states" of mature sexuality, the psychological effects of which are reflected in the devolution of narrative form.

In addition to this narrative reduction, the story moves forward

from book one, *Closer*, to the final book, *Period*, as if through a mirror. In the end, the novel is looking backwards through its material, leaving it with an inverted reflection of its own beginning. Further complicating this mirrored structure of the larger cycle is the fact that each novel within the cycle follows the same pattern, so that the contradiction of a highly structured cycle shedding its form is repeated on a micro-scale within each of the cycle's novels. This is demonstrated by the fact that the cycle's main character, George, metamorphoses in each novel to suit that particular novel's purposes, yet maintains his appearance and personality (which are fetishized throughout by the other characters) and ultimately returns, in *Period*, to the same "George" who was present in *Closer*. Diarmuid Hester comments on this same phenomenon, arguing that the continued reimagining of the George character is meant to "emphasize the hesitations of fragmented unstable identities and open his work up to the other and the time of the *to come*" (167, my emphasis). Hester, like Kennedy, acknowledges Cooper's transgressive form, but also points to the concern for futurity and to the "blank spaces" in the text, which, as Gitlin argues, is another signifier of the postmodern.

Hester is not the only critic to notice these blanknesses in Cooper's fiction. Michele Aaron argues that "Cooper's work stands out from other texts" in that its themes are "conveyed through headily self-conscious and self-reflexive writing" (116). This self-consciousness is also identified by Gitlin as an indicator of the postmodern. Aaron further posits that Cooper's texts, by virtue of self-consciously leaving blanks for the reader to fill-in, endangers the reader and makes him complicit. In *Period*, for instance, Cooper leaves blank space where the most dangerous events have occurred; this forces the reader to take agency in filling in the story and completing what has been left out. At one point in the story, when Duke and Henry have coerced Nate into their van in order to mutilate him, the most horrific, savage moment is described in this way: "Duke, go ahead. Cut off one of his . . . Yeah, the right . . . That's it" (31). The reader can determine, in context, what has happened; however, Cooper specifically wants the reader to become

complicit in this event, to be a part of the scene, and he does this by inserting blanks in the form for the reader to fill in on his own.

Surely, then, Cooper's novels meet two of Gitlin's criteria for the postmodern narrative: self-conscious awareness of (transgressive) form and blankness. They are also, however, obsessed with repetition and copies. This is demonstrated most clearly by the presence of so many look-alikes of the cycle's primary character, George Miles. As Hester points out, George "is everywhere" (165). In *Closer*, he can be found as the same-named character, George Miles. In *Frisk*, he becomes another character, twelve-year-old Kevin. Then, in *Try*, we find him in the character Ziggy, and in *Guide* he becomes both George (again) and another character, Chris. This sets the scene for *Period*, wherein there are suddenly multiple George "types" existing all at the same time, as we learn when Anonboy16 is talking online with MindMeld5:

I am reading that there are many energy sources, not just the one. This makes no sense. I have at least four distinct energies connected to these pictures. There is an energy named George Miles. There is one . . . a very powerful one . . . Egoreg? Can that be right? There is Dagger. Wait. This is strange. I am getting an unusual reading from you. You are also connected to these pictures. (57)

These people all look alike, as evidenced by the fact that Anonboy16 and MindMeld5 are comparing pictures of a boy thought to be George Miles, but the characters' personalities, or "energies" are also similar. George has been physically and emotionally copied, replicated. Earl Jackson Jr., evoking Baudrillard's *Simulations*, indicates that, by the end of *Period*, "George becomes as much a simulation of a person as the automated denizens of the Disney pavilions or the inexhaustibly available images of the porn stars" (167). Cooper has thus created an "automaton" out of George, a boy with no soul, no individuality, who leaves the reader wondering about the truth, and whether there is one. Hester accurately adds to this argument that "the proliferation of images of George across the whole cycle causes this same dilemma" (166).

She astutely recognizes that readers, like the characters in Cooper's cycle, will "find ourselves wishing to know what's 'in the back of it' but continually rejected by it" (ibid). The copies have left us with images of beauty, but truth and reality are lacking, and this "relish for copies and repetition," as Gitlin calls it, has been at the foreground of postmodern narratives.

Another element or indicator of the postmodern narrative is "pleasure in the play of surfaces." The disappointment the reader feels by being continuously reintroduced to copies of George, without ever discovering the *truth* of George, is only one way in which Cooper plays with his readers. Paul Hegarty, referring to Bersani's "Rectum as Grave" and Foucault's deliberations on power, argues that in the George Miles cycle, "the rectum and/or the grave holds out the promise of truth, or of some kind of reality, only to offer nothing at the end, not even mystery" (176). As the sexual object, George's anus or "rear passage" represents this promise, but only superficially. While Hegarty's essay focuses primarily on *Frisk*, it is also possible to find this theme, the promise of truth/knowledge that is ultimately confounded, in both *Closer* and *Period*. In *Closer*, for example, George himself seems to be the mystery that might unlock all knowledge. His body is described as being "covered with braille" and "filled up with hieroglyphs" (105). This would lead the reader to believe that inside George is some kind of truth to be decoded, one which will only be discovered through tactile exploration (hence his body of braille). The entry point, as will be made clear in later books, will be the rectum; but, perhaps not surprisingly, Cooper has made sure to deform this one part of George's body. At the end of the book, when George sleeps with Steve, we learn that George's "ass looks like someone threw a grenade at it" (117). Thus, the most desirable part of George's body, and the location of "truth" which characters in later books will seek to explore, is already disfigured, imperfect, a let-down.

In contrast, we find that, by the time we reach *Period*, the ass has been so consumed, so vigorously attacked in the middle novels (especially in *Frisk*), that very little is left to be said about it. Instead, the focus becomes the many faces of George, the look-

alikes. As Walker Crane, the fictional author of the fictional book, also called *Period*, within the actual Cooper novel, says, “I love my characters. They resemble George slightly, though cuter” (65). The fictional author of the fictional work that this entire cycle has been based on, then, reveals the perhaps one truth, which is that there is no mystery inside of George, no knowledge to be found; instead, the copies of George, by virtue of being more riveting and more accessible than the real George, have supplanted him in relevance and importance.

In the end, partly because the many reincarnations of George have been revealed to be one person, and partly because the final paragraph of *Period* brings us back to the beginning of the story, we realize that Cooper has been giving us only surface the entire time; there is a complete lack of depth, as we have not actually moved anywhere in time or space. Hegarty concurs that “Cooper’s fictions seem to offer surface only, however convoluted and twisted that surface” (181). It is like the haunted house of *Closer* and the windmill of *Frisk*, structures which presume to be complex and mysterious but are ultimately simple shapes of no consequence. Indeed, as Hegarty claims, “there is no depth that does not come to be shown to be only surface, only effect, or as Jean Baudrillard would say, ‘simulation’” (ibid).

Cooper’s George Miles cycle is a postmodern work. The narratives subvert traditional modern forms by being less concerned with chronological narrative progression, for instance, and more interested in making the narrative itself an event. Furthermore, Cooper demands the reader’s complicity by littering the narratives with blank spaces to be filled in by the reader’s imagination. Reader-Response theorists would find something similar in the idea of the Implied Reader, but Cooper takes this concept further by considering not only the reader and his reaction to the text, but by demanding the reader be burdened with agency. In addition, Cooper is clearly self-conscious about the form of his works, as Michele Aaron points out, but also takes pleasure in playing with surfaces, refusing to allow for much depth; even though, as Paul Hegarty argues, there are moments where locating depth seems to

be possible, these moments are deceptions.

Perhaps the most obvious way of discussing a text in queer terms is to evaluate how that text subverts or transgresses the heteronormative elements of fiction. Anti-heteronormativity does not necessarily need to be “against” or “opposed” to heterosexual fiction in such a way as would create a “better or worse” dichotomy; the queer narrative does, however, need to offer something different or something new, and it must, as Judith Butler argues “confound the binarism of sex” (149). The Cooper novels confound these binarisms and, in addition, are very much concerned with the idea that “the self is always being made and re-made,” as Butler also claims (152). This is witnessed in the many copies of George found throughout the cycle and in George’s own attempt to figure out who he is, particularly in *Period*, when he writes, “I don’t remember anything. I don’t even know my real name, or where I lived or anything. But I saw these pictures on the web, and I had this strong feeling about them. And they look just like me, I think” (57-8). This passage from *Period* demonstrates that George is on a quest to remake himself, not simply because he says that he has no memory and so therefore *must* do so, but also because he sees images of himself and apparently does not fully recognize himself in any of them. He is dissatisfied or confused by his former image and must mold a new one.

In addition to this introspection and remaking of the self, Cooper queers his text by rejecting binary gender systems. There is no “male/female” or “masculine/feminine” system, per se, in the cycle. Cooper subverts these binaries first by ensuring that only one biological sex (the male) is present in his narratives. This eliminates the possibility for traditional gender comparisons. Further, the sexual object for all of the characters is George Miles or his look-alikes, but it is not his maleness which is the attracting feature, as evidenced by the fact that the penis is rarely the desired object. In fact, when the penis or testicles are the object of fascination for other characters, they are oftentimes mutilated or castrated, thereby symbolically neutering George’s masculinity. Is George, then, the “feminine” in these texts and, if so, what “gender trouble”

results from the presence of *only* male-male sexual relationships? Answers to these questions (the latter of which Kaja Silverman has also posed and attempted to answer, somewhat problematically, through lesbian/feminine reattributions) are not within the scope of this essay, but the fact that these questions can be raised points to a particularly queered element of Cooper's fiction.

Aside from destroying binaries and causing gender trouble, the anti-heteronormative narrative should also present something distinct from the hetero-traditional one. Paul Hegarty argues that Cooper does this by seemingly creating a purely amoral narrative:

Several morals seem to impose themselves, even if ignoring a moralistic condemnation of the cold brutality of the novel. Firstly, fantasy has limits, and cannot successfully replace the real; second, the real has its limits, and cannot successfully enact fantasy; third, imagination should not have limits, but conversely, fourthly, that does not mean it should be shared. Finally, the position of the reader is challenged, made awkward, complicit, etc. (180)

Hegarty is discussing *Frisk*, but these morals, particularly that the reader must be challenged by being made complicit in wicked deeds, are Cooper's *modi operandi* throughout the cycle and might be a distinguishing factor of any queer text.

In addition to anti-heteronormative form and style choices, Cooper's language leaps into the queer realm. As Elizabeth Young argues, "Cooper is writing, as far as possible, what Roland Barthes termed 'a text of bliss' and Barthes refers to Jacques Lacan's contention that bliss 'cannot be spoken except between the lines'" (47). In this way, Young returns us to the postmodern narrative mode of blank fiction; however, by focusing on "erotic sublimity," Cooper, unlike Bret Easton Ellis or Lynne Tillman, for example, has taken blank fiction and queered it (ibid 45-6). This queering ultimately meets the criteria for Barthes's "bliss" in that it is "absolutely new" (Young 57). It is "the extreme of perversion," according to Barthes, which defines bliss. Cooper takes his readers to that extreme, but he is careful to distinguish his erotic sublime

from pornography. This is made clear in *Closer*, when Alex discretely films George and Philippe having sex and is then paralyzed in a car crash soon after. Alex's action and subsequent punishment fulfills Hegarty's interpretation of Cooper's moral codes by making the reader complicit in an awkward scene and then suggesting that fantasy has its limits. Invading another's private world or turning sexuality into pornography has its consequences.

Cooper draws the reader into complicity in the most dangerous scenes by leaving blank moments open to interpretation. Young further argues, however, that Cooper's "meaning is 'doomed' to inhabit such 'gaps'" because the very nature of his meaning, the erotic, leaves it unspeakable (47). This would seem to correspond with Hegarty's argument that Cooper's new, queered morals have much to do with limitless imagination but, as mentioned, the fact that the imagination is limitless "does not mean it should be shared" (180). Young enhances the point by claiming that "in evoking the unspeakable, Cooper is dreaming the impossible dream, writing the impossible text," a text which can only distribute its deepest meanings subliminally, between the lines (48). Adding to this case for a unique language is Annesley's argument that Cooper's novels, despite their "apparent apathy . . . can actually be interpreted as a mark of the narrative's engagement" (377). She points out the fact that "the disconcerting impact" of the many graphic, masochistic scenes in the novels "is heightened by the casual narrative tone, the repeated use of ellipses, the stunned language and the smooth unimpassioned perspective, devices that all seem to be at odds with the violent and disturbing subject matter" (ibid). Thus, by employing emotional paradox in his narrative language, Cooper has further queered his text, taking it beyond the realm of the expected.

Two other examples of a queer approach to language can be found in *Period*. The first is demonstrated by George's inability to communicate verbally. Instead, he speaks by writing in his journal, even commenting in a play-by-play manner when he is being sodomized. Lack of voice is appropriate for a marginalized character, but Cooper manages to give the marginalized, and thus

“queerest of the queer,” character some agency of expression:

1:10: One of ‘em’s screwing me.

1:11: That one hates me.

1:11: Dead

1:12: No, other one woke me up.

1:14: One of em’s taking a piss on my face.

1:14: Other one stopped him.

1:15: One of ‘em’s strangling me.

1:17: Scared.

1:20: Okay now.

1:23: Same one’s strangling me again.

1:24: Other one loves my ass.

1:24: Other one hates it.

1:29: One’s kicking my ass. One’s kissing my face.

1:30: Other one’s strangling me.

1:30: Just died, I think.

1:31: Dead.

1:33: Yeah. (13-14)

Deaf and dumb characters, such as Carson McCullers’s Spiros Antonopoulos, are appropriate subjects for queer theorizing; however, Cooper’s choice to have this particular character narrate the events in a log is strikingly unique. Other violent scenes in the novel include reactions from the victims and the abusers, but in this and other instances with the “real” George, we get only his pure, automatic responses, in cold, almost clinical record-keeping. This is another example of the sublime; it is a way for Cooper to encourage his reader to identify with George’s loneliness, isolation, sadness, and confusion, without being overburdened by the physical and sexual violence that is clearly occurring.

The second example of queered language is the dialogue that happens between characters in web chats. “Anonboy16” and “MindMeld5” communicate throughout the course of the novel only via instant messages. In these conversations, they discuss George Miles and Walker Crane, the fictional author of the fictional book of the same name as Cooper’s “real” book. What the reader

eventually discovers, when he catches on to Cooper's trick that the narrative has been folding in on itself the entire time, is that these two personas are both in fact George Miles. Given that the technology was somewhat new, the book having been published in 2000, allows for this new language to be pursued, but its "newness" alone does not constitute its queerness; instead, Cooper uses this means of communication, this language, to bend the narrative in on itself and to create a disturbingly narcissistic erotic relationship between George and himself, or the many versions of himself. The discovery that George is in fact his many versions, as seen through various mirrors, recalls the Lacanian mirror stage, wherein the subject (child/George) recognizes himself for the first time. Lacan argues that "the sight alone of the whole form of the human body gives the subject an imaginary mastery over his body, one which is premature in relation to a real mastery" (79). In Cooper's work, however, George never sees himself fully, not in any of his multitudinous versions, nor does the reader. George is described the same way, physically, regardless of the personas he takes on in any of the five books. His face and rectum, in particular, are recurrently obsessed over, perhaps to the point that George, only able to see himself in terms of his most desirable parts, cannot see himself as a whole; thus he cannot gain mastery over his body, and thereby remains a sexual victim throughout the cycle, lost in pre-Oedipal confusion and submission, and entirely without agency.

Another aspect of multiple Georges in this cycle is the fact that it raises significant questions about death and lack. Who is pursuing the death instinct, why, and to what end? If one character who can reasonably be understood to be George (Etan/Nate in *Period*, for example) is also one of the persons responsible for injuring George, can it not be assumed that George is preoccupied with self-destructive tendencies? Earl Jackson Jr. sees Cooper's narrative "as a kind of studying the self without participating in or extending the history of male violence against women that complicates similar themes in heterosexual literature and film" (151). The death drive, being wholly relatable to the self, is perhaps of more importance in Cooper's cycle than even the erotic sublime or the

narrative structure which, in its decomposition, simultaneously constitutes the narrative's form and its event. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud posits theories about two drives, one of life and one of death. In his argument, sex is an aspect of the life instinct; in a heteronormative reading, the purpose of sex is to propagate the species, to have children. A queer reading of sexuality, however, might place certain sexual activities, particularly at and after the height of the AIDS epidemic, into the realm of the death instinct, a desire to return to "the inanimate state" (380). Jackson finds much evidence in the George Miles Cycle to support the idea of a queering of the death instinct, placing sex right in the center. In *Closer*, for instance, he argues:

George's dependence on the adults' objectifying lust to fortify his exteriorized ego against this anxiety is a will-toward-death as subject, but it is also a defense against the abjection he experiences at their hands, since this abjection itself is 'one of the few avowals of the death drive, an undoing of the processes constituting the subject.' (168)

What his argument points to is a "mystery of desire and its often tragic resolutions" (ibid) but also the very real "relation between representation and death," be it physical or psychological death (170). Cooper is careful to undermine the reality of his fictive world at precise moments within the narratives, such as in *Frisk*, when the reader is made aware that the disgusting things he was just forced to participate in, through the reading experience, did not actually happen; the narrator, not just the author, invented all of it. This seems to be a reclaiming of the death instinct for the queer narrative. It would be expected, perhaps, to find the death instinct in gay fiction; after all, death by murder or suicide of homosexual literary characters has become quite cliché. Instead of traveling down this road, Cooper uses the death instinct for his own purposes. He depicts scenes of rape, mutilation, and gore, such as when "George . . . was literally reduced to bodily secretions/excretions in his encounter with Philippe and Tom" (Jackson 168). Yet, Cooper's primary purpose does not seem to be one of

desire-for-death; instead, it is, as Jackson argues, a psychological assessment of the sum of one's parts, without necessarily any intention of self-mutilation or complicity in death. Nobody dies. This self-preservation or will to live, post-AIDS crisis, can also be found in the cyber elements of Cooper's world.

Cyberpunk as a genre is generally considered to be postmodernism at its pinnacle. Cooper's George Miles cycle, from the very beginning, invokes elements of the punk and gothic, establishing itself as "counter" or "other" to popular culture. In the end, *Period* invokes the cyber element, introducing electronic communication, digital images, and web-based video recordings. It is truly in *Period* that the cyber elements are fully explored, as Leora Lev explains:

Period [is] a novel whose structure spirals into mirrorings, doublings, Kabbalistic palindromes, part electronic, fin de millennium funhouse, part Piranesi blueprint. George . . . is resurrected one last time; but he remains elusive, everywhere and nowhere, haunting *Period* as a series of undecipherable codes. (97)

These codes include the many different mirrored, inverted, or rearranged screen names for the characters that are searching out and obsessed with George Miles. Lev continues a particularly queer reading of *Period* by arguing that "identity is only ever a fragile construct subject to violation, and 'self' and 'other' are hazy holograms contingent upon positionality and always on the verge of extinction" (ibid). The continuous sequence of reforming identity only to reduce, destroy, and remold it again is at the very heart of the George Miles cycle and it is this, coupled with the loss or replacement of the physical, tactile self into a "vague, pixelated" electronic image which brings cyberpunk into the realm of queer or, as Donald Morton posits, the "cyberqueer."

According to Morton, "queer theory is seen as opening up a new space for the subject of desire, a space in which sexuality becomes primary" (370). He further argues that "(post)modern queer studies has made a decisive and radical advance over modernism, which

assigned questions of sexuality and desire to secondary social and intellectual status” (ibid). Dennis Cooper certainly puts sexuality and desire at the forefront; indeed, he requires readers to wade through particularly queer sexualities in order to find the moral elements of the narratives which, in modern texts, would be laid bare across their surfaces. “Desire is autonomous – unregulated and unencumbered,” according to Morton (ibid). Cooper, it would seem, tends to agree, as, any desire that the acting characters want, they fulfill, at least on the surface (and at least until the reader comes to realize that the entire journey has been one of fantasy and illusion).

Morton also argues that “desire is distinctive rather because it is the unruly and uncontrollable excess that accompanies the production of meaning,” and he adds to this by quoting Lacan, who claims that “desire ‘is not an appetite: it is essentially eccentric and insatiable” (371). The idea of insatiable desire is evident in Cooper, particularly when examining his more vulgar characters’ obsessions with cannibalism and bodily destruction. Furthermore, if desire must also be satisfied through language (after the subject has become “a socialized participant in what Lacan calls the symbolic”) (ibid), then this sheds new light on the need for George to record his experiences, especially when those experiences are sexual or violent.

While Hegarty argues that Cooper’s texts, though seemingly amoral on the surface, actually have a moral code of their own, Morton believes that “it is pointless to issue moral protests from the queer frame of reference, for by definition it sets aside questions of morality as irrelevant” (378). Morality is not necessarily irrelevant in a queer evaluation, but moral engagement with a text, from a queer perspective, must look only to that specific text and not to any previously established moral traditions external from it, for its didactic messages. That is not to say that a text must necessarily be moral, particularly a postmodern queer text whose aims might justifiably be to escape the moral altogether; however, it does mean a search for morality from the queer perspective can be made, though only in a very limited way.

Morton's argument on the cyberqueer is an excellent start in the search for commonalities between postmodern and queer texts. The postmodern is obsessed with copies, as has been argued, but the loss of self to copies of one's self, the reclamation of the death instinct with sex acts at its core, and the restriction of moral or ethical evaluation to each individual text, and not to a particular culture or genre's pre-established notions of such, will help to drive together the potential for reading texts as distinctively queer-postmodern ones.

Ultimately, the next task will be to discover or define what it means to be a queer postmodern narrative. As Cestaro points out, others have begun to work on "queer deconstructions of the Lacanian gaze" and to "discern in male homosexuality a unique relation to the death drive" (100). He further credits Edelman and Silverman with "zero[ing] in on the Mirror Stage as the crucial pass of selfhood, where the conventional male must abandon narcissistic self-love for misrecognition of self as other" (105). Cooper and other queer postmodern writers, such as William S. Burroughs and Samuel Delaney, are ripe for examination in this regard, but not necessarily through the lens of feminine or lesbian codes, as Silverman has suggested. Instead, queer postmodern texts should be analyzed for the ways in which they challenge traditional forms while appropriating heteronormative theoretical concepts, such as "the gaze" or "mirror stage" to represent them in a new way or from a different, queered, perspective. One way to do this is to examine postmodern texts which "envision a decentered, normless society" (Morton 375). The difficulty will be in the attempt to group together any set of texts or writers as "queer" when the very nature of queer theory is in shirking labels and resisting categorization. Nevertheless, a postmodern and a queer reading of Dennis Cooper's *George Miles* cycle makes it clear that there exists an elusive but navigable queer-postmodern narrative tradition ripe for excavation.

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*Pachucas, Cholas, and Disaffected Youth: Age and National Identity in Cherrie Moraga's *Giving up the Ghost**

Donald Burke

When reading Cherrie Moraga's play *Giving up the Ghost*, the obvious topics rightfully come up. These include sexuality, feminism, and national identity. While they are all intrinsically linked within the play, it is the notion of Chicano/a national identity and inclusion with relation to youth that warrants a closer look. The reason for this focus on youth is because childhood experiences are known to shape adolescent and adult behavior. This can be seen in "Corky," the youthful half of Marisa and one of the play's main characters. Corky's depiction as a young chola and her interactions with adults in the play lend a better understanding of her adult personality, including Marisa's notions of acceptance and cultural identity. Understanding the history of the Chicano Nationalist movement, as well as the history of the emergence of the pachuco/a and cholo/a subcultures will assist readers of the play to better understand who Corky is, why her identity shapes that of Marisa, and how they, as a combined unit, add to the richness of Chicano/a culture.

The Chicano Nationalist Movement arose between 1965 and 1980, but its origins date to 1836: the first time the Mexican bor-

der was shifted and the United States “incorporated land mass but also Mexican people” (Gutiérrez 25). This, and subsequent land acquisitions by the United States resulted in a Southwestern United States containing a large population of Mexican descent. It was not until the 1920s when Mexicans living in the United States began assimilating to America’s Anglo culture. These assimilated Mexicans contributed to the “baby boom” of the 1930s and 1940s and gave birth to “the first Mexican Americans” (Gutiérrez 26). While this is the generation that began the search and demand for equal rights after WWII, it was the “baby boomer’s” children that gave rise to the Chicano Movement.

The Chicano Movement, spurred by the Black Civil Rights Movement, utilized labor strikes, nonviolent protests, and demonstrations to instill a pride in heritage and identity, as well as a longing to reclaim “Aztlán,” their colonized homeland viewed in a physical and mythologic light. While this movement secured a positive identity for some Mexican Americans, it fell short in its representation of two groups: the youth and the female population. As Sarah Cooper claims in her article “Bridging Sexualities: Cherrie Moraga’s *‘Giving up the Ghost’* and Alma López’s Digital Art,” “the Chicano Movement . . . developed an agenda and an esthetic that disallowed the representation of women’s sexuality, much less from the lesbian perspective” (68). For the Chicano leadership, it was their belief that “Chicana women didn’t need to be liberated” (Ruiz 154) and that the idea of Chicana Feminism was an “attack” on their masculinity, and that the result was “labeling the Chicana feminists as malinchistas, traitors who were influenced by ideas foreign to their community” (Ruiz 154).

This feminist feeling of rejection and failure by their movement can be seen in *Giving up the Ghost*, during Amalia’s recounting of her dream:

I dreamed we were indias. In our village, some terrible taboo had been broken. There was thunder and lightning...when I realize is it you who have gone against the code of our people. But I was not afraid of being punished. I did not fear that los

dioses would enact their wrath...for the breaking of the taboo. It was merely that the taboo could be broken. And if this law nearly transcribed in blood could go, then what else? (33)

Moraga projects this Chicano Nationalist rejection of feminist rights onto Corky, a girl who takes great lengths to disassociate herself from her femininity as well as her sexuality. Corky's disassociation can be seen as a direct result of the adults around her who have vilified her without ever giving her a chance. Because of her gender and sexuality, she is culturally marginalized and ranked as La Malinche: the historical "traitor" based off of Malintzín Tenepal, the interpreter and later lover of Hernan Cortés, the Spanish Conquistador. According to Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, La Malinche is not just a "sell-out" but also "La chingada' (the fucked), constructing woman as soft, passive object, open to penetration. The active subject role is reserved for the chingón" (33). It is this desire to not be the "fucked" but rather the "fucker" that leads Corky to assume the role as a pachuca/chola, the Chicano youth subculture that rose out of Chicano barrios.

The cholo, according to Richard Mora, has its origins in Spanish California. Cholo was "used as a social class label for Mestizos and Indians" and "has always referred to abjected individuals" (129). This term evolved to now define a Mexican American gang member or hoodlum. While Mora goes to state that this culture of youth is looked down on by both Anglo and Chicano culture, cholo also exists as a microcosm of Chicano youth. It exists as a declaration of self-imposed pride and almost as a sub-sect of Chicano Nationalism, based among those that exist on the fringes of society, and is displayed well in Corky, who "dresses 'Cholo-style' —khaki pants with razor-sharp creases, pressed white undershirt. Her hair is cut short and slicked back" (Moraga 6). Corky is not a hoodlum or a gang member, but because of her gender and sexuality, is certainly an abjected member of society. But just as Corky uses her chola identity as a form of strength, claiming "the smarter I get the older I get the meaner I get / tough a tough cookie my mom calls me" (7), so too does a large portion of Mexican American youth,

dating back to the 1930s, and the emergence of the pachuco/a, the movement that gave “birth” to the cholo/a.

The pachuca was the female counterpart to the pachuco, the zoot-suit wearing, jazz-listening Mexican American youth who “rejected both traditional Mexican and mainstream American cultures” (Escobedo 134). Because the females involved used this style to defy cultural definitions of the feminine, they were seen as troublesome and as a threat to Mexican culture. As a result, the “Los Angeles populace—Anglo and Mexican alike—embarked on a campaign to contain and stigmatize the young second-generation women who flew in the face of convention . . .” (Escobedo 136). What this campaign functioned as, though, was an attempt to corral the sexuality of these young girls and control their bodies.

The notion of a Mexican American girl having agency over her body and sexuality rocked the traditional values of Mexican culture, and the populace responded to it harshly. A full generation before the Chicano Nationalist movement called Chicana feminists “malinchistas,” the Spanish-Language newspaper *La Opinión* “bemoaned the scandalous appearance of pachucas . . . [likening] the young women to prostitutes . . . And although referencing to male zoot-suiters as ‘pachucos,’ the newspaper deemed their female counterparts ‘las malinches’” (Escobedo 141). What these pachucas did was declare that they were not “demure, obedient girls” but rather “bold, rebellious young women who refused to accept that she was inferior because of her ethnicity” (Ramos 563). This is the same rebellion of the cholo and the same rebellion as Corky.

While the pachucas adopted their culture as rebellious, assertive, and sexually liberated, so did the cholo/a, albeit it differently. In her article “Chicano Gangs/Chicana Girls: Surviving the ‘Wild Barrio,’” Amaia Ibarraran Bigalondo quotes the US Department of Justice as stating, “joining a gang can be an assertion of independence not only from family, but also from cultural and class constraints” (48). While not all cholo/as are necessary gang members, it is this idea of breaking away and forming a new identity that roots them, as well as Corky, into this subculture. As a cholo/a, Corky can ignore her gender. She can, “think about how little I was

at the time / and a girl but in my mind I was big'n' tough 'n' a dude / in my mind I had all their freedom" (Moraga 8). It is this freedom from traditional culture and norms that causes these youth, as well as Corky to create their own "microsociety" (Bigalondo 48) within the Chicano Nationalist culture.

This "microsociety" of Corky can be seen in a nonfictional light by flipping through the pages of *Teen Angel's Magazine*. This "fanzine," a collection of reader-submitted art, photographs, and letters, was published throughout the 1980s and 1990s and functioned as an internal celebration of this Chicano youth culture. It reflected the pride, the bond, and also the assertion of independence and liberation. One such page of submitted art was a "paper doll" entitled "Kut and Kolor." It shows a young girl surrounded by different "cholo fashions," one of which is comprised of creased trousers with a wallet chain, a tank-top, a fedora, and the caption stating, "Stand Tall & Proud! The Teen Angels Uniform is feared and respected all over Aztlán! You are thee Best!" (Kut and Kolor). This outfit, not the other dresses, was the one that is "feared and respected," showing that respect was the goal of the cholo/a, which is the same as the Chicano Nationalists. Even more equalizing is the fact that the art is unsigned, so it could have been drawn by a male, who would be showing a high respect and love for females, rather than denigration. Were it drawn by a female, it would also show a high sense of pride and honor for who she is and whom she represents, both sexually and culturally. For these young boys and girls, this lifestyle was a way to "embark on a life outside the safe haven, the controlled, gendered space that the family home represents" (Bigalondo 47).

This "safe haven" was precisely why Corky ascribed to the look and lifestyle. Through her dress, and her actions, she could avoid the sex/gender norms of her culture, as well as the resulting oppression that came along with it, and find solace amongst like-minded youth. An example of her attempts at safety is shown in her relationship with Tury, a young boy who seemingly does not care about Corky's gender or sexuality. It is implied that Tury accepts her, knowing full well that she is not, in fact, like him. Instead,

Corky and Tury share a bond consisting of religion, race, and class. They rely on this bond in the presence of the “presbyterians or methodists or somet’ing” (Moraga 9) that live down the street.

This necessary bond with peers is highlighted when Corky feels slighted by her mother. After having a run-in with the Anglo kids down the street, Corky’s mom forces her to apologize. The desire of Corky’s mom to “keep some peace in the neighborhood” (Moraga 16) again reinforces the failure of Chicano Nationalism on its female population. Even though she thinks Corky did nothing wrong, her mother still forces Corky to back down to the Anglo family down the street. For Corky, this slight by her mom strengthens her need to not only hide anger but also to “develop survival strategies” (Bigalondo 48) by way of the chola subculture. For Corky, cholo/a is the front that she puts forth, but Corky knows that her front is just that—a masquerade. She is masquerading because she “never wanted to be a man, only wanted a woman to want [her] that bad” (Moraga 8). So Corky, like many other cholo/as, uses her identity as a coping mechanism. Richard Mora declares that “some young men of color, especially those who are working class or poor, adopt some variant of a gendered coping mechanisms to deal with their marginalized position in society” and that it is a “masculinity that often emphasizes toughness, male superiority, heterosexuality, physical dominance, and both the ability and willingness to use violence” (Mora 126). For Corky, this masquerade has multiple layers: her desire to be wanted by girls and as a defense against the adults, most notably those that would place her in the realm of chingada (“the fucked”), as opposed to the chingon (“the fucker”).

This dynamic of the penetrator/penetrated is touched upon throughout the play. In her opening monologue, Corky declares, “sometimes I even pack a blade” (Moraga 7). It is this blade that places Corky into a false sense of security and seemingly into the status of chingon; it can protect her emotionally and physically. Corky openly declares this sense of security when she states “I can feel there in my pants pocket / run the pad of my thumb over it to remind me I carry somet’ing / am sharp secretly” (Moraga 7). But for all of these attempts to break from the society that has reject-

ed, or at best, marginalized her, it ends up falling drastically short. While the “microsociety” of cholo/a can lead to a sense of pride and identity, Corky learns that it cannot always protect her gender and the most personal aspects of it. For all of her trying, she still ends up forced into the role of chingada.

Corky shows this seeming inevitability when she graphically recounts her rape by a maintenance/landscape worker at her school. Her brutalization was dealt to her by a fellow Mexican, again proving that the Chicano Nationalist movement failed her and didn't want her unless she was performing in a role of passivity and subservience or as a chingada. For all of Corky's fighting back against gender, and for all of her rejection of those traditional, masculinity-driven Mexican values, she was still forced into that role of La Malinche—of La Chingada. Even though Corky carried that blade, the blade that she thought could make a hole in someone and reverse the chingada/chingon dynamic and make her a penetrator, it was the worker at school that showed Corky she was in fact, trapped in her sex:

But with this one there was no hole he had to make
it / 'n' I saw myself down there like a face with
no opening / a face with no features / no eyes no
nose no mouth / only little lines where they shoul-
da been / so I dint cry / I never cried as he shoved
the thing / into what was supposed to be a mouth /
with no teeth / with no hate / with no voice / only
a hole / a hole! / He made me a hole! (Moraga 29)

This assault on her body and psyche ruined Corky, and for her and Marisa, it was a reaffirmation of their sex. Marisa even states that it “makes you more aware than ever that you are one hundred percent female, just in case you had any doubts” (Moraga 25). For all of Corky's attempts to distance herself from this movement that has seemingly failed her, it still comes crashing down around her; and it happens in spite of the “front” put on by donning the chola identity. But from this pain, there was hope. Catherine Wiley states that “the rape . . . destroys Corky, but she can become Marisa from those ruins. Her desire for Amalia combined with a burgeoning

love for Mexico rehabilitates her as a complete human being, and while her loss of innocence is not forgotten, just as Mexico is not forgotten, it defines her life without disabling it” (Wiley 113). It is from this point that Corky/Marisa can move forward and try to create a new identity, which is one that is inclusive and loving. However, it would be an identity not just for herself but also for everyone.

For Corky/Marisa, the play’s events function as an exorcism of the “ghost” of the rape. Sarah Cooper’s assertion is that Marisa “attempts to find salvation from her inner torment in an affair with Amalia, an embodiment of the wise women archetype” (Cooper 71). While part of this is true, there are two other factors that contribute to her emotional and spiritual release. The first is her art. Marisa, and even Corky, is constantly framed by art, either by their own hand or by someone else’s. Because art is expression, it is Corky/Marisa’s way of openly exploring their culture and identity in a safe manner. While Corky uses spray paint, walls, and “large, Chicano graffiti-stlye letters” (Moraga 6), Marisa has her sketchbook, her paintings, and her love of Amalia. Going together with this art is also culture. Marisa is enamored with Mexico; not just the country itself, but the notion of Aztlán. She tells Amalia that “this [Los Angeles] is Mexico...it was those gringos that put up those fences between us!” (Moraga 17). For Marisa, and also for Cherrie Moraga, this is the beginning of the creation of a “Queer Aztlán.”

According to Christina Accomando, “Queer Aztlán” is “both political construction and as real as flesh and land” (Accomando 113). Aztlán is the “historical, mythical land” (113) that is central to the notion of Chicano Nationalism, and “queer” is being used to refer to the academic notion of inclusion and embrace of not only sexuality but also to “other categories and refusals of categories” (115). Cherrie Moraga wrote Marisa and Amalia not just as representations of the Chicano/a nationalist movement but also as reclamation of the movement itself. Amalia was the traditional homeland: older, wiser, loving and open. She was more like La Virgin than La Malinche. Marisa was the Chicana. Born from flaws,

with body and soul seemingly “colonized” by that rapist, but still spiritually rich and longing to reconnect to her motherland. Cherrie Moraga herself stated that she envisioned “Queer Aztlán” as a “Chicano homeland that could embrace all its people, including its *jotería*” (qtd. in Accomando 113). For Cherrie Moraga, this embrace of everyone in Chicano society is of utmost importance, for her personally and for the movement itself. This notion of embrace and acceptance that Moraga stresses is because of the nature of the movement, which is the reclamation of identity from physical and emotional conquering and colonialism. The reclamation is precisely what Marisa goes through.

Even though Marisa is older, she still bears the scars that Corky was dealt. Marisa’s romance with Amalia was her reconnection to Mexico via someone who was born there and can seemingly function as a representation of Mexico itself. Marisa’s connection to Amalia reclaims her identity as a Chicana as well as a lesbian, even amidst the scars of the Chicano Movement’s denial of her gender, sexuality, and feminism. As a result, Marisa is stronger and happier.

Therefore, a reading of Cherrie Moraga’s *Giving up the Ghost* with a focus on inclusion and national identity centered around youth, primarily Corky’s physical actions and appearance, can give the reader better insight to both Marisa, the lead character, as well as Moraga’s viewpoints on sexuality, gender, and feminism. Even though the Chicano Nationalist Movement was brought about by the sons and daughters of the rebellious pachuchos and pachucas, its leadership made a critical mistake when it rejected its feminists out of misunderstanding and fear. Instead, the movement “institutionalized heterosexism . . . inbred machismo . . . and lack[ed] . . . a cohesive national political strategy” (Accomando 112). This resulted in the abjection of girls like Corky/Marisa, who were lesbians, went against gender norms, and believed in a unification of everyone within Aztlán. But even amidst these negatives, Corky found solace in a Chicano barrio subculture. This cholo/a movement was equal parts defense mechanism and safe haven, free from the pain and trappings of traditional Mexican culture as well as the oppression felt by a nationalist movement that disregarded her; but even

amidst this, Corky couldn't escape the pain. Even amidst a brutal and denigrating rape at the hands of what should have been a fellow Chicano, Corky managed to blossom into Marisa, who with Amalia's help, brought to the play's readers the universality of love and the greatness that is their mythical and physical Aztlán. Experiences in youth shape adulthood, and Corky's experience have allowed for Marisa to begin the "queering of Aztlán" that Cherrie Moraga wants to see.

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Making (Non)sense of Walter’s “merveillous desir”: *Sinthomosexuality* in “The Clerk’s Tale”¹

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A common finding of queer theorists occupied with Chaucer is that his characters are seldom caught red-handed in the behaviour that today’s reader is led to expect by the word *queer*. In Tison Pugh’s understanding of the term, “*Queer* need not imply homosexuality as much as a divergent stance vis-à-vis ideological normativity in matters of gender and sexuality; it is not a synonym for *homosexual* but rather a term that captures the disorienting effect of nonnormative sexual identities and their frequent clash with ideological power” (3). Taking similar care in defining its operative meaning of *queer*, this paper proposes a new reading of “The Clerk’s Tale” that focuses on the relatively neglected figure of Walter, whose emphatic vilification in Chaucer’s telling seems intended to evoke the kind of psychological terror that Lee Edelman associates with the *sinthomosexual*. A woman-shy marquis who later orchestrates the feigned murder of his children, Walter is a remarkably complete exemplification of one who, in Edelman’s conception of the

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sinthomosexual, flouts the heteronormative perception that same-sex intercourse jeopardizes the future, here defined as the illusory permanence of the existing social order. It should be stated at the onset that, in deference to Eve Sedgwick's admonition against the "destructively presumable" evolution of present-day sexualities from those of the past (48), this paper makes no attempt to locate the seeds of a contemporary homophobic culture in "The Clerk's Tale." Its abiding interest lies rather in what Chaucer's characterization of Walter as a prototypical *sinthomosexual* may reveal about the sources of "The Clerk's Tale." A longstanding authority on the subject, and the main proponent of the view that Chaucer relied solely on Petrarch's *Historia Griseldis* and a French redaction of the same, Jonathan Burke Severs finds it worth mentioning that Chaucer's marquis is "more obstinately wilful, more heartless, more cruel than he is made out to be in Petrarch's tale" (231). In addition to proposing that Walter, along with his potential analogue in the *Decameron*, exemplifies the *sinthomosexual*, the following comparative analysis looks to develop Severs's casual observation by demonstrating that Chaucer most likely found the model for his *sinthomosexual* marquis in Boccaccio's original telling of the Griselda story.

Despite the curiosity raised by his reluctance to marry, what is here called the "queerness" of the marquis in Chaucer and Boccaccio's respective narratives only figuratively pertains to sexual preference. Of greater importance are the psychological effects of the marquis's reluctance to marry, in particular the various manifestations of what Walter's vassals call their "bisy," or constant dread for the future governance of the marquisate (4.134). Chaucer's Clerk justifies this general panic with a typical allusion to human mortality in castigation of Walter's disregard for "tyme comynge" (79). The lesson to be drawn from Walter's cautionary example is crudely practical, and yet it derives moral force from the Boethian sentiment expressed in the Clerk's preceding eulogy for the late Petrarch and his contemporary Giovanni da Lignano (31–38). These conspicuously paired invocations of *memento mori* imply that Walter's duty to maintain the status quo through

fruitful marriage follows naturally from the fact of mortality. Such an assumption underpins what Edelman terms “reproductive futurism,” or the socially conservative, unconscious obsession with the future that makes a sacrosanct virtue of procreative intercourse, and conversely vilifies intercourse between partners of the same sex. Symbolizing the former is “the figure of the Child, enacting a logic of repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of the social order,” in opposition to which stands the “figure of the queer, embodying that order’s traumatic encounter with its own inescapable failure” (Edelman 25–26). The imagined continuance of the current social order, upheld by the Child-Symbol, is by definition a fantasy, since “fantasy alone endows reality with fictional coherence and stability, which seem to guarantee that such reality, the social world in which we take our place, will still survive when we do not” (Edelman 34). This fantasy underlies the notion of hereditary nobility, which Walter is explicitly called upon to maintain. If his willful neglect of this duty provokes fear and loathing, the reason may be that, like the contemporary queer figure in Edelman’s formulation, Walter’s indifference to the continuation of his lineage presents a threat to the central enabling fiction of a heteronormative social order. The unease of his vassals can therefore be likened to the reactionary homophobia that Edelman finds expressed throughout American politics and culture.

The morbid preoccupation with the future already glimpsed in “The Clerk’s Tale” is a main feature of the *Decameron’s* grand design. A work “committed to diligently embracing and shaping the fantasies beloved by common people” (Branca 10; “tutta intesa a raccogliere e a comporre studiosamente le fantasie amate dal volgo”), the *Decameron* predictably upholds the type of social conservatism that validates the proactive anxiety of reproductive futurism. More so than the unfinished *Canterbury Tales*, whose reliance on “heterosexuality as its major organizational category” is arguably more qualified than critics have traditionally been prepared to admit (Dinshaw 123), the *Decameron* tells a complete story of imaginative escape and the obligatory “return to reality —

to the reality of death as well as that of the patriarchy” (Barolini, “Sociology” 6). Motivated by little more than the instinct of self-preservation, seven young women resolve on departing from pestilent Florence for the idyllic countryside. Mortal terror does not prevent the women from scrupling over the unseemliness of travelling without respectable male companions, or worse, “with total strangers, for if self-preservation is our aim, we must so arrange our affairs that wherever we go for our pleasure and repose, no trouble or scandal should come of it” (McWilliam 62). The sudden appearance of three young men in the same church where the women have gathered conforms to the social conventions from which the *Decameron* rarely strays, the church being “one of the few places where men and women could come into regular social contact” in fourteenth-century Florence (Barolini, “Sociology” 20). True, the mixture of male and female narrators undermines the homosocial masculinity of the traditional *brigata*, or convivial band of storytellers. But the subversive potential of Boccaccio’s innovation is finally annulled by his “vigilant concern for the integrity of the *brigata*” (Wallace 281), whose country holiday is no indulgence in what the Clerk calls “lust present” (4.80), but rather “an active response to the moral, social, and political collapse of Florence: the communal spirit must be kept alive outside the city walls until the city is once more healthy enough to support its growth” (Wallace 281). Intractably oriented toward the future, the *Decameron* is deeply concerned with the preservation of a social order threatened by the apocalyptic disaster of the plague.

Just as the *Decameron*’s apocalyptic anxiety prefigures the shadow of mortality cast over “The Clerk’s Tale” by the repeated invocation of *memento mori*, the uniquely queer aspects of Walter’s character are boldly outlined in Boccaccio’s Gualtieri, who especially embodies the unnatural cruelty that Edelman ascribes to artistic representations of the queer figure. Referring at the onset of his narration to Gualtieri’s “matta *bestialità*” (10.10.3), or “senseless brutality” (McWilliam 813), Dioneo invites comparison between the marquis and the “machine-like men . . . who stand outside the ‘natural’ order of sexual reproduction,” and who

feature in the apocalyptic narratives that Edelman would classify as unconsciously homophobic (165n10). By drawing attention to the illogic of reproductive futurism, Edelman argues, the queer figure comes to represent the menace of utter destruction (114). The queer figure thus perceived is what Edelman refers to as a *sinthomosexual*. The precise manner in which Gualtieri fills this role is anticipated by G. H. McWilliam's fortuitous translation. The *bestialità* of the *sinthomosexual* marquis is truly "senseless" not only for its blindness and apparent lack of cause, but most of all because it throws a traditional epistemology into disorder, sabotaging the production of sense itself. Gualtieri visibly does so when remarking to his vassals that "it is foolish of you to believe that you can judge the character of daughters from the ways of their fathers and mothers. . . . For I cannot see how you are to know the fathers, or to discover the secrets of the mothers; and even if this were possible, daughters are very often different from either of their parents" (McWilliam 814). In Emma Grimaldi's commentary on this passage, the sacrosanct fiction of hereditary nobility is fatally undermined by Gualtieri's frankness about "the fallibility of human nature . . . the reality of the individual, of the peculiarity characterizing every single typology" (403; "la fallibilità della natura umana . . . la realtà dell'individuo, lo specifico caratterizzarsi di ogni singola tipologia"). Gualtieri thus torments his vassals, as he will Griselda, with "disturbing spectres that undermine any axiomatic certainty" (Grimaldi 403; "inquietanti fantasmi, demolitori di qualunque assiomatica certezza"). Here Grimaldi is effectively describing the *sinthomosexual*, and in terms that verify Colette Soler's clinical definition of the Lacanian *sinthome* as that which "makes the singularity of the subject, subjected otherwise to the great law of the want-to-be" (216). Gualtieri can laugh at the concept of hereditary nobility because he embodies the frightening singularity of the *hic et nunc*, or the self-satisfied awareness that reproductive futurism is an untenable fiction.

The corresponding scene of "The Clerk's Tale," in which Walter also profanes against reproductive futurism, differs only in external particulars. Following Petrarch (Severs 258), Walter discredits

hereditary nobility by professing the doctrine of Providence: “Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen / Of which [children] been engendred and ybore” (4.157–58). This quickly proves to be another hollow fiction, however, and like Boccaccio’s marquis Walter proceeds to exploit his people’s deep-seated fear of contingency for his own amusement, reserving the right to name his wedding day with only an insouciant promise to do so “as soone as evere he may” (180), prolonging the general fear “that the markys no wyf wolde wedde” (182). Both the vagueness of Walter’s pledge and its effect on his audience are Chaucer’s innovations: an unambiguous promise not to delay is made by Petrarch’s marquis — “nec morabor” — along with his French derivative — “ne pas n’atendray longuement” (Severs 258–59). With its implication that Walter deliberately frustrates the expectations of reproductive futurism, as if savouring the power he thereby gains over his anxious vassals, Chaucer’s departure from both of his attested sources brings Walter closer to his Boccaccian antecedent.

Being a patriarchal tyrant does not make Boccaccio’s marquis any less of a *sinthomosexual*; on the contrary, Gualtieri’s misogyny enhances his resemblance to the epitomical *sinthomosexual* whom Edelman finds in the ruthless hitman played by Martin Landau in Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* (1959). Simply named Leonard, Landau’s character deliberately treads on the fingers by which the protagonist (played by Cary Grant) clings for life to the edge of a cliff. With a characteristic pun on the setting of the scene, Mount Rushmore, Edelman claims that “Leonard brings to a head, as it were, Hitchcock’s concern throughout the film with the characteristically ‘human’ traits that conduce to sociality, traits to which, as *sinthomosexual*, Leonard stands opposed: compassion, identification, love of one’s neighbor as oneself” (70). Evincing the same concerns as Hitchcock, Boccaccio opens the *Decameron* with the precept that “[t]o take pity on people in distress is a human quality which every man and woman should possess” (McWilliam 45). Just as Gualtieri’s tale stands at the far end of the *Decameron*’s narrative cycle, his behaviour is emphatically distant from Boccaccio’s humane ethos of pity. The charge of

bestialità levelled against Gualtieri is in fact a categorical definition, authorized by the *Decameron's* operant conception of humanity. The heteronormative underpinning of that conception comes to light when Gualtieri's bestiality is manifested for the first time. He confronts Griselda with invented gossip to the effect that his vassals are unhappy with her, "especially now that they [have seen] her bearing children" (McWilliam 817). That his wife's fertility should inspire Gualtieri's program of misogynistic torture makes his desire more than "strange," as McWilliam has Dioneo say (817): it is positively queer. More precisely, Gualtieri's mania for testing Griselda portends violence against her fertility. The achievement of Griselda's infertility may be construed as the "set purpose" that Gualtieri reveals at the end of the tale (McWilliam 823), especially if one takes the marquis literally when, in the original text, he congratulates Griselda on having learned to "beget" him ("partorire") constant peace and quiet (10.10.61).² Though ostensibly casting off his reputation as "a cruel and bestial tyrant" (McWilliam 823), Boccaccio's marquis may actually be revelling in it, suggesting that, in accordance with his "set purpose," the begetting of peace and quiet is the only kind that Griselda will be doing from now on. Inimical to reproductive futurism, Gualtieri's *bestialità* glories in Griselda's implied infertility.

Chaucer's portrayal of Walter's cruelty is set against an ethos of compassion that is remarkably analogous to Boccaccio's. Drawing on a poetic lexicon in which "*pite* is a generous, outgoing, abundant emotion . . . virtually synonymous with 'compassion'" (Gray 182), Chaucer comes near to a literal translation of Boccaccio's Proem in the *Complaint of Mars*, in which the disgraced god of war appeals to his female audience with this precept: "Be wey of kynde ye oughten to be able / To have pite of folk that be in

2 The Grande dizionario della lingua italiana, s.v. "partorire," def. 1 takes an example from Gen. 17:19, as rendered in the Bibbia volgare (ed. Carlo Negrone, vol. 1 [Bologna, 1882], 86): "Dio disse ad Abram: Sara tua moglie partorirà a te uno figliuolo e chiamerai lo nome suo Isaac" ("God said to Abraham: 'Your wife Sarah will beget you a son and you will name him Isaac'"). If Gualtieri's choice of words gestures toward Griselda's readiness to, like Abraham, sacrifice her first-born child, the allusion can only be ironic. For Chaucer's Griselda as an Abraham-figure, see Utley 223 and note 74.

peyne” (282–83). Whether or not the dictum is modelled on Boccaccio’s actual words (or those of Dante, as Mario Praz believes [56]), Chaucer clearly takes up the ethos of compassion in “The Clerk’s Tale,” “an excellent, if extreme, example” of what Douglas Gray terms “the ‘pitous tale’ ” (197, 188), referring to an informal subgenre of lachrymose and family-oriented medieval romance, of which Gray considers Chaucer “the great master” (194). It is of course Griselda who justifies Gray’s observation. As the most “pitous” figure in “The Clerk’s Tale,” Griselda’s role includes bearing witness to Walter’s alienation from the ethos of pity and compassion, thereby revealing his *sinthomosexuality*. On the principle that Chaucerian *gentillesse* implies “nobility of soul,” and “wherever there is true *gentillesse* there will be *pite*, and vice versa” (Gray 179), Walter’s lack of *pite* is effectively confirmed when his cruelty compels Griselda to exclaim, “O goode God! How gentil and how kynde / Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage / The day that makend was oure mariage!” (4.852–54). Walter’s deficient *gentillesse* also carries the imputation of sexual abnormality, since the words *gentil* and *genitals* are cognate (whence the notion of hereditary nobility), a point the Wife of Bath helps to illustrate when vaunting her perfect understanding of the “gentil text” in which “God bad us for to wexe and multiplye” (3.28–29). Edelman regards the same text, Genesis 1:28, to be the founding statement of reproductive futurism (14–15). Walter’s lack of kindness is likewise imbued with sexual nuance, given the semantics of the Middle English substantive *kinde*, whose overlapping senses illustrate the heteronormative conflation of “innate or instinctive moral feeling” with “the characteristic function of a bodily part,” “sexual organs” in particular (“kīnde, n.,” defs. 5b.a, 6.a, and 14a.c.). Like its Boccaccian antecedent, the Chaucerian ethos of *pite* makes a virtue of heterosexual desire, and, like Gualteri’s *bestialità*, Walter’s cruelty provides an index to his profounder antipathy toward reproductive futurism. “Despitously” is the manner in which the “cruel sergeant” sent by Walter takes Griselda’s infant daughter from her (4.535, 539), and the kidnapper’s lack of *gentillesse* reflects Walter’s own when Griselda calls the sergeant “a worthy gentil man”

in her attempt to propitiate him (549). Laying bare the true nature of Walter's offence, the Clerk dictates the standard by which the scene is to be judged: "Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd 'allas!' " (563). And well she might have, presuming her maternal awareness that, by menacing Griselda's daughter, Walter prevents a potential mother from reaching sexual maturity, killing with her an indefinite number of unborn children, the very crime of which the *sinthomosexual* stands accused in the heteronormative unconscious (Edelman 74–75, 112–13). Through his ideal maternal reader, the Clerk directs his opprobrium, not at the misogynist, but at the *sinthomosexual*.

As Edelman strives to demonstrate throughout his analysis, *sinthomosexuality* sooner or later finds expression in the crime of infanticide. Accordingly, the violence that Walter threatens against Griselda's children is the single most visible sign of his antipathy toward the Child-Symbol and its promise of an endlessly replicated status quo. Chaucer encourages this perception with notable force, reprising the harrowing scene of abduction after the birth of the infant who, as Walter's prospective heir, corresponds by a short remove to the Child-Symbol itself (4.673–84), a repetition absent from Boccaccio's narrative. For Pugh, whose focus on virtual child abuse in "The Clerk's Tale" overlaps with what is argued here, Walter exemplifies the Freudian "desiring agent who envisions a beaten child" (153). Following Edelman, Pugh seizes on the fact that Freud's "infamous formulation" is passively phrased (153), which, in Edelman's words, "strategically elides the agency by which this [child beating] is achieved" (41, qtd. in Pugh 153). Pugh argues that Walter is likewise "obscured beyond identification" as the perpetrator of violence against his children, allowing him to be "rehabilitated from this horrific image to function simultaneously, if unconvincingly, as the benevolent *paterfamilias* of the tale's conclusion" (153, 155). Pugh tellingly buttresses this point with a quotation from Mark Miller's figural reading of Griselda as Job and Walter as God's instrument.³ Pugh is misled, however, by a too

3 See Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer: Love, Sex, and Agency in the "Canterbury Tales,"* Cambridge Studies in Medieval Lit. 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 242,

casual acceptance that Walter's actions have a purpose underwritten by a Christian morality in which the Clerk sincerely believes. When construed as the typical behaviour of a *sinthomosexual*, by contrast, Walter's cruelty has no redeeming purpose, nor any purpose at all, beyond the indulgence of a sadistic desire that Pugh classifies an "anti-eroticism," the generic term he gives to the various non-normative sexualities explored in his study (3). Pugh is likewise too eager to explain Walter's anti-erotic sadism, painting a frankly untenable portrait of the marquis as a traumatized child, "compelled to shift his attentions from youthful pastimes and pleasures to sexual maturity when [his vassals] demanded that he take a wife" (158). Though Walter is certainly more like Boccaccio's young and irresponsible Gualtieri than Petrarch's Valterius, Pugh has grossly exaggerated his youth. That he deliberately avoids the "servage" of matrimony is plainly stated by Walter himself (4.143–47), nor is it likely that a prepubescent marquis would be "drad" by his subjects and "[d]iscreet ynogh" to govern as wisely as he is claimed to do (69, 75). Whether the terms are Christian or Freudian, obscuring Walter's agency in Griselda's torture is the typical resort of exegetes who feel compelled to save the moral from the bewildering excess of Walter's cruelty. But there is no moral to save, because that same cruelty disrupts the sexual means of sense formation that would produce one.

By enacting unconscious violence against children, Walter simultaneously jeopardizes the moral significance of "The Clerk's Tale," in which the production of children and of moral sense are symbolically linked in a manner anticipated by the conceptual overlap of Chaucerian *pite* and reproductive futurism. That Walter feels "pitee" for the "meeke preyere" and "pitous cheere" of his vassals only proves that nothing short of blackmail could persuade him to marry (141–42), and in fact he does not hesitate to complain of being coerced (143–44, 171–73). As for the apparently genuine emotion that transpires when Walter turns away, "for routhe and for pitee" (893), from the sight of Griselda returning to her father's cottage with only the shirt on her back, the lines preceding Walter's

qtd. in Pugh 155.

display of tenderness demonstrate that Griselda too is capable of blackmail. Conscious of the role assigned to her by reproductive futurism, Griselda threatens to exacerbate the general anxiety over Walter's succession when bargaining for her smock, without which "thilke wombe in which youre children leye / Sholde biforn the peple . . . / Be seyn al bare" (877–79). The caesura following the word *bare* reverberates with the disquieting suggestion of barrenness. Though infertility may not be an affliction one can realistically dissemble by means of clothing, that Griselda means to do just that is implied by the efficacy of her request, and the intimacy of the scene permits the conclusion that Walter tacitly understands her, especially if he is the direct cause of Griselda's infertility. Griselda's reunion with her grown children at the tale's emphatically "pitous" conclusion may have, according to Wallace, "all the physical intensity of childbirth" (292), but the asexual means by which it is brought about should not be underestimated. If Gualtieri glories in his triumph over Griselda's fertility by looking forward to the peace and quiet that she will "beget" him in place of children, the ostensibly happy ending of "The Clerk's Tale" is also shadowed by the possibility that, with procreative intercourse no longer possible, Griselda's children are finally produced in the only manner still available: they are "produced" in the sense of being brought out of hiding ("produce, v.," def. 2a), adhering strictly to the word's etymology (*pro, ducere*), which is to say, *ad litteram*. Thus Walter's triumph over Griselda's fertility marks a simultaneous victory for the literal sense.

The first commentator to fully grasp the hermeneutic consequences of Griselda's subjection is the narrator of *Decameron* 10.10. Named after the mythical mother of Venus, Dione (Grimaldi 21–22), the consummately venereal Dioneo fills a role analogous to that of Chaucer's Wife, who virtually delivers the final message of "The Clerk's Tale." For Dioneo, no less than for the Wife, biology dictates in plain language "to what conclusion / Were membres maad of generacion" (3.115–16). Hence Dioneo's opinion that, had a wiser woman been "driven from the house in her shift" as Griselda is during her penultimate trial, she would have "found

some other man to shake her beaver for her,⁴ earning herself a fine new dress in the process” (McWilliam 824). Luciano Rossi signals the potential double meaning of this “fine new dress” or “bella roba” (10.10.69) with reference to the nuanced vocabulary typical of the fabliaux (404). A corroborating example can be drawn from Jean le Gallois’s *De Pleine bourse de sens*, in which “an unfaithful merchant, about to leave on business, asks his wife what dress [*robe*] — that is, what lie [*lobe*] — she would like upon his return” (Bloch 11), providing a literary antecedent to the *roba* that is likewise the souvenir of an adulterous encounter in Dioneo’s alternative ending to Griselda’s tale. Sexually charged references to clothing in le Gallois’s text also shed light on Dioneo’s implied equivalence of sexual reproduction with the production of moral sense. In the fabliau, the humour of the wife’s reply to the merchant that she would prefer a “purse full of sense” (“plaine borse de sen”) derives from the polysemy of the word *sen*, which here contains a ribald allusion “to ‘seed’ from the Latin *semino* (‘to beget,’ ‘engender,’ ‘bring forth,’ ‘procreate’),” while also being “a term employed in Old French to mean meaning itself . . . ; and here the indicated reading has to do with bringing back the significance of the tale we read” (Bloch 11). A comparable semantics obtains at the close of Dioneo’s narration, where Griselda’s missed opportunity to profit from an adulterous encounter is acknowledged at precisely the point in the story where a moral should be. Like the new dress (or, in Rossi’s reading, the third child) that Griselda naïvely passes up, the absence of a moral is implicitly blamed on Griselda’s loyalty to the marquis, who by subjecting her to sterilizing torture precludes the begetting of *sen*. Extending yet another “sudden invitation to think about Griselda in the previously unimagined terms of her sexuality” (Farrell 358), Chaucer’s Clerk humorously concludes his own tale by turning “with lusty herte” to Griselda’s counterexample (4.1173), the licentious Wife, the local embodiment of “that hermeneutically marginal and ephemeral matter” which is coterminous with the female gender in medieval exegesis (Burger 79), and which Walter

4 I have amended McWilliam’s tamer translation of what Dioneo refers to as Griselda’s “pilliccione” (10.10.69; lit. “fur pelt”).

literally extinguishes in Griselda. As Thomas Farrell observes, the equally vulgar gestures with which Dioneo and the Clerk conclude their respective tales constitute “the most suggestive parallel in the structure of the two works” (358). But the parallel runs even deeper, and is rooted in a mutually shared revulsion toward the queer marquis.

Boccaccio and Chaucer each present a marquis who conforms to Edelman’s description of the *sinthomosexual*, an identification with troubling hermeneutic consequences, which the narrators of both tales make a bold point of vocalizing. Edelman himself gestures toward such an application of his theory when he credits the fantasy of the Child-Symbol with the unconscious effect of “translating the corrupt, unregenerate vulgate of fucking into the infinitely tonier, indeed sacramental, Latin of procreation” (40). Petrarch’s refashioning of *Decameron* 10.10 is ideally analogous, since the tale’s linguistic “redemption” from Boccaccio’s vernacular is accompanied by its moralization, making sense of the narrative as the Child-Symbol makes sense of the heteronormative social order by appearing to rescue it from transience. This cherished reading of the tale may explain the lasting popularity of the Petrarchan Griselda who bears like a saint the trials engineered by her domestic and divine lord, which more than a century of Chaucer scholarship has endorsed. G. L. Kittredge influentially deemed “The Clerk’s Tale” an eloquent defence of “the orthodox view of the relations between husband and wife against the heretical opinions of the Wife of Bath” (448). Despite his revisionary reading of those tales that Kittredge dubbed the “Marriage Group,” Glen Burger effectively reprises the age-old assessment of “The Clerk’s Tale,” which he considers to be as guilty of the intent “to shape a young wife’s feminine nature” as Philippe de Mézières’s didactic refashioning of Petrarch’s fable (104), composed between 1385–89 and later anthologized in the *Ménagier de Paris*, a self-purported handbook for wives. Taking Walter for a *sinthomosexual* offers a welcome alternative to this antiquated critical tradition. By “insisting on access to *jouissance* in place of access to sense, on identification with one’s *sinthome* instead of belief in its meaning” (Edelman 37), the *sinthomosexual*

can be justly accused, as is Gualtieri in McWilliam's apt translation, of "senseless" brutality, in every sense of the word. The equal senselessness of Walter's behaviour reveals a compelling similarity between Boccaccio and Chaucer's respective tales, one that sharply distinguishes them from Petrarch's. While the latter seeks to justify Griselda's torture for the sake of a Christian moral, her abuse at the hands of Gualtieri and Walter is portrayed as the needless cruelty it truly is.

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“Free! Body and Soul Free!”: The Docile Female Body in Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Kristin M. Distel

In 1894, Kate Chopin wrote her well-known short story, “The Story of an Hour,” an extremely brief but gripping narrative that Susan Cahill describes as “One of feminism’s sacred texts” (3). This paper explores the story’s depiction of the home as a patriarchal power structure and the way in which domestic patriarchy regulates and limits the female bodily experience. In order to contextualize my analysis, a short summary of Chopin’s story is necessary. Louise Mallard, a young wife who is “afflicted with heart trouble,” receives news that her husband has been killed in a train accident (352). After experiencing a brief “storm of grief,” Louise excuses herself to “her room” and, once alone, eventually admits that she is enormously relieved that her husband has died, that she may now “live for herself” (353). She is at first deeply reluctant to acknowledge and is actually ashamed of her relief, but she quickly embraces the notion of autonomy; she eagerly anticipates a long life in which she will not have to conform to her husband’s wishes. Louise repeatedly whispers to herself, “Free! Body and soul free!” After Josephine, Louise’s sister, coaxes her out of her room and back downstairs, Mr. Mallard walks in the front door. He had been mistakenly listed among people killed in the accident. Upon seeing her husband, Louise immediately dies. The doctors determine that

Louise has “died of heart disease—of joy that kills” (354).

Critics have long grappled with the question of whether Brently Mallard actually mistreats or oppresses his wife; indeed, the text itself makes this question rather complicated. One of the most inscrutable passages in the story summarizes this contradiction: “And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not” (353). Louise’s tepid feelings toward her supposedly deceased husband do not prove that her husband oppressed her, and the overt absence of love certainly does not indicate that the Mallard home was an oppressive space. Such an analysis is complicated by the fact that Louise herself seems unable to decide whether her husband has mistreated her. The text reveals that Brently Mallard “had never looked save with love upon” Louise, but the narrative then complicates his character significantly by revealing that Brently had a “powerful will bending hers in...blind persistence” (353). Brently’s feelings toward his wife and the extent to which he loved her are, almost certainly, questions without definitive answers; such questions are also, in large part, beyond the scope of the present paper. Regardless of his intentions or degree of love and affection, he bears responsibility for the creation of Louise’s docile body.

Perhaps the strongest evidence within the story of Louise’s moderated and restricted embodiment is her delight in realizing that she could “live for herself” as a widow, followed, of course, by her sudden death at having her independence stripped away upon seeing her husband, who is very much alive. Though reactions to grief vary enormously, Louise’s behavior is a highly telling and non-normative response to news of a spouse’s unexpected death. Louise’s reactions, both her joy and her death, indicate the extreme docility of her body within the confines of marriage, as well as her degree of subjugation within the penal structure of the Mallard household.

My argument will examine Louise’s female embodied experience through multiple lenses, primarily employing Foucault’s concept of docile bodies created through authoritative surveillance and Sandra Bartky’s theory of gendered shame and powerlessness. I will also examine Louise’s physical comportment and “heart trouble,” as well themes of infantilization, silence, and the complex

nature of her suppressed identity, which Angelyn Mitchell has termed Louise's "double consciousness." Scholarship has not yet addressed Chopin's story through a Foucauldian lens, nor have critics assessed the issue of Louise's embodiment as a response to patriarchal social structures, including the structure of her own home. In examining the story through the aforementioned lenses, my paper will supplement research on this important short story and, I hope, advance current discourse on Kate Chopin's feminist fiction. Overall, this essay will position the Mallard home as a penitentiary and situate Louise as a docile body—an infantilized, silenced prisoner whose behavior signifies an internalized sense of shame and oppression.

Foucault: Mallard Home as Penitentiary

Bernard Kolaksi's work on Kate Chopin's oeuvre reveals that Americans were not reading Chopin's work widely until the mid-to-late 1970s, which coincides with the 1975 publication of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (4). However, as previously mentioned, a Foucauldian reading of "The Story of an Hour" does not yet exist. I claim that Foucault's theory of modern power and the penitentiary is essential to a thorough understanding of Chopin's story, particularly in terms of Louise Mallard's role within the household. I argue that the Mallard's home mirrors the disciplinary structures that Foucault examines in *Discipline and Punish*. The Mallard home is the seat of Brently Mallard's power; the physical structure of the home reinforces Louise's subjugated role within the household. Foucault argues:

Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. (187)

Brently's exertion of disciplinary power is subtle; indeed, it is

essentially invisible, which is in keeping with Foucault's definition. As previously mentioned, Louise herself seems unable to determine whether she loves her husband, but her relief at his death signifies a relationship in which she was the subjugated Other within the home. Her role as the wife of a subtly authoritative husband causes her to become the hypervisible subject of invisible disciplinary power. She wields no observable power within the Mallard household; however, she is the focal point of the household in that Brently Mallard's authority rests upon his wife being a docile body and subservient subject.

Foucault's claim that the subjects of discipline, not the wielders of authority, must be visible is particularly applicable to "The Story of an Hour." Brently Mallard is present only for a very small portion of the story. He arrives just seconds before his wife dies. The story also does not provide background information or a history of the couple's marriage; readers do not see Brently leave for work that morning, nor do readers encounter Brently at any other portion of the story (on his return trip home, for example). The actual presence of Brently Mallard is unnecessary to the story because, according to Foucault, the person who exerts power does not need to be visible. Indeed, the authoritative person's very power lies in the fact that s/he is invisible. The prisoner, in this case, Louise, responds to the presence of power, regardless of whether s/he can see the person who holds authority over her. Louise is a docile body both in and out of her husband's presence. It is only upon his supposed death—when it is physically impossible for him to surveil her—that she is completely free.

While Brently Mallard is largely invisible throughout the story, Louise is constantly visible. Louise is the subject of nearly every scene and sentence within the story. This hypervisibility is in keeping with Foucault's claim that the prisoner within a penitentiary is the subject of "compulsory visibility." Readers are aware of Louise's motions, her physical body movements and her comportment, which will be addressed later in this paper. Richards (Brently's friend, who shares the news of Brently's supposed death) and Josephine, Louise's sister, constantly scrutinize Louise's body; Brently, too, surveils his wife's movement. Chopin writes, "Her

husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of 'killed.' He...had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message" (352). Richards acts as an agent of Brently Mallard's power. In Brently's absence, Richards is significantly positioned "near" Louise in this intensely private moment of grief. The text makes a point of explaining that Richards is Brently's friend; he has no particular relationship to Louise herself. However, he essentially functions as Brently in absentia. In hovering "near" Louise as she grieves, his physical presence ensures that Louise remains a visible, docile subject who exhibits proper expressions of grief. The power that both Richards and Josephine wield suggests that they act as surrogates for Brently and ersatz wardens in the Mallard home. When in the presence of Richards and Josephine, Louise embodies the normative role of a grieving widow: "She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms" (352). It is not until Louise is alone that she can physically and emotionally acknowledge the freedom that her husband's death will afford her.

Like Richards, Josephine acts as an agent of Brently Mallard's power. It is not simply because Louise is a woman that she is a docile body and subjugated Other. Rather, it is specifically because she is a *wife* that she is the subject of such strict patriarchal control. Such criticisms of marriage as an unjust patriarchal institution are in keeping with much of Chopin's oeuvre. When Louise excuses herself to her room so that she might be alone, Josephine aggressively demands that Louise let her into the room: "Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. 'Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door'" (354). The passage implies that because Louise is alone and thus unobservable except through the keyhole, her body is dangerously uncontained. This reinforces the concepts of surveillance and subtle disciplinary power that permeate the text. That Brently has secured, in the form of Richards and Josephine, agents of his power working on his behalf and in his

absence signifies the extent to which he has maintained the docility of his wife's body.

Regardless of Brently's intent or his feelings toward his wife, an application of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power indicates that Brently Mallard does truly oppress Louise and regulate her embodied experience. This oppression is inextricable from Louise's lack of autonomy and freedom as a woman. Sonia Kruks's analysis of gender and humiliation is useful in understanding Louise's position within the Mallard home. Kruks writes, "To feel humiliated, or more generally to feel shame, is to undergo an experience not merely of consciousness but also of embodied—and thus gendered—existence. ... The 'pain' of humiliation might well be discursively inflicted, but it is viscerally lived" (146-147). A thorough definition of the word "humiliate" is necessary for a useful application of the preceding quotation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "humiliate" as "To make low or humble in position, condition, or feeling" ("Humiliate"). According to Kruks's definition, then, Chopin's story suggests that Louise suffers humiliation in the household; like Brently's exertion of disciplinary power, though, Brently's humiliation of his wife is subtle and indeed may not align with some modern, normative uses of the term "humiliate." Nevertheless, because Brently subjugates his wife so that she may not exceed the bounds of his patriarchal control, he does indeed humiliate her according to the definitions provided above.

Kruks claims that when a person experiences humiliation, a sense of shame is present not only in the sufferer's mind but also in the body; humiliation serves as a reminder of the person's gender and the normative roles that accompany the designation of "man" or "woman" (146). Humiliation serves to reinforce dyadic gender roles: men more often function as those who inflict humiliation and shame, and women are generally the ones whose bodies physically experience and operate within the confines of humiliation and shame. Brently (and, by extension, Josephine) and the subtle disciplinary power he exerts consistently remind Louise of her position as a gendered and inferior subject within the Mallard home. Her reaction to the news of his death and her

immediate death upon learning that he was alive indicate that her Otherness is perpetually before her, reminding her of the gendered body that she occupies but is not permitted to control.

Shame and the Female Body

Because Kruks links together humiliation and shame as gendered experiences, an examination of shame as a gendered concept is warranted. Sandra Bartky's "The Pedagogies of Shame" provides a particularly useful overview of the ways in which shame limits and regulates women's lived experiences. Bartky argues that women experience shame more deeply and more frequently than do men, which reinforces Kruks's argument about the gendered nature of humiliation. In what is perhaps Bartky's most powerful claim, she argues, "In women, shame may well be a mark and token of powerlessness" ("Pedagogies" 226). During the time in which Louise's body is docile—that is, while she believes her husband to be alive and again when she dies at the sight of him—she is almost entirely powerless within her marriage and home. While in the presence of Brently's surrogate agents of power, the only power Louise can wield is to go to her room—and, as previously discussed, Josephine continually knocks on the door and demands to be let in.

Within Chopin's story, shame functions as a form of discipline. Even in Brently's absence, Louise monitors her behavior and restrains both her speech and bodily movements in response to others who exert his power. I would argue that in part, this restraint arises from Louise's internalization of hegemonic patriarchal power and the normative expectations for female conduct. On the subject of accepting and enacting others' expectations, Bartky writes, "Shame is the distressed apprehension of the self as inadequate or diminished. It requires, if not an actual audience before whom my deficiencies are paraded, then an internalized audience with the capacity to judge me, hence internalized standards of judgment" ("Pedagogies" 227). The first line of Chopin's story reveals the "inadequate" and "diminished" nature of Louise's physical body: "Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble" (352). The text immediately identifies Louise's body as defective and insufficient;

she is physically Othered by both her gender and her illness. Thus, Louise's body is simultaneously a site and source of shame. That she has internalized others' expectations for her behavior is apparent in her normative expression of grief. To do otherwise in the presence of her judges would indeed be shameful. She must remove herself from her audience, her judges—from the panopticon—in order to eschew the sense of shame that has controlled her body and her emotions.

Louise's body is dangerous because it is potentially uncontrollable. As her relief at her husband's death indicates, she is resistant to the apparatuses of control that Brently has implemented. Both Foucault and Bartky take up the concept of resistance and indicate that resistant bodies are seen as particularly dangerous because they instinctively reject, or at least desire to reject, feelings of shame. Bartky argues that those who wield power now recognize that if they can "transform the minds" of resistant subjects, control of their subjects' bodies is eventually possible ("Foucault, Femininity," 79). Louise obviously resents the fact that marriage has stripped her of her autonomy; while her body obeys, her mind rejects the power that others exercise over her. While alone in her room she realizes, "There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself" (353). The text reveals in this key passage that Louise's body and life have not been her own; Brently has lived her life "for her." To resist his power to do this would be a shameful rejection of hegemonic male authority, an eschewal of her avowed identity as a wife.

Thus, within this story, Louise's shame in regards to her own subversive happiness functions as a type of discipline. While she is among Richards and Josephine, she reminds herself that it is wrong to welcome the freedom that widowhood provides. She knows that happiness is, in this moment, shameful. She disciplines herself in the presence of the people who regulate her body, and she experiences normative feelings of shame at her own burgeoning sense of individuality. As Foucault argues in "The Gentle Way of Punishment," discipline need not be harsh or even over in order to be effective; gentle discipline is often extremely effective in achieving the ends of the person who holds power (104). Partly

because Brently's oppression has been subtle and partly because his discipline has been highly effective, Louise has begun to monitor her own behavior. This is most clearly observable in her constrained physical movements and speech, to which I will turn later in my paper.

Bartky concurs with John Deigh, who claims that shame prompts the subject to feel as though she must hide or otherwise conceal her body from her judges (Bartky, "Pedagogies" 228, and Deigh 243). J. Brooks Bouson refers to shame as "the master emotion," one that "induces secrecy and a hiding response" (5). It is plausible, then, that Louise escapes to her room because she must hide her nascent feelings of shame—the latent yet intensifying relief—that begin to invade her body.¹ Indeed, when she enters her room, her body is the subject of the narrative's focus: "She sank [into her chair], pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul" (352). This sensation of being "pressed down" is a physical response to the shame that Louise has internalized. Bartky claims that shame is sometimes "a physical sensation of being pulled inward and downward" and gives rise to "the necessity for hiding and concealment" (228). Though she is drained and overwhelmed, she becomes the owner of her body and her lived experience within the protected space of her room.

Gendered Space: Louise's Room

The physical space of Louise's room is, as previously mentioned, free from surveillance, though not from interruption and potential intrusion. As Louise initially resists but then joyfully embraces her freedom as a widow, she is dangerously invisible. According to Foucault's theory of the penitentiary, an invisible prisoner is dangerous and unacceptable. Josephine functions as Louise's guard and seeks to recover control of the escaped prisoner. Louise's defiance directly contradicts the normative exertion of power in the household. Foucault maintains that each prisoner must be a

1 As Deigh points out, there has long been a belief that shame bespeaks worthlessness (245); Louise calls this paradigm into question, though, because she acknowledges that living "for herself" has great worth. If she saw herself as worthless, then living for and with herself alone would engender a sense of dread. Deigh claims that a person who feels shame will often hide because the acknowledgement of said shame threatens the individual's sense of worth.

responsive and obedient body: “Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. . . . Everyone is locked up in his cage, everyone at his window, answering to his name and showing himself when asked” (187, 196). Significantly, Louise does *not* “answer to [her] name” or open the door and “show [her] self when Josephine demands that she do so. This rejection signifies that Louise is no longer the model prisoner or wife. That Louise disobeys her guard reveals the extent to which she has rejected the concept of compulsory docility. Josephine’s acts of pounding on the door and demanding to be admitted are ineffectual; Louise does not respond until she wants to do so. Behind a closed, locked door, Louise is outside the scope of the panoptical structure of the Mallard home.

Louise’s Bodily Comportment

Louise’s transformation from a docile body to an unrestrained body is particularly evident in the change in her bodily movements. In many ways, Louise’s comportment reflects the common ways in which women tend to restrain and control their own bodies so that they do not take up too much physical space or exceed invisible bounds by which women are expected to abide. “Throwing Like a Girl,” Iris Marion Young’s classic study of feminine comportment, delineates the physical behaviors observable in most women in terms of the ways that they use—or rather, do *not* use—their bodies. She writes, “Girls tend to remain relatively immobile except for their arms, and even the arms are not extended as far as they could be” and that women’s movements “are frequently characterized...by a failure to make full use of the body’s spatial and lateral potentialities” (32). When Louise’s body is completely docile and under surveillance of Richards and Josephine, she is held within her sister’s arms. Josephine is the agent of power, and Louise is the docile, even childlike body that Josephine contains. Before Louise rejects the identity of the docile body, the only physical descriptions the text provides of Louise’s body and its comportment are that she is “afflicted with heart trouble” and that

she hides in her sister's arms. The lack of bodily movement or even descriptions of movement reinforces the docility of her body; she is controlled and measured, even in her grief.

Louise's experiences within her room, however, signify a drastic change in her relationship to her body. The text provides rich descriptions of Louise's body. Once Louise claims that she is "free, free, free!" her body responds to this new sense of autonomy: "Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body" (353). Most significantly, Louise stretches out her arms and exceeds the normative boundaries within which women are expected to operate: "And she opened and spread her arms out...in welcome" (353). When Louise determines that her body no longer needs to be docile because her husband—the person who controls her body—has died, she is physically freer in her bodily movements. She decides when and *whether* to open the door in response to Josephine's incessant knocking. She determines who may or may not enter her physical space and actually tells Josephine to "Go away" (354). The imperative tense of Louise's terse statement indicates the sense of boldness with which she will now determine who may or may not come close to her body. She is also more keenly aware of her body's state of health. When Josephine insists that Louise must open the door because she "will make [her]self ill," Louise answers, "I am not making myself ill" (354). Louise's knowledge of her own body and its abilities is reminiscent of Susan K. Cahn's description of bodies with invisible illnesses; like Louise, Cahn is deeply familiar with her body and what it can endure (17). Louise both uses and understands her body in ways that were heretofore inaccessible to her as a docile body. The above-quoted passages are also significant because they are among the first words Louise speaks within the story: she does not speak until she is alone. Once she claims that she is "free," she uses her body more liberally and unreservedly.

After rejecting shame and embracing her individuality, Louise also becomes an agent and actor, rather than one who is acted upon. She is no longer a body that others may touch and regulate. She reclaims control of her body. Chopin writes, "She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was

a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs" (354). Josephine is no longer the one who reaches for, touches, or guides Louise. In gripping Josephine's waist, Louise determines who will come close to her body and who may touch her, a transformation that Mary Papke has termed Louise's "rebirth" (63). Louise usurps control of her own physical body.

Loss of Identity

The docility of Louise's body is further ensured by the text's withholding of the character's name. Louise is referred to as "Mrs. Mallard" or otherwise identified as Josephine's sister until she is alone in her room. Readers only learn Louise's first name when Josephine demands admission to Louise's room.² Mary Papke has argued that because Josephine is the first person to use Louise's name, the text thus suggests that Josephine is introducing her sister to a protected community of women (63). Such an analysis seems to neglect Josephine's role as an extension of Brently Mallard's power, however. While it is certainly true that Josephine is, to some extent, simply comforting her sister, she also actively participates in the regulation of Louise's body.

Louise's namelessness is part of what Chopin scholar Angelyn Mitchell has termed Louise's "double-consciousness": "a divided state of the female psyche engendered by the cultural constructs of gender and by the biological determinants of sex" (59-60). Louise's two selves occupy different physical spaces: "her room" versus the rest of the house, which is subject to panoptical surveillance. In her room, she is Louise. In the highly regulated space of the house at large, though, she is Mrs. Mallard. This dyadic conflict results in the erasure of her identity; "Louise" may only exist when she is free from observation. Scholars such as Mark Cunningham have argued that this clash between identities contributes to Louise's death. Cunningham claims that Louise does not actually see Brently return, and thus his appearance and the resultant forfeiture of her

² Most scholars who analyze "The Story of an Hour" refer to Louise only as "Mrs. Mallard," a puzzling habit that seems to further entrench Louise in an identity that she clearly rejects.

freedom cannot be the cause of her death. Rather, according to Cunningham, Louise is so overwhelmed by her newfound sense of independence that very notion of selfhood kills her (49). Similarly, Allen F. Stein has claimed that Louise dies from “a weakness of resolve” (65). Such readings are deeply problematic in that they strip Louise of any control over her own body. Cunningham and Stein’s analyses suggest that as a woman, Louise is incapable of enduring news that might upset her delicate feminine body.

Longevity and the Unhealthy Female Body

The text’s description of Louise is complex: she is youthful, but she is also fragile and in poor health: “She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength” (353). These seeming contradictions actually serve to reinforce Louise’s role as ideally feminine: she is young, and she is ill. The combination of these traits serves to make her deeply docile and dependent. Even the lines of her face indicate that she passively accepts oppressive attempts to control her. In keeping with the aforementioned concept of double-consciousness, though, Louise consists of two selves. Diana Tietjens Meyers argues that women who embody two contradictory selves are “doomed to spend a significant part of...life distraught by the mismatch between one’s inner nature and one’s outer appearance” (157). This “mismatch” is particularly evident in Louise’s prayers: “She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long” (354). Angelyn Mitchell argues that Louise’s prayer “reflects Mrs. Mallard’s femininity: women are biologically created with the capacity to sustain the creation of life and, subsequently, are concerned with preserving life” (63). Such an analysis seems to reinscribe Louise’s body with the very normative gender role that she eagerly eschews, though. The story makes no mention of Louise as a mother or a maternal figure; if anything, as I will discuss below, Louise is positioned as a child within the structure of the home. To suggest that she desires a long life because she (presumably) has the potential to carry a child overlooks the limitations that marriage has placed upon Louise’s physical and emotional lives.

Infantilization

In contrast to Louise's preoccupation with aging and longevity is the infantilization of her character. Indeed, the text describes her as "a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams" (353). Attempts to protect Louise indicate that Richards and Josephine's belief that she is not only a grieving woman but also a child. The great deal of attention both Richards and Josephine pay to Louise does not stem solely from the fact that they are concerned about her health and wellbeing after receiving the news of her husband's death. Rather, the consistent attempts to invade her physical space, both in terms of her body and her room, reiterate Louise's docility.

The care with which Louise is treated does not actually serve her needs as a grieving person but rather further makes her an object that Josephine and Richards must monitor, regulate, and control. This concept of attention and individuation as barriers to selfhood is central to Foucault's concept of training the bodies of prisoners. Foucault writes, "In a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and the non-delinquent" (193). Thus, the fact that Louise seems to be the subject of concern and care within the story does not necessarily indicate that such care meets her needs; rather, it further entrenches her in a model of subjugation to her caretakers' power and judgment.

Conclusion

"The Story of an Hour" defies simplistic analyses of gender binaries and power dynamics. Though Brently is indeed an authoritative figure and Louise is a docile body, Louise is also oppressed by the surrogate agents of Richards *and* Josephine. The text criticizes the institution of marriage and the compulsory female oppression that accompanies it. In this text, women can occupy a position of power so long as they use it to oppress a fellow female body. Power does not take the form of overt discipline or obvious attempts to subjugate another. Rather, in keeping with Foucault's analysis of power and Bartky's interpretation of shame,

power in “The Story of an Hour” is the insistence that a docile body be incessantly visible and obedient; the body must feel ashamed of and thus hide feelings of independence or resistance.

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Homonormative Desire: Investigating Male-Male Relationships in Anglo-Saxon Literature

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Attempts to locate a homosexual history in the medieval past through queer readings of Anglo-Saxon literature have been particularly numerous in recent decades. Two advocates of such interpretation, Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger, argue that queer readings of medieval texts “promise[] the recovery of cultural meanings that are lost, obscured, or distorted in work[s] that either ignores questions of sexuality or attends only to hegemonic or heteronormative understandings of it” (qtd. in Zeikowitz 1). This statement is problematic for several reasons. Most notably, Anglo-Saxon literature does not ignore questions of sexuality, nor is it fair to say that all representations of it are heteronormative. Yet this sort of belief stands as an example of the overarching misunderstanding of male same-sex relations in Old English literature that is worryingly present in recent scholarship. When confronted with a scene of male-male intimacy in a medieval text, we are often led to choose between two extreme reactions: either the characters are homosexuals, or it is an innocuous scene of brotherly affection.

Alternative readings are rarely, if ever, presented -- ones that are not hesitant to admit the profound and unusual significance of the relationship without giving in to the temptation of deeming it “homosexual” or setting it against an imagined medieval version of heteronormativity.

This temptingly simple reading that forces us to choose between extremes has fortunately been falling out of favor with many critics. One such critic, James Schultz, argues that “the Middle Ages had no notion of sexual orientation” (57) – the “heterosexual” and “homosexual” did not exist as identities, a concept with which Foucault would heartily agree. David Clark concurs that it is improbable that “Anglo-Saxons had any concept of same-sex partnerships in the modern sense” (31). Allen Frantzen adds that while “intramale relations [were] powerful, suggestive, intimate, socially, even sexually, charged,” they had nothing to do with sexual intercourse and thus defy modern labelling (107). Yet even as they admit that rigid categories of sexual identification were nonexistent, none of them attempt to investigate deeply the space in which medieval literary males engage in such undeniably profound relationships. They skirt the important question: if the demonstrated relationships between two men cannot be rightly called homosexual, homoerotic, heterosexual, or heteronormative, then what *can* they be called? The short answer is that we, by dint of being modern readers, lack the appropriately nuanced terminology needed to label these phenomena. We must then turn to the language surrounding the depictions of male-male bonds in the Old English texts in an attempt to tease out an aggregate of qualities that characterize them. I will argue that these relationships transcend modern notions of heteronormativity and queerness by analyzing the particular language that constitutes their cultural treatment within their respective texts. I will suggest that we cannot rely on modern conceptions of sexual identity to discuss these characters; rather, we must propose and operate under the premise of a homonormative model of male intimacy. In my analysis, I will focus mainly on the most significant male-male relationships found in *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf*. This analysis will be followed

by a short discussion of scholarly arguments regarding the narrators' genders in *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*. Through this discussion, I will argue that we implicitly realize the pervasiveness of homonormative relationships between men in Old English literature, leading to a desire to impose that expectation everywhere in an unexpected reversal of modern notions of normativity.

The most immediately evident quality that characterizes these male-male relationships has already been briefly introduced by Frantzen: while exceptionally intimate and passionate, they lack true homoeroticism in the modern sense of the word.¹ This divide is particularly well-illustrated in the Exeter book elegy, *The Wanderer*. In the poem, we understand that the Wanderer is in mournful exile following the death of his lord, and that when “sorg ond slæp . . . / . . . gebindað”² him in dreams, he imagines that “hē his mondryhten / clyppe ond cysse” and “on cnēo legge / honda ond hēafod” (39-43).³ The genuine affection implicit in this display – embracing, kissing, and laying his head on his lord's lap – is difficult to deny, and yet it is often dismissed by readers as “the brotherly bond that has always existed between warriors” (Clark 3). But in brushing the scene off as a manifestation of “brotherly love” that is ultimately unremarkable, we deny ourselves the chance to investigate the nuances of the relationship presented to us. Indeed, in considering that the Wanderer refers to his lord as both “his winedryhtnes / lēofes” and “swæsne”⁴ among other affectionate terms, we must question why the Wanderer continually reiterates and rewords his proclamations of affection if the poet intends for the relationship between the two men to be unremarkable.

In his book *Before the Closet*, Frantzen suggests that the Wanderer's dream is a “gesture of loyalty” that is “both erotic . . . and courtly,” and argues that the fact that it “takes place in a dream

1 Here and elsewhere I take “homoeroticism” to mean a blatantly sexual overtone characterizing the relations between two men, but not necessarily involving actual sexual acts.

2 “sorrow and sleep . . . bind” – For *The Wanderer* Old English source text, see Mitchell citation.

3 “he might embrace and kiss his liege-lord” and “might lay hands and head on his knee”

4 “his dear beloved lord” and “beloved one”

might intensify its fleeting but moving sexual resonance, its sexual same-sex shadow” (98). While I agree that the dream is courtly gesture of loyalty, namely due to the imagery of the head on the lap, I take issue with the assertion of its homoeroticism. Frantzen specifically points to the clasp and kiss as being the erotic moments of the dream, and I could only agree if the clasping and kissing were mutual – as it is, the Wanderer is performing these acts on a passive figure and we are given no indication of the lord’s actions in return. The deemphasizing of the lord’s body thus abstracts the Wanderer’s acts from sexuality and shifts the reader’s focus to the emotions underpinning those acts. Therefore, the one-sided nature of the dream denies the Wanderer’s acts an overtly sexual dimension even while encouraging their high-despairing passion. As such, the dream’s lack of homoeroticism does not diminish its profound intimacy. Yet this reading is uncommon, and the reason seems to be that the dismissive “brotherly love” reading evokes an equally extreme counter-reading that asserts overt homosexuality (even if critics like Frantzen deny use of that word on the grounds of anachronism). However, both claims erase the potential existence of a nuanced middle-ground, a type of homointimacy unique to its culture and time period that transcends expected categorization. We can use the dream scene from *The Wanderer* to further unsettle those pigeonholing tendencies.

One such form of dichotomous categorization that critics implicitly impose on male-male relations in Anglo-Saxon texts, in addition to “brotherly” versus “erotic,” is whether or not the specifically illustrated behaviors appease religious values of the time. This question is certainly important for a historicist reading, but it is based on a misguided foundation: the idea that Anglo-Saxon Christianity was primarily worried about the gender of the participants in a sexual act rather than any other criteria. Frantzen contributes to this belief in his discussion of penitentials from the time period, in which he writes: “[They] identif[y] same-sex relations of many kinds and unambiguously condemn[] them” (113). While his statement is not factually wrong, by only discussing same-sex relations he makes it sound as if all male-

female relations were free from condemnation. In his book *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality*, Schultz criticizes the tendency of many scholars like Frantzen to imply this false dichotomy. He argues that “in earlier times sexual behavior was classified according to other criteria” than the gender of sexual participants, such as activity and passivity (54). Continuing this discussion in her article “Engendering Religious Desire,” Clare Lees suggests that Anglo-Saxon Christianity’s views on sex “[were] not constructed by an explicit ideology of sexuality . . . but by the doctrines of cleanliness and uncleanness: chastity and sin,” and furthermore by “restraint” (19). The Wanderer’s dream tenuously threatens to become homoerotic as it progresses: first a clasp, then a kiss, then his head and hands are placed in his lord’s lap in what might turn into fellatio (if we allow ourselves to take the imagery to its potential limits). But, in a display of restraint, the progression is halted; the Wanderer awakes, sin is evaded, chastity is preserved – yet the undeniable, intimate affection of the dream is preserved without condemnation. The relationship between the Wanderer and his lord, therefore, is upheld as proper and desirable by the poet not because it is heteronormative (i.e. “brotherly”) but because it mingles intimacy and restraint, love and chastity, without diminishing its own profundity. Our desire to attribute the relationship’s idealized treatment to its compliance with modern heteronormative standards neglects contemporary context and is, to quote Arnold Davidson, “anachronis[tic] at best and unintelligib[le] at worst” (qtd. in Schultz 56).

Our understanding of this sort of intimacy is deepened if we turn to examples of similar relationships in other Anglo-Saxon texts, like *Beowulf*. Equal if not greater intimacy is observed between Beowulf and Hrothgar during the scene in which Beowulf is just about to return to Hygelac in Geatland across the sea. As they say their farewells, Hrothgar “gecyste þa . . . / . . . ðegn betstan / ond be healse genam”(1870-2).⁵ Afterward, he reflects that “wæs him se man tō þon lēof, / þæt hē þone brēost-wylm forberan ne mehte

5 “kissed then . . . the best thane and seized him about the neck” – For *Beowulf* Old English source text, see Chickering citation.

/ ac him on hrepre hyge-bendum fæst / æfter dēorum men dyrne langað / beorn wið blōde” (1876-80).⁶ The kissing and embracing in this scene is reminiscent of that which is found in *The Wanderer*, but Hrothgar qualifies his feelings towards his companion in much more explicit terms. Much critical attention has been focused on the “langað” that “beorn wið blōde”⁷ and the potentially homoerotic connotations it suggests. Frantzen cites Howell Chickering in an agreement that the “burning” signifies a “secret longing for a son, or rather for another son, rather than a sexual passion for Beowulf.” While he admits that the kiss is “one of the most impressive and moving displays of same-sex love in Anglo-Saxon literature,” he implores critics not to take it any further: “The fact that it unites two men, at least one of whom deeply loves the other, is quite enough” (94). Again, this reading reflects the polarizing tendencies of critics presented with male-male intimacy in these works: it either represents blatant sexual desire or familial friendship. No room is allowed for a model of male intimacy that toes the line between categories of normativity and queerness, and transcends them. It seems unlikely that Hrothgar’s burning blood is meant to communicate sexual desire, since nowhere else in the poem do we see their relationship figured erotically, nor does Hrothgar’s gaze ever draw our attention to Beowulf’s body beyond, in this scene, his neck. Yet to propose that one’s blood would burn with longing for a father-son relationship seems uncomfortable at best, inappropriate at worst, and hyperbolic, regardless, in a way that the *Beowulf*-poet does not appear to mimic anywhere else. What is more probable is that Hrothgar passionately desires to be intimate with Beowulf, but in a manner restrained from sexuality and transcending modern understandings of queerness. As Lees points out, in Anglo-Saxon literature, “the male body [is] a conflicted locus of violence, division, and male homosocial bonding The ‘other’ is expelled, often as monstrous, from a milieu in which the

6 “that man was so dear to him that he could not restrain the breast-fountain (i.e. emotion of his heart), but to him in his heart, firmly thought-bound, a secret longing for the dear man burned in his blood”

7 “longing” that “burned in his blood”

male body signifies heroism, rank, and often death” (23). We can thus understand Hrothgar’s intimacy with Beowulf to be qualified, in part, by their recognition of one another as respected members of the *comitatus*. Their intimacy is homonormalizing – it reinforces and validates their heroism and rank among men – and Hrothgar’s burning blood is a manifestation of that overwhelming respect for his “ðegn betstan”⁸ (1870).

We can discern that the men comprising either of the pairs found in *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf* occupy hierarchical positions in relation to one another – one is a dominant lord, the other a subordinate thane. However, despite modern preconceptions of such a power arrangement, it confers neither effeminacy nor lesser masculinity upon the subordinate as we might stereotypically expect. Under a heteronormative model, the woman in a male-female relationship, sexual or otherwise, is generally expected to be subordinate to the man. In this way, the subordinate man in a male-male relationship would be associated with effeminacy or lesser masculinity. Thus if these Anglo-Saxon texts are working under a heteronormative model, then we should expect to see Beowulf and the Wanderer feminized to some degree by their respective texts since they are the thanes subordinate to their lords.

In order to determine whether or not they are feminized in the intimate scenes already discussed, we must query what effeminacy meant to Anglo-Saxons. In an extensive analysis of Anglo-Saxon penitentials in his article “Male Homoeroticism in the Old English *Canons of Theodore*,” R. D. Fulk reveals that recorded religious punishments for sexual acts tend to be harsher for someone who is penetrated than for someone who does the penetrating, whether male-male or male-female. It follows that the most severe punishments appear to be reserved for molles (Latin) or bædlings (Old English) – “effeminate males, who either have no beards or endure the fornication of another” (19-23). Frantzen nuances Fulk’s discoveries in arguing that “effeminacy was a sign of weakness, a moral defect” in the Middle Ages that qualified a man’s character rather than his sexual preferences (90). It seems, then, that

effeminacy was generally characterized by “endur[ing] fornication” – or what Clark calls “sexual passivity” – and “weakness,” which we can understand to mean a lack of emotional, physical, or mental fortitude. In the texts in question, Beowulf and the Wanderer’s lord are the passive parties in the kissing scenes; actions are performed upon them and we are given no descriptions of their reactions during the embrace. This would, according to the definition we have set forth, seem to feminize them and masculinize the active parties. However, Hrothgar and the Wanderer are associated with emotional weakness, a feminine trait. Hrothgar’s “[tēaras] hruron him” (1872)⁹ and the Wanderer is said to “cwīþan [his] ceare” (9),¹⁰ both at the loss or impending loss of their companions. Conversely, Beowulf and the Wanderer’s lord are presented as nothing short of stoic, a masculine composure. It appears, then, that all of the men in question are equally associated with feminine and masculine traits in ways that seem to defy a heteronormative view of their hierarchy. The logical conclusion is that a heteronormative model is not governing their behavior or interactions within their narratives, but rather a homonormative one that transcends gendered associations.

While, in both texts, the masculinity of either man does not seem to be in danger as a result of his thoughts and actions towards the other, we must take into special consideration the fact that both Hrothgar and the Wanderer experience impassioned longing for their companions. As Frantzen points out, “longing in Old English poetry is seldom a feeling one man has for another” (95). In fact, outside of *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*, the most prominent examples of longing for another person that we can easily find in Anglo-Saxon literature occur within *The Wife’s Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer* – both of which have purportedly female narrators. Thus, heteronormative or not, we must admit that “langað”¹¹ has a distinctly gendered history of use in Anglo-Saxon literature. As we have previously discussed, “langað” is mentioned explicitly in *Beowulf*. The private act of longing is starkly juxtaposed with the

9 “tears rushed down [his face]”

10 “bewail his sorrow”

11 “longing”

public act of embracing in the scene between Beowulf and Hrothgar. The poet states that Hrothgar's longing is "him on hreþre hyge-bendum fæst,"¹² simultaneously meaning that his thoughts have permanently impressed that "dyrne langað" within him and that his longing is "fæst"¹⁴ in place, thwarted from transcending the private mind into the public sphere. His thoughts have silenced his longing and made it "dyrne"¹⁵ without diminishing its passion whatsoever. Frantzen argues that "secret desires are outside what the social will permit: what is public must be for the public good" (97). Therefore, when Hrothgar's "langað" that "beorn wið blōde"¹⁶ is allowed to become public, it is expressed as an action that is tailored "for the public good" – in this case, a homosocial display that reinforces the visible *comitatus*. The Wanderer's longing is somewhat different in that its physical manifestation never becomes public at all; it is relegated to the realm of dreams and exile, neither harming nor benefitting the "public good." Their longing, therefore, does not undermine the homonormative model we have developed so far.

At this point, it is worth noting that the male-male intimate scenes showcased in *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf* are far more detailed and passionate than virtually any other scene involving a male and a female in the Old English canon. The only potential exceptions are *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*, but even these texts have male presences imposed upon them by some critics – with interesting consequences. In his 1963 article "Another View of the Old English *Wife's Lament*," Rudolph Bambas presents a still frequently cited reading of a male narrator in *The Wife's Lament*. He argues that the plot does not make sense if the speaker is a woman, since there is no reason the chief would put his wife in "unprotected isolation" or exile in his absence; more likely, he argues, she would tend to the chief's estate or live with relatives until his return. Furthermore, the "fierce loyalty" that "she" exhibits towards her

12 "to him in his heart, firmly thought-bound"

13 "secret longing"

14 "bound"

15 "secret"

16 "longing" that "burns in his blood"

“husband” is not presented by any other woman in Old English literature, though it is a trait very often idealized in male characters (305-6). Norman Eliason posits a similar reading for *Wulf and Eadwacer* in his aptly titled “On *Wulf and Eadwacer*.” He claims that interpreting the speaker as a woman does nothing to illuminate the poem’s ambiguities. Instead, he suggests that the poem is written by a man and is a “private communication addressed to a colleague, ruefully but playfully protesting about the mishandling of their poetry” (228). Both Bambas and Eliason explain that the feminine inflections gendering the speakers are scribal errors. Jane Chance in *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* takes issue with these readings, calling them “eccentric[]” and part of an “odd vogue” that cannot account for the feminine inflections in a satisfying way (127-8). Clark is equally skeptical, lauding their “elegantly simple solution[s]” but, like Chance, finding it “rather implausible . . . that a scribe made three errors in a row for no apparent reason” (32).

The accuracy of the male narrator reading is not important to our discussion – what *is* important is that the existence of this sort of reading reflects a consciousness of how pervasive and privileged homonormativity is in Anglo-Saxon literature. When a poem is presented where a character’s intimate relationship with a man is given a large amount of attention, as is the case in the last two poems we discussed, there is an inclination to expect the speaker to be a man as well. The attention given to male-male relationships in the rest of the Old English canon – *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf* only being two examples thereof – leads us to find the intimacy between two men to be more normative and profound than that which is ever shown to exist between a man and a woman. As Lees puts it, “heterosexuality – though naturalized – is not as normative as homosociality” and the latter is overwhelmingly privileged at the expense of the former (23).

It is clear by now that approaching Anglo-Saxon literature with a modern expectation of heteronormativity against which we can measure the “queerness” of characters is flawed at its most basic level on account of its anachronism. Instead, *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf* present a homonormative model of interpersonal relation,

characterized primarily by intense intimacy lacking the overtly sexual nature that some critics mistakenly read into it. An obvious hierarchy is also present in which one man is dominant and the other subordinate, but this hierarchy does not lend feminization onto the subordinate; in fact, both men are, in a sense, initiated into the homosocial order as a result of the relationship. Fittingly, their longing for one another manifests itself publically as intimate displays of affection that reinforce homosocial ties and strengthen the *comitatus*. The type of male-male relationship presented in these Old English texts is undoubtedly unique to its time period and thus lacks a popular modern analog, perhaps due to our pigeonholing views of heteronormativity that erase the middle-ground in which these texts operate. It will be interesting to see if modern queer theory will open up our analysis of homonormativity in Anglo-Saxon works as that critical view continues to evolve.

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Rage Against the Machine: Examining Identity, Ideology, and Politics in Nella Larsens's *Quicksand*

Erika Gavitt

Nella Larsen's 1928 novel *Quicksand* begins with one of the only instances in which the main character, Helga Crane, is completely alone. The reader is introduced to Helga as she sits in her room among furnishings: a single reading lamp, a Chinese carpet, etc. Like the items described, Helga herself is presented as a solitary figure. The sense of isolation at the heart of the image creates an illusion – a false sense of Helga's authority and the sense that she is unattached to the outside world. The illusion of solitude quickly shatters. As Helga moves to her window and looks outside, she sees her African American students teeming with movement which contrasts the calm seclusion of her personal space (Larsen 16). This sense of movement begins to engulf Helga and it becomes clear that Larsen's novel focuses on anything but tranquility. Initially, she seems to exhibit mastery over movement. Physical agency pushes Helga to quit her job in Naxos and move from state to state. In this way, Helga *seems* free. However, Larsen layers and complicates the notion of her freedom and independence. Although Helga decides to leave Naxos, it becomes clear that Naxos never lets *her* go. Using

the theories of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, I conclude that the networks of power are present throughout the entirety of the novel. Larsen uses these systems of power to imply that Helga is never alone. And this is not a novel concept at this point. When are we ever really alone? Due to recent increased measures in surveillance and advancements in technology, most people in developed countries would probably answer: Never. We are never truly alone, or, at least, we choose to compose ourselves in a way where we assume so. The same idea holds true for Helga. Regardless of how removed she feels from the busy world outside her window, she is forced to operate within its systems. This constant presence of state apparatuses, the larger institutional powers, ultimately consumes Helga in a way that destroys her sense of will and identity.

The literary theorist Louis Althusser's ideas are the foundation for how readers understand the systems of power at play in *Quicksand*. In his book, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Althusser dedicates a section titled "The State Ideological Apparatuses" to explain the structure and function of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). ISAs and their counterpart, SAs (repressive State Apparatuses), are social formations created and used by the governing power in order to exert control over its subjects. SAs, like the government and the police, exert their control through violent measures and physical force. ISAs, by contrast, are defined by their plurality and the fact that their functions are predominantly based upon the inculcation of ideologies. Among Althusser's list of the primary ISAs that he has identified, he stresses the importance of the religious ISA, the church, and the educational ISA, the school. Where SAs exert their power in physical forms of management and repression, ISAs are powerful in their ability to "attenuate and conceal" their exertions of power and are therefore able to conceal the ways in which they are able to influence large masses of people (Althusser 1346). The ways in which an SA, like the police, might manage or control a group may seem more obvious and threatening than the way in which an ISA, such as a school, might insidiously enforce similarly restrictive forms of management upon students. One could easily take issue with an officer physically forcing a person into place by limiting her movement with combative measures. On the

other hand, the ethics of classroom management, with practices like deeming children to be well behaved when they sit quietly in one particular seat throughout a term, are rarely ever called into question because they feel natural to the teacher, the student, and the parent. ISAs are also distinguished by their purpose to “reproduce the relations of production” (Althusser 1346). While SAs also operate in order to reproduce, ISAs have the ability to influence subjects without them understanding that they are the product of a system in which they will not only be taught the ideologies of the State, but will then also be influenced to teach those same ideologies to other which creates the reproduction that Althusser predicts. The most important reason why the educational ISA to be “the dominant ideological State apparatus in capitalist social formations” is because it appears to be the most “natural” of the ISAs, to the point where teachers do not understand the work it forces them to do (1348). Yet, school has the highest rate of reproducing ideas because it holds the “audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist formation eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven” (Althusser 1347). By necessity in capitalist society, schools have the ability, simply in terms of size and number, to influence everyone: teachers, students, and the networks those students enter after they have completed their education. For Nella Larsen, Helga Crane becomes the vehicle with which to display the power of the influence of the state and specifically of ISAs like school. Throughout her journey, Helga seeks desperately to detach herself from the ideas and influence of the South and of Naxos. While Helga is able to physically separate herself from the repressive institution, the ideas have impacted Helga in a way in which she is pathologically doomed to repeat and spread the ideologies she opposes. Helga’s journey and her inability to outrun the influence of Naxos and its ideologies show the political power and corruption that extend beyond Helga and also beyond the American South.

Helga’s attempt to establish independence from Naxos is most easily understood when examining the way in which Larsen characterizes the school, its repressive power, and its corrupt ideologies. Helga begins the novel by thinking to herself, “This great community [Naxos] was no longer a school. It had grown

into a machine” (Larsen 8). By comparing the school to a “machine” Nella Larsen invokes Althusser’s ideas that institutions like school function as apparatuses that have mechanical qualities in their ability to produce subjects. Furthermore, the real danger for Helga comes as a result of the policy of racial uplift that Naxos upholds. She feels resentment toward the preacher of the school as he explains the ideologies of the school which are founded on the fact that students of Naxos “kn[o]w enough to stay in their places and that show good taste” (Larsen 7). The preacher and the school represent the idea that education is not a means for liberation although often it is presented to students in that way. Instead, education in terms of racial uplift is a means for repression and African Americans like Helga are responsible for being role models for and correcting the behavior of the African American population as a whole. Larsen continues to show the imposition of machines and systems by showing the strict order that defines the school. Helga watches from her room as teachers escort groups of students across the campus. She notes that as they travel “here and there a male member of the faculty, important and resplendent in the regalia of an army officer, would pause in his prancing or struggling to jerk a negligent or offending student into the proper attitude or place” (Larsen 16). In this situation, Helga makes a connection between the school, an ISA by Althusser’s definition, and the Army, a (repressive) State Apparatus that “functions by violence” (1341). The school enforces a level of order upon the students and physically curtails their natural movements and also polices their natural ideologies or attitudes. What Helga fails to acknowledge at this point is where she is situated in the context of this machine. She describes the scene from a distance, as if she is removed from the ISA and its affects, but in reality her attitude is equally as affected by Naxos and the reader sees evidence of this after Helga begins to travel. Larsen reinforces the comparison between school and machine by calling the students “automatons” and “massed phalanxes” at the end of the same paragraph (16). These robotic masses of students visually begin to encroach upon and take over the natural landscape. Larsen describes “the massed phalanxes increased in size and number, blotting out the

pavements, bare earth, and grass” (Larsen 16). The spreading of students and the blotting out of the earth represents an infections spreading of order and ideals of Naxos. The dissemination of corrupt ideas contributes, in large part, to the discomfort that Helga feels throughout the novel, a discomfort that Helga tries to escape. Perhaps the most discomfiting aspect of this image for Helga is the way in which the scene resembles an assembly line with the teacher putting the mass back together every time a student tries to work his way out of the line. With this analogy, the students and education are organized, commodified, and described in economic terms, which compares them to products. The manufacturing of knowledge and education goes against the way in which Helga understands education and the individual having value over bureaucratic institutions and the State that controls them. At this point in the novel, Helga is clearly aware of the political and ethical problems that govern the institution of Naxos. Helga’s acknowledgment of the hypocritical ideologies and understanding of the fact that the school is an ideological state apparatus causes her to want to separate herself from the problem. She is then moved to leave the school immediately hoping to save herself from the power of the school and establish her own sense of independence that is founded on her personal ideologies and beliefs which differ from those which Naxos promotes. Helga’s goals are clear and her understanding of the insidiousness of Naxos and its ideologies is well defined. Repressive violence, however, follows Helga throughout her journey of escape as it inadvertently shapes her attitude and ideals, thereby contributing to her downfall.

The restrictive ideologies of Naxos follow Helga to Chicago as she gravitates naturally to other ISAs like the library and brings the ideologies of the south with her. After abandoning her career as a teacher in the south, Helga arrives in Chicago and finds that she needs a job and a place to reside. Helga instinctively considers taking a job as a librarian. Her desire to embark on a career in which she is responsible for arranging and categorizing reflects the way in which the school has left an impression on her. As the critic Karin Roffman points out, Helga approaches the situation with an attitude in which she is critical of libraries and the people

who work within them. She describes the library as “that ugly gray building, where was housed much knowledge and a little wisdom” (Larsen 34). Roffman uses these criticisms to make the argument that Helga is to holding onto the idea that “knowledge is manufactured” just like it was in Naxos (764). The reason why Helga looks upon the building with a sense of bitterness is because she recognizes that it bears, in its objective to regulate and manipulate knowledge and learning, a similarity to Naxos. Roffman also points out that in Helga’s description, knowledge is a “passive thing” for Helga because the narrator uses the passive voice to explain that it is simply “housed” and therefore static (767). Furthermore, by using the relative pronoun “that,” Larsen implies that the uselessness of the library and the powerlessness of knowledge is expected to be understood by the reader. Despite the criticism of the lack of wisdom in libraries and her awareness that the library is as much an ISA as a school, Helga still applies for the job. Ultimately, she wants to be part of a profession that classifies and organizes knowledge based on its varying values. In wanting to become a librarian, Helga wants to be part of the system in which she helps to keep the knowledge housed, even though her dissatisfaction with the institution implies that she would oppose it politically. She even feels a sense of “disappointment” when she finds that she is not properly qualified because she lacks training in areas like “classification” and “cataloguing” (Larsen 34-35). In the event that Helga does not intend to ally herself with the library and what it represents, she is willing to sacrifice upholding her political beliefs in order to make a living. Roffman’s research explains that Larsen herself, who was a librarian for a number of years, most likely understood the systematic nature of libraries and the problems that were born of them. Abandoning her career as a librarian after publishing her work, the fact that Larsen detached herself from libraries, and, indicates an understanding of the sacrifice Helga was pressured to make when threatened with the prospect of unemployment (Roffman 776). Having recently fled from Naxos, Helga is hyperaware of the problems that arise from categorizing and racial uplift; however, her livelihood also depends upon them because she cannot “afford anger” (Larsen 38). In

many ways, it appears as though Helga arrives in Chicago with the intention of breaking away from the systematic ordering that defines the institutions she loathes like Naxos, which she leaves purposefully. However, due to her financial position, Helga is forced to make compromises and allows herself to be part of a system that represses others by regulating knowledge. Though she wants to escape these ideologies, she finds herself grudgingly becoming part of them instead.

The theme of classifying and regulating ideas, the product of Helga's time spent being influenced by Naxos, continues to work its way through her journey as she finds a stable occupation editing the speeches of Mrs. Hayes-Rore. After being turned away from several positions and finding that she is unable to find a job for herself, Mrs. Hayes-Rore finds Helga by chance and "depends" upon her talent as a writer (Larsen 41). Upon first explaining what she expects of Helga, Hayes-Rore says that Helga has been hired to help "order, correct, and condense" her speeches (Larsen 39). The subject of the speeches reflects the ideas that Helga had been forced to be part of at Naxos. Larsen writes that Hayes-Rore's speeches took "phrases and even whole sentences" from the published work of figures like "Wendell Phillips, Frederic Douglass, Booker T. Washington...with a peppery dash of W. E. B. Du Bois" all of whom were main figureheads of the racial uplift movement (Larsen 41). In being given the freedom to "correct" the speech of Hayes-Rore, Helga clearly suffers, with bitterness, an internal conflict. She is not only helping to create, edit and promote the ideas that she longs to revolt against, but has to work in order to earn money and also have Hayes-Rore as a reference. Helga's patience is pushed to the limit when she realizes she has become the subject of the speeches and is being studied by Hayes-Rore as she works (Larsen 41). In certain senses, the recognition of Hayes-Rore's gaze implies a realization in which Helga has become the subject of the speeches she edits. Through this subjugation, she becomes an example of a successful case in a movement that she wants to detach herself from. In her article titled "Too High a Price" the critic Jessica Labbe examines the conflict between agency and desire as they pertain to Helga's occupations. Labbe argues that working to edit

speeches “exposes how black female workers were domesticized in non-domestic employment even within the African American community itself” (97). Labbe also points out that the diction of the statement reveals the stratification of power between the two women. Larsen writes that Hayes-Rore “seasons” her speeches with “vinegary statements” and “peppery dashes” to show the way in which the employer domesticates Helga and her work (97). Labbe concludes “such a metaphor uncovers Mrs. Hayes-Rore’s role as an oppressor—who, as a black woman, is herself oppressed—in the matrix of domination” (97). In one sense, Helga is still caught in the machine of ideologies because she is obligated to perform the literal task of organizing. Furthermore, Helga is still in a position in which she desires agency, but is held down by figures of authority in a way in which she has to curtail her voice and instead using it to amplify their ideas. The added layer of tragic irony is that her first job in Chicago also forces Helga to write and edit thoughts about her race and help to organize movements in racial uplift. She has the chance to correct the speeches and edit the ideas within them, but realistically, due to her race and position she is clearly not able to make any significant changes. Thus, Helga is held down in her power and restricted from working to develop her own ideas. As she participates in classifying, organizing, and compartmentalizing, Larsen begins to develop a theme of division which reflects the idea that Helga’s identity does not become any more whole, but instead, more fragmented as the novel progresses. While Helga attempts to work her way outside of the systems and institutions that enforce order, she ends up participating in other forms of order. Helga’s inability to escape both the ISAs and SAs within *Quicksand* augments the power of institutions.

Another theorist whose work can be used to understand the power of systems and institutions in *Quicksand* is Michel Foucault. Foucault’s 1975 book *Discipline and Punish* is a critique of the western prison system and the development of its structure and modes of power throughout the modern age. The bulk of Foucault’s argument within the text holds that while most people consider the prison to be the primary and most threatening form of punishment, the threat of punishment is equally distributed in other institutions

such as schools and hospitals. Foucault's main idea about discipline and punishment overlap with the ideas of Louis Althusser who, in his criticism, also identified the threat of the ISAs that Foucault points out. In the third chapter of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains his theory of Panopticism. Panopticism comes from a model of the ideal prison which was developed by Jeremy Bentham. The model consists of two concentric circles with prison cells on the outer circle and a watchtower in the center. While the tower is structured in such a way that the prisoners cannot see whether or not they are being watched or who is watching them, the cells of the prisoners are lit from behind so their shadows and movements can be observed at any moment. Foucault summarizes, "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (202). Thus, in Bentham's model the power of the Panopticon is not structured in a way in which a set of guards physically threatens the well being of the prisoners. Instead, the power comes from anonymity, the way in which the mechanism "automatizes and disindividualizes power." Foucault explains, "the more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed" (202). The threat of being observed at any time forces the prisoner into a form of self discipline in which prisoners modify their behavior at all times instead of at one crucial moment when they know they are being watched. While Foucault begins with the model of a prison system, he contends that the effects of anonymous surveillance can be seen in other contexts: "A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation" Foucault explains; "So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behavior, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application, the patient to the observation of the regulations" (202). The network of the power of surveillance allows for many points of critique within the context of *Quicksand*. At many points in the novel, Helga takes the position of being the observer, categorizing those around her and using subjection to hold herself in a position of authority. However, as Helga progresses in her journey to establish a sense of

self, she becomes subjugated through the gaze of others, causing her identity to become unstable and fragmented throughout the novel. By the conclusion of *Quicksand* Helga begins to self-survey and modifies her own thoughts and actions in a way in which she limits her expression and any development of the identity she seeks so desperately because she feels the threat of others observing her.

Foucault's ideas allow readers to see the effects of surveillance and the reversal of power that comes about as a result of Helga shifting from the surveyor to the surveyed. In the beginning of the novel, Helga is in a position in which she surveys and observes others which allows her to create a sense of power for herself. One can critique the two aforementioned moments in *Quicksand* in order to lay the groundwork for understanding the gradual destruction of Helga's agency. She removes herself from crowds in order to observe and critique them. In the initial chapters of the novel, Helga takes the perspective comparable to an anthropologist. For instance, on her final day at school, Helga watches groups of students and teachers from the window of her room without their knowledge (Larsen 16). If one were to apply Foucault's principles on Panopticism, Helga is in a position that is analogous to a surveyor in Bentham's watchtower while the well-behaved students can be compared to the prisoners. Though Helga plays no part in punishing the students herself, her perspective indicates a sense of authority and that authority allows her to feel, for the time being, that her will is free. Hence, Helga feels confident in her impulsive decision to move to the north because she feels in control of her life and secure in her choices. In Chicago with Mrs. Hayes-Rore, Helga's confidence and authority begins to break down. Initially, Helga feels she is able to maintain a position of power despite the fact that she is under observation. However, the mood changes in a single paragraph and both characters are put at odds with one another in their authority. The paragraph begins with Helga's observations of Hayes-Rore: "Her dark eyes, bright and investigating, had held her untidy head gave the impression of a cat watching its prey..." (Larsen 41). Helga not only uses Hayes-Rore's physical features to make judgmental inferences about her character, but she even dehumanizes her by comparing her to a cat.

Directly after making this observation, Helga looks up from her work to find that “she was being studied” by her employer (Larsen 41). Larsen continues to describe Hayes-Rore, noting that she “sat leaning back, the tips of her fingers pressed together, her head a bit on one side, her small inquisitive eyes boring into the girl before her” (Larsen 41). While Helga begins by judging Mrs. Hayes-Rore, she then becomes aware of the fact that she is simultaneously being observed and judged in the same way. While Helga is confident in the opening of the passage, she quickly becomes defensive in her conversation after noticing that she is being observed. Helga also continues to describe her boss as an animal, but in a way in which she feels threatened by her. Larsen puts an emphasis on the eyes that “bore into” Helga and strategically makes it so that Hayes-Rore is being characterized as predatory to make clear that she holds the authority in the conversation and in their relationship. Jessica Labbe’s analysis of Larsen’s choice to use culinary, domestic terms when describing Hayes-Rore reinforces the idea that Helga is losing her power in this interaction. In being both domesticated and turned metaphorically into her employer’s prey, it becomes clear that the main character begins to lose the momentum she was characterized by in the beginning of the novel. The novel starts off with Helga holding a certain amount of authority in social situations due to the position she assumes as a surveyor. By the time Helga is in Chicago, which happens early on in the novel, her power is stripped down as she becomes the surveyed. Being aware of the fact that others can watch her at any given point characterizes a sense of insecurity that develops in Helga as the novel continues. Due to surveillance, self-awareness morphs into a crippling sense of self consciousness that makes Helga change from being authoritatively independent to a part that supports the Ideological State Apparatuses that surround her. As the novel progresses, these shifts in power become even more dramatic.

The effects of surveillance and observation can be seen when comparing the observations made by third person narrator to the appropriations of Helga that are created by secondary characters like Axel Olsen. Throughout the novel Helga is described by the third person narrator in terms of her appearance and finds herself

classifying others in the same way. Helga is not only obsessed with material goods, but she habitually classifies other people by their appearance as if their value comes from the way in which they appear. In many situations Helga is described as a part of a scene the narrator builds to resemble a painting. In the beginning of the novel Helga is seated in her room among her reading lamp, Chinese carpet and shelves of books. The narrator conveys that “An observer would have thought [Helga] well fitted to that framing of light and shade in the room” (Larsen 5). Helga is “well fitted” to the frame of the room because she appears to be naturally situated with the furniture in the room (5). In a discreet way, the narrator objectifies Helga by blending her presence so closely with the rest of the room that the scene becomes a *tableau vivant*, a living picture. A *tableau vivant* is an event in which people dress and pose to imitate subjects in a painting in order to recreate a famous work of art with their presence. In this way, the people become a part of the painting and have the ability to interact and give life to a piece of art. On the other hand, in choosing to become part of the painting, the participant also allows herself to become commodified as a painting would be. By choosing to compare Helga to a painting, the narrator, even before Helga has been subjugated by other people, describes her in a way in which she is a subject: the subject of a painting. Larsen allows the narrator to strategically use free indirect discourse as a way of showing the effects of surveillance upon Helga. The use of free indirect discourse allows the narrator to distance herself from Helga, but also has access to Helga’s thoughts despite this distance. The conveying of Helga’s thoughts creates a sense of spectacle. The critic Marybeth Baggett argues that through free indirect discourse and qualifying statements like “she thought” and “she felt,” that “the narrator seems to be calling attention to Helga’s participation in creating her own self-identity even when she sees the judgments she feels as coming from other people” (Baggett 67). The further Helga travels, the more clearly she becomes a spectacle to those who surround her.

As Pamela Barnett illustrates in her article titled “My Picture of You Is, after All, the True Helga Crane” the objectification and dehumanization of Helga comes to a climax in Europe. Helga’s

sense of identity comes into question when Axel Olsen, a potential suitor paints a portrait of Helga. The portrait is a manifestation of the way in which the third person narrator has described Helga. Like the narrator, Axel Olsen also objectifies Helga when he paints a highly sexualized portrait of Helga while she is in Copenhagen. Pamela Barnett describes that many of the characters give “stereotypical assignations” to Helga (586). For Olsen, this stereotype manifests in the portrait he offers to Helga. The offensive portrait is an attempt, on Olsen’s behalf, to convey his admiration to her. However, the portrait has the opposite effect and upsets her. In Helga’s concluding thoughts on Olsen, Larsen writes, “The picture...wasn’t herself at all, but some disgusting sensual creature with her features” (Larsen 91). What disturbs Helga about the portrait is that, in essence, it bears no similarity to her. Helga is jarred by the reality that other people view her in stereotypical racialized terms. The presentation of the portrait reminds Helga of the fact she is often positioned as a subject, someone who is open to be interpreted, which conflicts with image she has fashioned for herself. In the instance of Axel Olsen, Helga uses the event as an excuse to leave Copenhagen. Critics like Barnett come to the conclusion that by rejecting Olsen’s portrait and the offensive way in which the painting sexualizes and portrays her, Helga is “finally positioned to see rather than to be looked at” which puts her in a position of authority similar to what defined Helga at the beginning of the novel (587). Barnett argues that Helga “behaves according to this consciousness of exploitation and refuses any further performance” when she rejects Olsen, his portrait and Copenhagen (588). However, through the novel’s disturbing conclusion, authority is far from being reinforced within Helga upon her return to America. If anything, the effects of ISAs can be seen in the influence that begins to take over Helga’s physical and mental well being as she returns to the south.

In the novel’s final pages, Helga’s lack of progress is made clear in the way as the effects of the apparatus show her functioning like a machine. After meeting and quickly marrying a southern pastor, Helga becomes completely anonymous in Alabama. The domestic life that she becomes a part of is marked by stillness. Where Helga

once had agency and was able to move from place to place, she becomes stuck. After having her first child, she is bound in her position as a mother and must remain in the south with her children. The more disturbing detail in Larsen's writing is the choice to have Helga confined, almost exclusively, to a bed. Despite the fact that she has "enthusiastic plans" Helga is "too driven, too occupied, and too sick" to carry any of them out (Larsen 124). Helga makes the point herself with protest and observation that her immobility "can't be natural" (Larsen 126). Even a process as natural as bearing children becomes incredibly disturbing and unnatural for Helga because it happens so frequently. The frequency with which she continues to give birth, especially because there are indications that she is pregnant against her will, into a reproductive machine as opposed to an individual with any authority. In this observation, one can connect to the image in the beginning of the book of the students, automatons, taking over the natural scenery of the school. In the same way, anything that was natural and free about Helga is taken over as her body begins to resemble a machine. Helga becomes a literal manifestation of Althusser's ISA because in being confined to having children, she is literally made to reproduce. Furthermore, she reproduces subjects for the state who will continue the cycle of influence instead of breaking it, as she had planned to. Since she is having children in the south, Helga's children become subjects in the environment that she had initially sought to escape, and, reflecting the shape of Bentham's Panopticon, Helga's story comes full circle. Despite her best efforts to escape the influences of Naxos and of the south, Helga falls victim to the ideologies and the apparatus. As a part of the family ISA, Helga takes on the role of a mother who is stationary and limited in her freedom. As the wife of a pastor, Helga is also deliberately influenced by the religious ISA. Based on Althusser's model, the educational ISA is equivalent in power to the church ISA. Therefore, in many ways Althusser's ideas allow one to argue that Helga ends up exactly where she started - stuck in apparatuses that strip her of agency. As a result of being so heavily influenced and manipulated by the powers at hand, Helga is treated like a machine, used and observed by those around her.

The disturbing conclusion of Nella Larsen's novel reinforces

how impossible it is for Helga to escape both the SAs and ISAs that surround her. Though Helga is physically able to move between cities and countries, she lacks a sense of agency over determining the outcome of her life. Even in small details like the continual reappearance of Dr. Anderson who is connected directly to Naxos, Larsen creates a sense in the novel that parts of Naxos linger within Helga and influence her choices. The most striking fact about the ending is that Helga is in a position in which she had the motivation to change and attempt to claim authority over her life and identity, but ultimately fails to have made any progress in finding her identity or ascending in her status. The inability for Helga to develop her identity and claim the independence she desires is representative of larger systemic issues that Nella Larsen attempts to address in *Quicksand*. Taking into consideration Larsen's equally turbulent but ultimately anticlimactic life, Helga could reflect a sense of futile ambition. Though she lived through and contributed to the Harlem Renaissance, Helga's defeat as a result of the apparatuses that oppose her imply an equally pessimistic outlook for the African American community to make changes to the systems that function to oppress them. However, while the future of Helga and Nella Larsen might have looked bleak upon the initial publication of *Quicksand*, and even for theorists with ominous ideas like Althusser and Foucault, Larsen's troubling writing perhaps demands an attempt for readers to change and challenge despite the risks involved.

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Mothers, Sisters, and Daughters: The Hybrid Identities of Women in *Shadow of a Man*

Sara Gonzalez

“All identities are hybrids, formed over time through the interaction of multiple cultures and constantly being transformed by new encounters in the ‘borderlands’ between one culture and another.” - Gloria Anzaldúa

Movements in Chicano/a communities can be seen through the hybridity of race and cultural heritage. Cherríe Moraga portrays a coming of age story in her play *Shadow of a Man*, which is set in Los Angeles in the home of the Rodriguez family. The women in this play each symbolize a hybrid aspect of female sexuality that resists the Chicana binary of virgin or vixen. This text deals with elements of power and resistance as seen through the Chicana communities resisting the patriarchy through their individual sexual expression. The three main characters of this play display a continuum on the gender spectrograph: the mother, Hortensia, represents tradition; Leticia, is radical in her push against the established Chicana identity; and Lupe, the youngest daughter who symbolizes a true hybridity between old and new views on the Chicano family and sexuality. This paper will analyze how Chicana communities are

difficult to define; however, Moraga's text highlights scenes of power and the resulting resistance that create hybrid sexual identities that question patriarchal oppression.

Hortensia: The Traditional Chicana Mother

Maternal instincts stereotypically describe a caring woman who puts the needs of her children before her own and not surprisingly this is exemplified in Chicana writing. One of Moraga's main characters, Hortensia, is a mother, wife, and sister in her mid-40s that still has the abilities to care for her children while dealing with the weight of a deep familial secret. The audience, or in this case the reader¹, quickly comes to realize that Hortensia is dealing with deep psychological issues that are causing fractures to the familial community that she is trying to uphold. A summary of this play's drama surrounds Hortensia's twelve-year-old daughter, Lupe. Hortensia's husband, Manuel is not Lupe's biological father; Lupe is in fact the daughter of Manuel's best friend or *compadré*², Conrado. Adding to the complexity of this drama, Lupe may also be the victim of molestation from her (for all intents and purposes) father, Manuel, which in turn causes Lupe to question her own sexuality. Being the mother of a Chicano/a family, Hortensia deals with the pressure to conform to the patriarchal structure that oppresses her need to express her sexuality and protect her family.

The expected gender roles for women are intensified for the Chicana mother, but Hortensia attempts to push against these restrictions. She is proud of her position as a mother, "That's one thing, you know, the men can never take from us. The birth of a son. Somos las creadoras³. Without us women, they'd be nothing but a

1 Due to the nature of this essay, I will use "reader" instead of "audience" even though this text is a play.

2 Elizabeth Jacobs defines *compadrazgo* in her article to mean "the relationships within Chicano families that create 'fictive kin' among the community... Moraga stating that 'in Mexican culture, it is a very special bond, akin to that of blood ties, sometimes stronger'" (52). This close relationship between Manuel, Conrado, and Hortensia will be analyzed further in the paper.

3 The author does not provide a translation and I will uphold that artistic decision and also not provide a possible misinterpretation of Moraga's intended meaning. According to Jonsson, the function of language mixing relates to power and is generally associated to a

dream” (Moraga 61). Hortensia is directly addressing the power relation between men and women, but more specifically the power of motherhood. The production of child birth is one that men will never obtain or control, which makes this natural act a powerful one for Hortensia. Mothers are the gateway to life, yet after birth Chicano men immediately have more authority than their female counterparts. Motherhood is also directly related to sexuality. Elizabeth Jacob’s article about embodied feminist practice unpacks this idea of women and sexuality: “Her [Moraga’s] plays continue to explore how and in what ways the abject Chicana body has the capacity to disrupt hegemonic culture, including patriarchal models of the family that transmit and maintain sexualized hierarchies” (51). The complexity of sexuality is seen through Hortensia’s struggle to create a hybrid sense of motherhood. She wants to uphold traditional Chicana ideals for her daughters to follow, yet she realizes the inequality that expectation carries.

In further complicating the role of Chicana sexuality in the mother character, this play deals with allowed adultery. Earlier it was stated that Lupe is not Manuel’s biological daughter, but this does not mean that Hortensia committed adultery – in this case Manuel essentially gave his wife over to his best friend. In a chilling moment of theater, Manuel confesses:

MANUEL: ... I asked him, [Conrado] “Do you want her, [Hortensia] compa?” And he said, “Yes.” So, I told him, “What’s mine is yours, compadre. Take her.” (Pause). I floated into the room with him. In my mind, I was him. And then, I was her too. In my mind, I imagined their pleasure, and I turned into nothing.

Black out. (Moraga 71)

Manuel allowed his best friend to essentially rape his own wife. Manuel has so much power over his Chicana wife that he doesn’t even consider her desires or private sexuality. Hortensia’s body is a commodity that he willingly gives away to those who want it. Interestingly, this relationship between these male friends is

meaningful global sense (119).

also a perversion of the kinship exchange. Not only is Hortensia a subordinate to Manuel, she must then give birth to Conrado's child. This web of Chicana identity is tied to "The familial ideology that dominated Chicano theatre and discourse also worked toward masking a distinct gendered and sexual hierarchy that subordinated women and women's bodies within the organizational structures of the home and the traditional family order" (Jacobs 50). Familial hierarchies or borders only further complicate the hybrid identity of Chicana mothers and women; it seems as though women do not have a voice or even a body to be in control over because everything that they embody belongs to patriarchy.

Although the focus of this section is about Hortensia, a closer analysis of Manuel's own sexuality should be inspected. Masculinity is closely associated to outward portrayals of violence; this dominance can be expressed through physical and emotional violence. Manuel uses his role as the male figure to embody his heterosexual place. However, this may be a front for yet another secret within the Rodriguez family. Note the way that Manuel praises his compadre:

MANUEL: ... One of these days, I'm gonna get in the car, buy me a coupla six-packs and hit the road and I'm not gonna stop until I reach the desert. They got the road paved now all the way to my pueblito. I'll stop off and see my compadre in Phoenix. Conrado's got a real nice life there. He's rich, I bet, pouring cement holes in the ground. He's making swimming pools. (Moraga 55)

Interestingly, Manuel clearly has homosexual or homosocial desires for Conrado. In this scene he is day-dreaming about being with Conrado and fantasizing about the success his lover is experiencing without him. Yarbro-Bejarano, in commenting on Chicano masculinity states, "The male homosexual is held in contempt because he voluntarily assumes the role of woman" (qtd. in Jacobs 57). Not only is homosexuality a threat to the patriarchy, but in constructing the Chicano/a identity, same sex relationships are seen as going against the natural order. This would mean that a

man is lowering himself to the point of being equal to a woman. Even if Manuel does feel this way toward Conrado, he would never physically or verbally express these sexual desires because it goes against everything he stands for.

Hortensia's sexual identity is negatively affected because of the physical abuse she endures from Manuel. Although Hortensia sees the injustice that she faces in her home, she does not rebel against Manuel's power. After another physical altercation between Hortensia and Manuel, it seems as though Hortensia experiences a mental breakdown. This revealing scene begins with stage directions:

HORTENSIA *climbs into the tub, starts to pour vinegar into the bag, her hands shaking. LUPE stands back, horrified. LETICIA goes to HORTENSIA.*

LETICIA: Mamá, what are you doing?

HORTENSIA: ¡Estoy cochina! Filthy!

LETICIA: Did he hit you, mamá?

HORTENSIA: ¡Me tengo que lavar! ¡Me voy a bañar! (*She abandons the bag, pouring vinegar directly all over herself. LETICIA tries to get the bottle from her.*)

LETICIA: No, mamá. ¡Dámela!

HORTENSIA: ¡Déjame sola! ¡'Stoy sucia!
¡Desgraciada!

LETICIA: Mamá, you're gonna hurt yourself, let it go!

HORTENSIA: Tu padre thinks I stink, pues not I stink for sure!

LETICIA: Give me it! (*She grabs the bottle.*

HORTENSIA *slumps into the tub, holding her bruised face.*) (Moraga 66)

The physical damage Manuel has caused to Hortensia in this scene not only affects her personal view of her own sexuality, but her children have to also deal with the repercussions of the abuse. Manuel has made Hortensia believe that her own body, the vehicle of sexuality, is somehow unclean. Manuel is harkening back to the

incident with Conrado, yet he himself is the one who let that rape occur and is now placing blame on Hortensia. She is so beaten down by these dominant and violent men that she no longer even fights for her sexuality; Hortensia, understandably has given in to the power of the patriarchy because she can no longer resist, which solidifies her motherly and subordinate role on the hybrid Chicana continuum.

Leticia: The Radical Future

Leticia, the seventeen-year-old daughter embodies resistance and the future of Chicana women. From the stage directions, Leticia is described as a “radical” due to her 1960s Chicana attire of tight jean pants, looped earrings, and an army jacket with the United Farm Workers (UFW) symbol attached (Moraga 47). She is educated, works, and buys herself a car, while also maintaining a social life. Rosa Campos-Brito comments on Leticia’s education, “While her mother [Hortensia] undermines her achievements at school, the young girl equates women’s freedom and independence with education” (78). In the play, Leticia even encourages her younger sister to go to college: “Bout the time you’re in college, lots of Chicanos will be going to Harvard. You’ll see” (Moraga 72). Leticia encourages her sister, symbolically the future generation, to pursue education because it is the way to freedom from the patriarchal structure they are living under. Unlike her mother, Leticia is unsatisfied by merely taking her place within the home.

For Chicana women there is a binary that they are supposed to live within: virgin or vixen. Jacobs also notices this restriction and contends, “The sexual stereotypes of *la Virgen* and *la Malinche* were part of a binary logic that typified *la Virgen* as the good woman who obeys and is submissive to male needs.” She continues by arguing, “*La Malinche*, on the other hand, has been traditionally inscribed as the *mujer mala* (the bad woman)” (50). If Hortensia obeys her husband and upholds most of the traditional patriarchal expectations then she is seen as a good wife; arguably, then, Leticia would be on the opposite side of this spectrum. In relation to sexuality, Leticia is resisting the ideal her mother holds in relation

to virginity:

LETICIA: ... So, I opened my legs to one of them, [member of La Raza] mamá. The way a person opens her arms to take the whole world in, I opened my legs.

HORTENSIA: Is that what you call love?

LETICIA (*turning to her*): It's not about love. It's about power. Power we get to hold and caress and protect. Power they drop into our hands, so fragile the slightest pressure makes them weak with pain.

HORTENSIA: Why, mija? Why you give your virginidad away for nothing?

LETICIA: I was tired of carrying it around, that weight of being a woman with a prize. Walking around with that special secret, that valuable commodity, waiting for some lucky guy to put his name on it. I wanted it to be worthless, mamá. Don't you see? Not for me to be worthless, but to know that my worth had nothing to do with it.

(Moraga 78)

Leticia is aware of the difference between sexual love and mere physical sexuality. The hybrid definitions for a woman's sexuality is presented here through Leticia's argument. She knows that her virginity is an important aspect in reinforcing the patriarchy, yet she chooses to give it away. Leticia's power comes from her decision to act outside of the prescribed Chicana *la Virgen* roles. By defining her own means of sexuality she is empowered through her new form of identity.

In resisting the power typically associated with sex and the patriarchy, Leticia is also making a comment about love and identity. Notice that in the dialogue above, Hortensia is mostly concerned about whether Leticia had sex for love rather than lust. For the Chicana identity the binary between virgin and vixen is deeply rooted in race and cultural history. Rafael Pérez-Torres, in writing about identity, states:

Unlike the typically binary notions of identity

within a U.S. racial paradigm (choose black or white), a focus on *mestizaje* [racial mixing] allows for other forms of ethnic self-identification, other types of cultural creation, other means of social struggle [...] a reliance on *mestizaje* becomes a way to articulate subjectivity outside dominant paradigms. (156)

Leticia is actively desensitizing the correlation between her sexual value and her Chicana identity. Leticia self-identifies with her ethnic Chicana side, but she is resisting the paradigm surrounding sexuality that is presented in both US and Mexican patriarchies.

Although Leticia may seem like the embodiment of a rebel, Moraga presents another side of her character that is more troubling and yet necessary for the construction of the play. Campos-Brito, in looking at female symbolism, states, “Moraga uses the character of Leticia, the young radical and politicized Chicana, to dismantle the most sacred and limited patriarchal myths about women, virginity and motherhood” (79). I agree with Campos-Brito that Leticia dismantles aspects of the patriarchal structure within the Rodriguez home, but some textual evidence suggests that she (like her mother) is aware of a familial secret and chooses to remain silent. In conducting archival research, Jacobs discovers that “Leticia is profoundly traumatized by her inadvertent witnessing of the abusive relationship between her father and Lupe, as can be seen by her disrupted speech patterns and modes of expression” (55). I believe the textual evidence from the play is minimal to support this theory; however, on pure speculation this could have been written out of the play by Moraga. Whether Leticia was aware Manuel’s abuse of Lupe or not, this disturbing aspect of the play’s plot is well documented and remains in the published version.

Lupe: The Sexually Confused Child

The identities of the women in the Rodriguez family are complicated, yet Lupe is quintessentially the most hybrid character of the lot due to her coming of age story. Lupe has dealt with physical abuse, religious-based shame, and a confused understanding of

sexuality. Jacobs explains that in the play, “The audience becomes aware of how Lupe’s sexuality has been compromised by dominant heterosexist structures and systems of thought, as Moraga gradually but ambiguously reveals that Lupe is possibly a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, Manuel” (54). This horrific event shapes Lupe’s hybrid sexual identity the most because she is confused about what is morally correct. Manuel has arrived home drunk and immediately begins fighting with Hortensia, and then the scene quickly shifts: “MANUEL *crosses to the girls’ bedroom. LETICIA remains in the kitchen. Lights rise on LUPE in bed, the covers pulled up tight around her. She clutches a rosary in one hand. MANUEL stands at the doorway, his shadow filling the room*” (Moraga 51). The stage directions alone casts an eerie veil over the scene that is about to unfold. It is important to note that the girls share a bedroom, and even though Leticia remains in the kitchen, this insight could be interpreted to mean that she has witnessed a similar scene in the past. In fear of what is about to happen, Lupe is in her bed shielding herself from her father by hiding under her blankets. Lupe is also holding her rosary, which signifies that she is praying for what the reader could assume is shelter and safety from her father. Manuel’s shadow fills the entire room; it is as if his essence is already oppressing Lupe without physically touching her. The scene that follows these stage directions are disturbing:

MANUEL: I know la chiquita is waiting for me.
She’s got a soft heart, mi ninita. She makes sure her papacito comes home safe.

HORTENSIA⁴: If he doesn’t give a damn about himself, why should I care?

MANUEL (*going to LUPE*): Lupita! ¿Stás durmiendo, hijita? (*He lays his huge man’s head on LUPE’s small shoulder.*) You’ll never leave me ¿no, mijita?

LUPE: No, papi.

⁴ The stage directions indicate that after the fight with Manuel, Hortensia goes out onto the porch to smoke a cigarette so she is talking out loud to herself here. This also means that Hortensia is not inside the home to protect Lupe or intervene in anyway.

MANUEL: Eres mi preferida ¿sabes?

LUPE: Sí, papi.

MANUEL: You're different from the rest. You got a heart that was made to love. Don't ever leave me, baby.

LUPE: No, papi. I won't.

He begins to weep softly. Her thin arm mechanically caresses his broad back. A muted tension falls over the scene. A few moments later, LETICIA enters the bedroom, brings MANUEL to his feet.

LETICIA: C'mon, Dad. Let's get you to bed now. *He gets up without resistance. LETICIA holds him up as they exit. Fade out.* (Moraga 51-5)

This scene is immersed with multiple interpretations of what could really be taking place; and this scene is clearly one of the sources for Lupe's complicated hybrid identity.

Interestingly, there are actual records that indicate Moraga's reaction to seeing this scene performed for the first time. Although this description is extensive, I would imagine that it merits the same reaction in the reader. Moraga reflects:

I had written the scene, seen it enacted numerous times in other rehearsals and staged readings by actors sixteen years and older, but never by a real live girl whose body balanced itself precariously and quite beautifully on the verge of puberty. So when that two-hundred-pound man playing the father dropped his drunken head on to Lupe's blanketed, eleven-year-old⁵ belly, I was not prepared for the holy terror of that moment. Although I had written the scene, I had not anticipated my own sense of revulsion, as I felt the audience gasp at the embodied experience of Lupe's vulnerability. (Jacobs 55)

Moraga describes her reaction as terror and revulsion, which is

5 The character list for the play indicates that Lupe is twelve-years-old. Moraga is probably referring to the actor playing Lupe.

exactly the same emotion that she tries to create for her audience. Although it might be uncomfortable to analyze, this incestuous act needs to be further explored. Manuel is not technically Lupe's father⁶ meaning that this is not necessarily incest but still a moment of molestation. In further examples of a power struggle, Manuel adds "-ita" to all of the terms of endearment he assigns to Lupe, such as *chiquita*, *ninita*, and *hijita*. This word ending is usually given to small, adorable, and innocent things, but in this case it adds to a level of discomfort because Manuel is perfectly aware of how meek Lupe is and continues to take advantage of her in this way. This makes Lupe powerless in size and powerless from the perspective of her father's gaze.

Regardless that this scene doesn't explicitly show an act of molestation, this moment in the Rodriguez home doesn't raise any suspicion or alarm in the rest of the family. This means that Manuel usually finds comfort in Lupe, whether that be through a loving father-daughter bond or in this more likely instance of sexual abuse. For a child, being called the favorite would usually be a moment of victory over the other siblings; however, this case could be interpreted as Manuel's favorite sexually, since there aren't any sexual encounters between Manuel and his wife throughout the play⁷. Again, Manuel explains to Lupe that "You got a heart that was made to love. Don't ever leave me, baby" (Moraga 52). He is manipulating his own daughter to believe that these violent acts are because of love; in reality molestation is a psychological illness that causes more harm to the victims than to the abuser dealing with that infected thought process. Enacting sexual dominance over another is quintessential in understanding that this scene is the patriarchy embodied in sexual discourse. Not only is Manuel continuing to exert his dominance in the Chicano household but he is taking out his physical aggression and desire on his own daughter. These unnatural acts undoubtedly affect the way Lupe

6 At this point in the play, Lupe is unaware of the connection between her and Conrado – meaning to Lupe – Manuel is still her real father.

7 The only romantic contact this couple has is when Manuel kisses Hortensia's cheek and it is lacking any sense of sexuality at all.

understands sexuality and the bond between a daughter and father.

At the opening of the play, Lupe is expressing her inner thoughts in a reflective and confessional manner. Lupe is realizing that she has sexual desires toward a woman, and from her Catholic Chicana upbringing and her confused sexual ideal enforced by her father, she is naturally uncomfortable with this self-realization. The stage directions indicate that she is dressed in her Catholic school uniform, holding a candle under her chin, talking into the bathroom mirror, with a crucifix “loom[ing] over the back wall” (Moraga 42). The play begins:

LUPE: I think there's somethin' wrong with me. I have ex-ray eyes. (*Staring.*) I can see through Sister Genevieve's habit, through her thin black belt with the rosary hanging from it, through her scapular and cotton slip. She has a naked body under there. I try not to see Sister Genevieve this way, but I can't stop. (*Pause*) [...] Sometimes I think I should tell somebody about myself. It's a sin to have secrets. (Moraga 42)

Not only is Lupe sexually oppressed due to the molestation she must endure, but also because of her religious upbringing. Lupe feels shame for her lesbian thoughts yet, “Lupe's main conflict is within herself as she tries to reconcile her Catholic beliefs with her lesbian desires” (Campos-Brito 77). Lupe doesn't know any other world view than that of a patriarchal, heterosexual, sinful one. She automatically sees these natural feelings as wrong, and like the rest of her family decides to keep yet another secret.

This sexual confusion identifies Lupe as a hybrid. She does not allude to being in love with Sister Genevieve nor does she desire to freely give away her virginity; this places Lupe on a spectrum between her mother and sister's ideals. In not conforming to heterosexuality, Lupe is actually resisting patriarchy. In sympathizing with this third space that Lupe occupies she can be seen as being “Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* [hybrid] undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders,

and inner war” (Anzaldúa 2099). Her position in between cultural and religious standards allows Lupe to silently figure out where she belongs in this inner war. In understanding Lupe’s struggle, it is also interesting to note that “The representation of the female body as a series of fragmented parts or physically separate pieces highlights the discursive and scopic dimensions of the colonialist construction of gender difference” (Jacobs 51). Lupe can be seen through these physically separated pieces – she identifies as a Catholic religiously, yet a lesbian internally, and is still capable of familial love. She embodies the hybrid Chicana identity through her mixing and evolving sexuality. Lupe continues to dismantle the ideals of the patriarchy by resisting and redefining gender and sexuality.

Conclusion: The Spectrum of Chicana Women

The end of the play mirrors the way this drama began – Lupe looking at herself in the mirror. An entire scene is dedicated to this one pivotal moment:

LUPE stands in her robe in front of the bathroom mirror, a rosary with crucifix in her hand. She lights a candle as at the beginning of the play, then takes out the photo of Conrado her father had left. She studies the image for a moment, measuring it against her own reflection in the mirror. Then she tears the small photo into pieces and drops it into the mouth of the burning candle. The shadow of the crucifix goes up in flames. Fade out. (Moraga 82)

Lupe has come face-to-face with the truth that Conrado is her true biological father and she decided it is best to burn whatever remnants remains of his existence in the Rodriguez home. Campos-Brito also analyzes this important scene and she believes that “It is Lupe, the character with lesbian inclinations, who transgresses all patriarchal constructions of female desire, and destroys what remains of the previous masculine order” (83). Campos-Brito continues to explain that Lupe is liberated by burning that picture and that this is a purifying moment not only for her but for the

remaining women of the house.

The line in the stage directions about the shadow correlates to the title of the play *Shadow of a Man*. I would argue that the “man” refers to could be different for each female character of the play. Manuel ends up killing himself with a lethal dose of alcohol and pills, which frees Hortensia from her oppressive marriage. Arguably, Leticia was freed the moment she gave her virginity away because the man’s shadow she was living under was that of the symbolic patriarchy. For Lupe, she will no longer have to endure the physical abuse from her father nor live in secret about her biological father. Each of these women has overcome the shadow of a certain man. Their community is only further highlighting its resilience through the fact that they are now a household of women: “With this ending, the playwright is creating a non-violent, non-hierarchical and non-threatening space where these women can interact and fabricate their very own female discourse” (Campos-Brito 83). Although these women did not purposefully eliminate these oppressive men from their lives (i.e. they could not stop Manuel from killing himself) they resisted the power of the patriarchy in their own distinct ways.

Through the gender expectations established for Chicana women it is clear that Hortensia, Leticia, and Lupe are hybrid mixtures of what it means to be a sexual woman. Anzaldúa agrees that “We [Chicanas] don’t identify with Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican Angloness” (qtd. in Jonsson 120). Hortensia tries to be a good mother and by doing so she unintentionally upholds aspects of the patriarchy such as her religious beliefs about la Virgen. However, once Hortensia’s familial secret is revealed she is liberated and can once again become a sexual woman. Leticia could be pinned in opposition to her mother because she does everything in her power to resist Chicana gender roles. By having sex, Leticia then gains power and is no longer victim to the mistaken ideal that virginity holds. Finally, Lupe’s identity is shaped through secrecy. She is the victim of sexual abuse and in turn becomes sexually confused to the point that she isn’t even sure if she is actually a lesbian or not. Yet by the

end of the play it is clear that Lupe too has been freed from the patriarchy. This play presents the hybrid nature of identities and how Chicana sexuality may actually be a continuum rather than a set binary of *la Virgen* or *la Malinche*.

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“Enter this antechamber of birth”: An Exploration of the Hospital and the Brothel in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

Layla Hendow

“Enter this antechamber of birth where the studios are assembled and note their faces” (Joyce 553). This solemn imperative is for you and me. Now imagine the scene that is presented to us. A biblical allusion acts as a commentary. The expected wise men have been replaced by raucously drunk medical students, and our guiding star is none other than a clumsy, uncomfortable Leopold Bloom. The word “enter” marks the admission into a sacred pocket of feminised space, and, yet, when we walk in, we are not told to admire the mother and her “bouncing boy” (531), but to note the faces of the men. Under what circumstances is it more important for the reader to be observing in this layered way: looking at the men who are looking at the woman? It is a pitiful anti-climax for a surrogate Virgin Mary. In this small statement, Joyce directs us towards a wider spatial and gendered concern in *Ulysses*. For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing on the consecutive episodes “Oxen of the Sun” and “Circe”. This paper will argue that the key to the spatial concern is the notion of *construction through performance*.

The episodes in question act as alternative microcosms of Dublin’s urban space, which is accompanied by a new manufacturing of gender.

Before embarking upon a reading of *Ulysses*, Joyce provides his readers with a map to navigate the novel. It is useful to replicate the necessary chapters here, as it will be alluded to throughout this paper¹:

TITLE	SCENE	HOUR	
“Oxen of the Sun”	The Hospital	10 pm	
“Circe”	The Brothel	12 midnight	
ORGAN	ART	SYMBOL	TECHNIC
Womb	Medicine	Mothers	Embryonic development
Locomotor Apparatus	Magic	Whore	Hallucination

Scene: the Hospital and the Brothel

The maternity hospital and the brothel are treated as isolated feminine spaces within *Ulysses*. I tread carefully with these contentious terms, ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ spaces, and my understanding is derived from Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler’s established scholarship on gendered spaces. As abstract arenas, feminine spaces contain women who, as de Beauvoir states, “belong at one and the same time to the male world and to a sphere in which that world is challenged” (102). This ‘sphere’ is presented in *Ulysses* by the ‘Scenes’ of the hospital and the brothel, which in turn represent two very different female bodies. The pregnant body of the mother and the sexual body of the whore epitomize a distinct use and misuse of the female body, but are both founded in sexual congress. The mother is experienced in carnal terms just as the whore is, but the difference is the legitimacy of that sexual

1 Figure 1: Gilbert, Stuart. *James Joyce’s Ulysses*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963. p.38.

reproduction.

In analyzing gender, thus, this essay will not dwell on the familiarity in literary criticism with Mother Ireland. Critics such as David Peirce, David Alderson and Fiona Beckett have all noted the prevalence of a Mother Ireland pillar both within *Ulysses* and without. Pierce quite rightly notes how Stephen Dedalus' mother "is not just the woman who bore him, but Mother Ireland. In this light, references to his mother have a profound resonance. It is Ireland that comes to haunt him" (140-1). Rather than looking at the figure of the mother in her relation to Ireland's national consciousness, I consider her construction in parallel to an alternative construction of Dublin, a reconstruction that was an unfortunate reality after World War I.

"Oxen of the Sun" and "Circe" are distinctive episodes in *Ulysses* insofar as they present Dublin not as realities, but as fantasy, whilst retaining the obsessive signposting of street names. The very first line, "Deshil Holles Eamus", chanted by the group of medical students, initiates the impressive neglect of the flâneur's requirements (Joyce 499). John Gordon sheds light on its meaning, as "'Deshil' means 'sunward'" (244). The travellers go sunwards to Holles Street. Its mirror image, coincidentally, is the movement in "Circe", where the men proceed towards the darkness of Nighttown. In this case, too, they are directed by signs, "chang[ing] here for Bawdyhouse" (561). Edna Duffy remarks how "the specific spaces of *Ulysses*' Dublin are both fetishized and derealized in the novel" (37), and this is seen most prominently, if not solely in, "Oxen of the Sun" and "Circe". As well as presenting readers with a dramatic transformation of the English language, "Oxen of the Sun" does very interesting transformations with space. In "Oxen of the Sun", the men, whether through intoxication or apprehension, transform the room they reside in into a castle: "Whiles they spake the door of the castle was opened and there nighed them a mickle noise as of many that say there at meat. And there came against the place as they stood a young learning knight yclept Dixon" (Joyce 504). It is worth noticing the fascinating use of scale here. The masculine imagination of the men in the room explodes a small hospital

waiting room into a grandiose “castle”. This control over the space around them shows their masculine authority. Walter Benjamin, in *The Writer of Modern Life*, discusses the flâneur in Paris with an analogous interest, claiming that for them, “newsstands are his libraries; and café terraces are the balconies from which he looks down” – using the same microscopic to macroscopic use of scale (68-9). Though the men do not represent flâneurs at this moment in *Ulysses*, the trait is clearly a masculine one (shown in the pronouns used by Benjamin), legitimising a faint echo between Benjamin’s Parisian men and Joyce’s Irish men.

Equally fantastical is the world of Nighttown, which, like the maternity hospital in Holles Street, begins geographically sound, on “Mabbot Street” (561). This is the genesis of the uncanny experience that Irish readers would have for the duration of these two episodes. Well known landmarks diminish into fiction. Duffy, in “Disappearing Dublin”, discusses the implications of Joyce choosing Dublin as a contextual background. She points out that, “the novel, set in 1904 in a late colonial city, was written in 1914-21” (41). The novel, then, exists in the knowledge of its future; the war. It becomes apparent to Duffy that if *Ulysses* was written during the war, but set before it, Joyce’s motive was to look back to an idealist version of Ireland to picture it as ‘ruined memorials’ (38). However, Joyce’s decision to set his novel in 1904, added to the fact that he uses the Hamlet-esque trope of the ghost parent, seems to suggest his Dublin is always already a ghost-town. It is fitting, then, that Joyce would offer us a fantastical alternative to the old Dublin with street names and mapped geography. His act of transformation only reveals the failings of a real space, which can be destroyed, unlike his imagined space that exists safely in the pages of *Ulysses*. The medics’ castle, Nighttown and Bloomusalem (the paradisiac society Bloom hallucinates in Nighttown) all are able to survive the destruction of the war, where Ireland itself cannot.

There are crucial differences, however, between the castle, Nighttown and Bloomusalem. Michel Foucault, in *Of Other Spaces*, attempts to situate the difference between spaces in what he brands as ‘utopia’ and ‘heterotopia’. Heterotopias are:

... real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. ("Of Other Spaces, Heterotopia")

The fact that heterotopias are able to be located in reality suggest that the castle in "Oxen of the Sun" and Nighttown in "Circe" are examples of Foucault's heterotopias. They are real places that have been "represented, contested and inverted" but at the same time display an otherness that readers would not be able to locate. Bloomusalem, on the other hand, is a very different place entirely, because it is "unreal", offering, as Foucault writes, a "society turned upside down" ("Of Other Spaces, Heterotopia"). Bloomusalem is an unreal ideal inside the borders of Nighttown, a type of play within a play. In the depths of Nighttown heterotopia, Bloom is seen "*under an arch of triumph...seated on a milk white horse*" (603). The Bloomusalem building is constructed to a scale almost impossible to imagine, with "*forty thousand rooms*" (606). What makes the space even more detached from reality is that Bloomusalem also exists in a different time frame to the scene: "in the Nova Hibernia of the future" (606). Bloomusalem, then, is not only a form of escapism for Bloom, but a hopeful nod to the future that, as we have seen, Joyce has already experienced, and knows it to be false.

Marquerite Harkness pinpoints "circe" as a pivotal point in the novel in that "throughout 16 June 1904, we have seen parts of individuals stream of consciousness, in "circe" we take that final step into the unconscious" (260). Bloom and Stephen's unconsciousness becomes a reality in this episode, where

... stretches an uncobbled transiding set with skeleton tracks, red and green will-o'-the-wisps and danger signals. Rows of flimsy houses with gaping doors. Rare lamps with faint rainbow fans. (Joyce 561)

The adjective-noun construction is repeated so frequently that it becomes hypnotic. Readers are given an overload of information. This information is distorted further through the use of mirrors, another object that Foucault uses as an example object existing in heterotopia, as it makes space both “absolutely real” and “absolutely unreal”, depending on whether it is seen from the perspective of the real image or the mirror image (“Of Other Spaces, Heterotopia”). Both images are explored in *Ulysses*, but the mirror is not simply one mirror; it is a concave-convex mirror. Foucault argues that the mirror is unreal “since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (“Of Other Spaces, Heterotopia”). The space of “over there” is complicated in “Circe” because the image is multiplied.

When Bloom enters Nighttown and is immediately entrapped in a grotesque world. Images are flipped on their head with the use of mirrors that act to deceive and confuse. Joyce describes what Bloom sees:

From Gillen's hairdresser's window a composite portrait shows him gallant Nelson's image. A concave mirror at the side presents to him lovelord longlost lugubru Booloohoom... He passes, struck by the stare of truculent Wellington but in the convex mirror grin unstruck the Bonham eyes and fatchuck cheekchops of Jollypoldy the rixdix doldy. (565-6)

This hilarious scene of multiple Blooms makes a mockery of the ghosts from the past that appear in the rest of the episode. Bloom is able to see past and future versions of himself purely in the reflection of different mirrors. The concave mirror, curved inwards, shows himself as a slimmer, “longlost” version of himself. The convex mirror, curved outwards, shows an expanded version of “fatchuck cheekchops”. Austin Briggs suggests that ““Circe” argues powerfully that the artist holds up a mirror not in order to reflect

an exterior reality but to refract an interior reality, as in the concave and convex mirrors that figure in the chapter” (57). The interior reality Briggs points out is perhaps the same unconsciousness that Harkness picks up on. If this is the case, the mirrors do not just alter Bloom’s appearance, but his interior mind, and are perhaps the catalyst for his hallucinations.

Briggs goes on to argue that this interiority is unique because it is displayed both for the reader and internally for the characters as a theatrical performance. Briggs limits himself to the “drama of “Circe”” (56), and it is my contention that this drama begins before the men enter Nighttown, for it is there when they enter the maternity hospital in “Oxen of the Sun”. The obvious form of a script makes it easy to isolate “Circe” as the lone dramatic episode. But, if we extend what a theatre means to embrace space that is *staged*, then “Oxen of the Sun”, too, can be viewed as equally theatrical. Both are staged performances whether they are written in dialogue or via a narrative voice. The detached narrative voice in “Oxen of the Sun” is indicative of the chorus in a play, who is able to offer an assortment of perspectives, introducing characters when a change in scene occurs, for instance, in the shift from the men inside their castle to the street where we meet Mulligan and Alec Bannon. Chris Morash, author of *Mapping Irish Theatre*, describes the “discontinuous” nature of Irish theatre’s history, and claims that “theatre in performance can never be national... Theatre takes place in a particular place, at a particular moment, before a community that is not imagined but is real” (18). This is overcome by Joyce in the hybridity of his novel’s form. The performance *does* take place in front of an imagined audience, and it takes place at multiple moments, in multiple dwellings. Joyce’s play, then, can be national. It does not have the spatial restrictions of a true theatre.

The same liberty can be assigned to the forty-thousand rooms of Bloomusalem. But, as quickly as Bloomusalem is erected, it is demolished again. When Bloom goes up in flames, so must Bloomusalem; it exists only in Bloom’s imagination. In a bizarre twist in Bloom’s hallucinatory state, the fire brigade, “by general request”, set him on fire (617). There are derisible “lamentations”

that follow (617). It is the same fire engine that has been following us from Holles Street to Mabbot Street, and it finally displays its purpose. The men, in their drunken state, are mesmerized by the fire engine in “Oxen of the Sun”. The “Pflaap! Pflaap!” noise could be a replication of the brigade (as Joyce often provides us) or it could be an attempted imitation by one of the men, who declares “There she goes. Brigade! Bout ship!” (560). However, this is long before Bloom needs a fire engine. “Oxen of the Sun” seems to anticipate the fire that will occur over an hour later, if the timeline Joyce provides us in the table is accurate. Death by fire is no doubt indicative of an apocalyptic state, and is followed by a fire that consumes Dublin, with cries of “Dublin’s burning! Dublin’s burning! On fire, on fire!” (694). The revelation here is perhaps the expectation of war, as it comes with the image of “troops deploy. Gallop of hoofs” (694).

Previously, in “Oxen of the Sun”, we have already experienced the death by water, the Noah-like flood that terrifies Stephen. William Fitzpatrick interestingly asserts that “in contrast to the fructifying atmosphere so pervasive in “Oxen of the Sun”, the purgative phantasmagoria of “Circe” serves as the cleansing fire that follows the life-giving wind and water” (135). Indeed, the water is associated with life; the rain timed perfectly with the birth of Mina Purefoy’s “bouncing boy” (531). But, in its association with motherhood, it also represents death; Bloom, having lost a son, and Stephen, having lost his mother. The links between the flood and the birth of Mina Purefoy’s son become entirely intermingled, and its violence suggests the life-giving quality comes with a price. The thunderstorm uses the same language we might expect to find inside the maternity hospital, being “impregnated with raindeew moisture” (554). Its dawn is the process from insemination to birth:

The rosy buds all gone brown, and spread out blobs
and on the hills nought but dry flags and faggots
that would catch at first fire. [...] the wind sitting
in the west, biggish swollen clouds to be seen as
the night increased and the weatherwise poring up
at them and some sheet lightnings at first and after,

past ten of the clock, one great stoke with a long thunder and in a brace of shakes all scamper pell-mell within door for the smoking shower. (518)

It is no accident that there are pregnant “swollen clouds” residing over the maternity hospital, where once was “rosy buds”. Furthermore, it is not a stretch to see the thunder and lightning as replicas of poor Mina Purefoy’s contractions. This materialises the men’s anxiety about childbirth on an enormous scale, leaving Stephen distraught. Even mother’s milk is described as “milk of human kin, milk to of those burgeoning stars overhead, rutilent in thin rainpour, punch milk” (555). The rain outside is the final step in the birth process: the milk which sustains the new born boy. This concludes the division between the feminine spaces in these two episodes, and the ways in which the masculine presences battle against such femininity.

Art: Medicine and Magic

In his map, Joyce makes a clear contrast between medicine and magic as the ‘Art’ of the chapters. It is clear, too, that this distinction is gendered; medicine is the occupation of men, magic is the occupation of women. After Mina gives birth, we are assured that “all that surgical skill could do was done and the brave woman had manfully helped. She had. She had fought the good fight and now she was very very happy...breathing a silent prayer of thanksgiving to the One above, the Universal Husband” (550-1). The word “manfully” is unusual, giving the mother a masculine role in the birth process in the fact that she was able to help the doctors. It seems the woman can have no place in a medical phenomenon if she retains her femininity. In Max Weber’s well known modernist critique, *Science as a Vocation*, just such differences between medicine and magic are explored. Weber suggests that in modernity:

One need no longer have recourse to magic in order to control or implore the spirits, as did the savage for whom such powers existed. Technology and calculation achieve that, and this more than anything else means intellectualization as such. (342)

For Weber, magic is associated with the “savage” figure, not women. He forms a correspondence between the role of the scientist and intellectualization, a label which Joyce enjoys playing within *Ulysses* with the group of (inadequate, at times) medical students.

The woman of magic comes into light when the pregnant body is exchanged for the sexual body, although these two figures intermingle in the variety of mother bodies that appear in the brothel. Ewa Ziarek agrees with Weber’s concentration on the modern world of science. She links the modern world of mechanical technology to the processes of the female body, setting this in contrast to natural imagery. Ziarek suggests that “Joyce could imagine the female sexual body as the last remnant of authenticity in the increasingly technologized social space” (123), as it offers a different kind of mechanical reproduction. If the man of science is associated with a technological modern space, it seems fitting that the woman retains bodily spaces, although the level of authenticity to this body is very much under debate in *Ulysses*. Furthermore, in *Ulysses*, the notion that the men represent a kind of fast-paced technological world is not the case. When inside the hospital, the men are paralysed. Across the hall is the pregnant female body they fear; outside the pregnant female sky they fear. The problem is not concluded in “Oxen of the Sun”, but extends into the narrative of “Circe”.

Magic materialises in “Circe” through hallucination and metamorphoses. These two processes are championed by the female whores that cause the men to hallucinate metamorphosed beings. But it cannot be so simply argued that the women are hallucinated at the same rate as the space of Nighttown is hallucinated. Gender goes through a more complex transformation. The false mother figures and the whores are treated in different ways, but it is Bloom who unites them. This is because he transforms into both a mother and a whore. Bloom bears children due to his “bisexual abnormality”, as well as being the “finished example of a new womanly man” (613-4). This juxtaposition of the oxymoronic “womanly man” places Bloom in direct contrast to Mina Purefoy who “manfully helped” in her own pregnancy (590). She is a

woman who holds a masculine adjective “manfully”, while Bloom is a man who holds a female adjective “womanly”.

More genders questions are raised when Bloom finds out he is going to give birth and exclaims “O! I so wanted to be a mother!” (614). As with everything else in this scene, the statement is bizarre. Bloom cannot simply exclaim that he so wanted to have children, because he has a daughter. Specifying that he has always wanted to be a *mother* suggests the statement means something slightly different; namely that Bloom has always wanted to *give birth*. In other words, to perform a mother’s duty of childbirth. If this isn’t problematic enough, he bears his eight children with magnificent ease, contrasted to Mina’s three-day pregnancy. His male pregnancy makes the repeated use of the word “women” by the nurse more understandable in “Oxen of the Sun”. It is jarring that the nurse says that “she had seen many births of women but never was one so hard as was that woman’s birth” (504). It seems evidently surplus to remind the reader that Mina is a woman, but this is not so obvious by the time we get to “Circe”, where men and women alike have the capacity to bear infants.

Few critics have written on the gender issues prevailing in *Ulysses*, particularly the issues regarding childbirth. Johanna Garvey, in a useful article which aims to demonstrate “how *Ulysses* re-presents recurring gender dichotomies as they emerge in spatial configurations, and to explore whether the text also writes against those divisions” (190), argues that “men appropriate space, including the female domain of the maternity hospital” (109). This is problematized because Bloom *wants* to be a mother; he wants to enter into the maternal world, not occupy it himself. Garvey uses evidence of the men’s desire to construct language to show how with “a pregnant word language takes over women’s body and women’s space” (116). This is not entirely true. Mina may well have seemed to fail in the womanly role of childbirth, but Bloom gives birth to “yellow and white children” with “metalled faces” (614), suggestive of their artificiality. The colour yellow and metal characteristic evokes images of pollution (consider T. S. Eliot’s well known “yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes”

(15)). If childbirth is being juxtaposed with the creation of language, then the medical students should be eloquent by the end of “Oxen of the Sun”, if Garvey’s testimony is to hold true. However, rather than portraying the “language so encyclopaedic” (546), the men are intoxicated. They slur their speech and talk over one another in a crazed rabble so that language becomes incomprehensible.

In this way, it is not so easy to assume a patriarchal take-over is underway in these feminine arenas. What seems more likely is that an anxious negotiation is taking place where the men can only enter into the feminine space by being stripped of their masculinity. This occurs in two different ways for Bloom. The first is by being metamorphosed into a child, and the second is by being feminised by Bella Cohen. Ariela Freedman, in her essay, calls “Circe” the “chapter of transformation” (76), but also admits that “in “Circe”, you are what you wear” (77). Indeed, most of the transformations that occur in the chapter are costume changes. When Bloom’s father appears in front of him, the stage directions tell us he is now donning a “youth’s smart blue Oxford suit with white vestslips” (569). His alteration into a child in the face of his scorning father is merely materialised in the play form as a change in costume, rather than true metamorphosis.

This play-within-a-novel format is possibly linked to the setting choice of the brothel. Austin Briggs suggests the play form is entirely fitting for the brothel, making a semantic connection between the whorehouse and the playhouse, suggesting, too, that:

Prostitution is associated with plays and playhouses, players and playgoers, and by its very nature, the brothel is, if not ‘legitimate’, a theatre nonetheless, a place of dress up and gender-bending, performance and spectatorship. (56-7)

In this manner, prostitution and theatre are both based on modes of deception, and in *Ulysses* this is not limited to the brothel. Leopold Bloom, or Henry Flower, spends the novel trying to play two different roles, but falls short because he tries to play them at the same time. Any actor would no doubt confess this is impossible on the stage. But, at the same time, it is important to remember

that *Ulysses* is not a play. Its possibilities for transformation extend beyond mere dress-up. The appearance of the nymphs, for instance, provides “Circe” an escape from its prostitutes, the women of the night, as these nymphs represent light and immortality. They confess to Bloom that “we eat electric light” (660). This places them at once in the fantasy world of fairy creatures, and the modern world, where electric lighting is a new technological advancement.

A true metamorphosis is possible, though it is difficult to distinguish between costume changes. Bloom is seen in his “punishment frock” (647), a drag costume showing he is not actually becoming a woman, only performing one. Judith Butler identifies drag as a key contributor in the performance of sex, describing its complex binary:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. (187)

This makes Bloom’s status even more ambiguous. His “bisexual abnormality” implies his anatomical sex is as a hermaphrodite, his gender identity is masculine and his gender performance is, here, as a woman (613). His drag performance indicates the type of falsity that Briggs recognised in the play of the whorehouse, and, importantly, this drag is not entirely down to Bloom’s gender. It is evident in the other whores. Bello explains Bloom’s transformation to him as such:

Bello: As they are now, so will you be too, wigged, singed, perfumesprayed, ricepowdered, with smoothshaven armpits. Tape measurements will be taken next your skin. You will be laced with cruel force into vicelike corsets of soft dove coutille, with whalebone busk, to the diamond trimmed pelvis, the absolute outside edge, while your figure, plumper than when at large, will be restrained in nettight frocks. (Joyce 647)

Bloom isn't being dressed up as whore; he is being dressed up as the whores are dressed up. It is a dual superficiality, based on a layered deception. The whores and Bloom alike are dressed up as dolls, something Susan Buck-Morss recognises as complying with Marxist consumerism. She notices that "somewhere along the road, the vision of young girls playing with mechanical dolls turned into young girls becoming a doll" (125-6). Although it is not indicated how old the girls in the brothel are, they are still as "wiggled" and "smoothshave" as dolls. Buck-Morss suggests "this reversal optimises that which Marx considered characteristic of the capitalist industrial mode of production" (126). However, for the doll-prostitutes, as has already been insinuated, production and consumerism is arrested. They are neither being sold as dolls or as whores. It is important to remember that Stephen and Bloom end up fleeing Nighttown, despite all the offers they receive to go with the women. The prostitutes, as real-life mechanical dolls, have failed in their purpose.

If all the whores are also taking part in a performance, though not specifically a drag one, "Circe" is not as phantasmagorical as it first appears. Despite Bella's plea that "this isn't a brothel" (684), Briggs uses contemporary reports from Ulick O'Connor to argue that it did resemble a brothel, and was, in fact, far more professional than of some of Dublin's brothels. Prostitutes who "walked the turf on Mabbot Street, Faithful Place and Railway Street often wore only raincoats, which they would open to flash their merchandise" (Briggs 54). Brothels were a significant aspect of Dublin's urban scene, and very much in the public eye by the twentieth century, due to the introduction of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (Luddy 17). This meant an increase both in the number of brothels and in the number of arrests that took place.

There is one important difference between Bloom and Stephen and the doll-like whores. The girls remain controlled by Bella Cohen, within the hallucinations that occupy the episode. Bloom and Stephen, on the other hand, manage to escape through a violence that the women are not entitled to. Indeed, Freedman points out that "fantasy is coupled with anxiety, and lust and violence operate

in tandem”(77). Bloom’s button snapping off his trousers brings him out of his reverie; Stephen smashes the chandelier. The fact that they can return to reality independent of the prostitutes seems to offer the men some authority in the female spaces. Circe, too, concludes with a paternal trilogy: Bloom, Stephen, and Rudy, rather than any powerful woman (Garvey 118). But it is also important that the men are not, at this moment, representative of the “gods with human faces” that de Beauvoir describes in the masculine-run universe (103). They are scared; they are “wanderstruck” (703). The only person “smiling” is Rudy, a “fairy boy” who is a remnant still of the fantasy land the men have just escaped (702).

The issues that concern us today regarding gender identity and performativity finds a magical stage in “Oxen of the Sun” and “Circe”. The theatre helps to create the heterotopias that act as a platform for the construction of gender that is so beautifully complicated in the unconscious of Bloom and Stephen. On fleeing Nighttown, the men take back their flâneur status and explore the homosocial relationship of surrogate-father, surrogate-son, as “they walked together along Beaver street” (704). They are able to forget entirely the events that have happened. The reader, however, is still utterly enthralled by the grotesque costumes and ghostly appearances that is constructed through performance. It is hard to deny that we have been lifted out of Dublin and to another space, to an alternative microcosm where Dublin can still be just about seen under a veil.

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“Preservation in Destruction”¹: Eschatological Anxieties in *Bleak House*

James McAdams

I

Critics and readers have proposed various interpretations of the infamous dual narrative of *Bleak House* since its initial publication in 1851. Modern scholars, employing the insights and research of scientific historians, have increasingly viewed the omniscient narrative in particular as a *locus* in which Dickens explores and depicts Victorian anxieties regarding discoveries in the emerging disciplines of physics, geology, and biology.² However, by restricting their analyses solely to the omniscient narrative, these scholars neglect the corresponding and corrective function of Esther’s narrative. Consequently, this paper will briefly review the

1 The second installment of a travelogue contemplating the destruction of Pompeii appeared under this title in the June 5, 1852 edition of *Household Words*. The first installment, appearing in the May 8, 1852 edition, was entitled “The City of Sudden Death” (q.v. p. 5 *infra*).

2 I am particularly indebted to Ann Wilkinson’s insightful (and brilliantly titled) “*Bleak House*: From Faraday to Judgment Day.” *ELH*, 34 (1967): 225-247; William Axton’s “Religious and Scientific Imagery in *Bleak House*.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 22 (1968): 349-359; and Barry Gold’s “The Consolation of Physics: Tennyson’s Thermodynamic Solution.” *PMLA*. 117 (2002): 449-464. The latter, although specifically concerned with Tennyson’s “In Memoriam,” informatively discusses the emerging scientific models of Victorian England and their relationship with contemporary literature.

scientific explications of the omniscient narrative before considering how Esther's narrative, especially in its resolution, interacts with the eschatological implications of the omniscient narrative in order to suggest a more unitary and socially-minded understanding of the novel as a whole.

Science and artistic expression often exercises a mutual, perhaps unintentional, influence on the development and ratification of cultural paradigms, a process described in the nomenclature of science as "spontaneous discovery" (Gold 449). In her essay "The Death of the Sun': Victorian Solar Physics and Solar Myth," the eminent historian of science Gillian Beer remarks that "conversation among articulate Victorians about solar physics and the prospects for life on earth in a cooling solar system worked, as half-formulated anxieties will, to generate much imaginative thought" (225).

In addition to the thermodynamic concerns referred to by Beer, numerous other scientific ideas served to "generate imaginative thought: the discovery of fossils encouraged speculation regarding the extinction of species; the time-scale introduced by geologists to explain the process of fossilization contradicted the accounts of Biblical time; finally, the increasing pervasiveness of evolutionary theory (which merely lacked a governing mechanism before Darwin hypothesized natural selection in the 1859 publication of *The Origin of the Species*) resulted in an increase in anxiety regarding the long-term durability of the earth and accounted for a diminution of faith in the Biblical explanations of the world.³ Charles Dickens, who greatly appreciated the importance of these phenomena, popularized and promoted them in *Household Words*, and explored their significance and societal impact in his short fiction and novels, especially *Bleak House*.

Scholars reading a scientific system of symbology into *Bleak House* frequently focus on the following four incidents or narrative

3 Indeed, Tennyson's famous ascription "Nature, red in tooth and claw," a phrase often used to signify the Darwinian mechanism of natural selection, comes from "In Memoriam," a poem published a decade before *The Origin of the Species*. Cf. "And murmurs from the dying sun," from Canto III of the same poem, for further evidence of the general currency of these ideas before 1859.

tropes: Krook's spontaneous combustion; the recurring images of the dying sun and heat-death of the universe; the surreal appearance of the Megalosaurus on Holborn Hill; and the representation of the Dedlocks and the Court of Chancery as obsolete or atavistic systems bound for extinction. Although she touches on all of these subjects in her wide-ranging essay "*Bleak House*: From Faraday to Judgment Day," Ann Y. Wilkinson devotes most of her attention and energy to documenting the "death of the sun" and Krook's spontaneous combustion.

She commences her argument by stating that the operative metaphor in *Bleak House* is "a universe, rather than a single world, in which various spheres move about with differing speed and orbit, according to their size and density," a compelling description with respect to the narrative alterations and the perspectival divagations of the omniscient narrative (Wilkinson 226). Noting that multiple systems comprise this universe, Wilkinson stresses, as many critics do, that the entropy within these systems increases as the novel proceeds; in addition, she juxtaposes entropy with its opposite, productive order, in order to interpret the novel:

I shall no doubt, for the sake of structural clarity and strength in my argument, stretch the cosmic metaphor into tenuousness, but I hope that the quotation already adduced ["death of the sun" from *Bleak House*'s opening paragraph], with more to come, demonstrate that in itself the analogy is no farfetched critical ploy: Dickens, it seems clear, gives frequent and explicit keys to its use. The working out of this analogy, through the texture and form of the novel, is the meaning of the novel. And the meaning, we shall see, resides in the disposition of energies into the productive order—work—or into entropy—chaos—that characterize the actual universe of the novel, a universe which is of course a system, with the dynamics of a system. (227)

This passage demonstrates Wilkinson's heuristic approach, which

she applies to other matters in the novel.

Krook's combustion, of course, adumbrates the combustion of that which he so unforgettably symbolizes, the Court of Chancery. Wilkinson, acknowledging the banality of this observation, connects it to the figure of Michael Faraday, whom Dickens had contacted for a feature in *Household Words* entitled "The Chemistry of a Candle." As in other parts of the essay, here Wilkinson uses the *Household Words* archive to explore how Dickens studied, popularized, and rehearsed topics relevant to *Bleak House* in this periodical. As she explains, "I have gone into this detail for two reasons: one, to show that Dickens was indeed thinking of, or at least aware of, Spontaneous Combustion as an abnormal occurrence in the case of a "system" and that, "in addition to this, we have now the material before us to consider as the gross matter to be refined—sublimated—by the chemical magic of Dickens's technique into symbolic art" (237, 238). Ultimately, this sublimation, since it is fore grounded in data and empirical experience, can "give to physics the universality and many-layered meaning of myth...to the ancient myth of the death of the sun" (247).

Following Wilkinson's example, I have searched the *Household Words* archives for articles corresponding to the science and eschatology of her reading of *Bleak House*. Most of these articles, among them "Chemistry of a Candle," "Chemical Contradictions," and "The Mysteries of a Tea Kettle," are either directly cited or alluded to in Wilkinson's argument. Of the articles overlooked or not mentioned by Wilkinson, the most engaging one comprises a travelogue in two installments. These two installments, written by John Lewis Delaware and published in May and June of 1852, were respectively titled "The City of Sudden Death" and "Preservation in Destruction" (Lohrli 94). Considering that the implications of Wilkinson's argument is the death of the universe, or at least London in particular, it is perhaps necessary to quote a passage from "The City of Sudden Death" in which John Delaware meditates upon Pompeii's demise:

But who is there who will not construct for

himself...some picture of what that awful moment must have been, when Vesuvius poured boiling ashes through every pore and fibre of the city and its citizens...And in these future ages, when Mr. Macaulay's New Zealander is to contemplate the ruins of London...will our descendants, in like manner, stalk uninvited through mysterious mansions? (171)

It is difficult not to think of Chesney Wold, in particular in its final represented state—attached as first epigraph—as one of these “mysterious mansions.”

Not surprisingly, considering the density and volume of its figuration, William Axton also begins his essay “Religious and Scientific Imagery in *Bleak House*” by focusing on the opening pages of *Bleak House*. The Megalosaurus, he suggests, “invokes those contrary accounts of pre-history proposed by evolutionary science” (Axton 350). As Axton shrewdly notes, this invocation of evolution results in the adoption or promotion of adaptation as a law of Nature, and thus obsolescent institutions, perhaps like the Court of Chancery, must inevitably become extinct because of a natural process.

Axton, furthermore, applies this observation to the Dedlocks and the world of Chesney Wold. As representatives of aristocratic traditions and societies that support all that is “bleak” in society, the Dedlock family is thereby associated with faded glory and functional obsolescence. As in the case of the Court of Chancery, and as foreshadowed by the surreal Megalosaurus (whose presence now seems more appropriate), the Dedlock's “true situation” is summarized by Axton as follows:

In scientific terms, the Dedlocks are fossils, atavisms, or petrified remnants of antiquity...Hence it is that Sir Leicester and his lady are described throughout the throughout the novel in terms of immobility, rigidity, stasis. What is stressed at this point, however, is their almost spellbound ignorance of the their anachronistic survival and the inevitability

of their awakening. (354)

What I have established so far is the well-documented literature arguing for viewing the omniscient narrative of *Bleak House* as a sustained and deeply embedded analogy, to use Wilkinson's term, between emerging scientific developments in the early-to-mid nineteenth century and exigent problems of municipal institutions and social traditions in Regency and Victorian England. "The energy which gave the social system its initial impetus seems about to run down. Entropy approaches at a maximum," writes J. Hillis Miller (31). Indeed, "things fall apart" in *Bleak House* fifty years before they do for Yeats, but in the end "the center holds," civilization endures, because Dickens, in the closing chapters of the Esther narrative, redeems the world he has symbolically destroyed.

II

The notion that Esther's narrative functions, at least partially, as redemptive is certainly not unique to *Bleak House* criticism. In "The Bleak Houses of *Bleak House*," Alice Van Kelley writes, "When Esther Summerson marries Allan Woodcourt and moves into the ideally bucolic namesake of her former home, she enters a Bleak House which points the way towards a lifting of the fog" (Kelley 268). The author of *A Bleak House Companion* notes that the ending suggests "a world being supplanted...by a new world... which embodies the values of love, redemption, and individual acts of goodness" (Shatto 8). Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf concludes her reading of the novel by concluding, "thus the novel ends with the creation of a new world" (Van Boheemen-Saaf 123). Miller adverts to the novel's close as a "happy ending" (Miller 50), and even Wilkinson admits that "there seems to be support for the idea of an eventual moral and spiritual regeneration which will save the world" (Wilkinson 246).

Despite this critical awareness, there remains a paucity of *bona fide* scholarship examining the function of Esther's narrative, especially its resolution, in relation to the metaphorical destruction of the earlier omniscient narrative. Perhaps, as we have seen, this is a result of the omniscient narrative's success; or, approached from

the opposite side, a reflection of Esther's characteristic blandness. Problems of style produce problems of interpretations: many readers think of *Bleak House* entirely in terms of the omniscient narrative. Even as eminent a critic as Edmund Wilson, pioneering Dickens criticism in 1937, mistakenly opines that "the whole book is permeated with fog and rain" and that "[*Bleak House* is a book in which] the magnanimous, the simple of heart, the amiable, the loving and the honest are frustrated, subdued or destroyed" (Wilson 31, 34). Both of these assertions are simply incorrect, though probably accurate if Wilson is thinking solely of the omniscient narrative as distinct or distinctive, as is lamentably common.⁴ Therefore, my intention is to interpret the resolution of Esther's narrative by focusing on four incidents or narrative tropes: the name Esther Summerson itself; the fact that she writes seven years after the events depicted by herself and the omniscient narrator; the description of how to "begin the world"; and the environment of the new Bleak House.

First, Esther Summerson is a name rich in significations and allusions. "Esther," I posit, adverts to The Book of Esther in the Old Testament, which describes Esther as a "beautiful and charming girl...who had neither father nor mother" (*The New English Bible* 552).⁵ She is raised by her guardian, Mordecai, and ultimately the Persian King Ahasuerus, whose realm subjugates and oppresses the Jews, selects her to be Queen. After discovering conspiracies intending to eliminate the Hebrew population, Esther begs the King to for his intervention, pleading, "For how can I bear to see the calamity which is coming upon my race? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" (557). Complying with her desires, the king intercedes by imprisoning the conspirators and promising safety to the Jews, who commemorate these events in

4 Pace Ellen Serlen, who has argued that "the two worlds...are intended to be two totally separate entities rather than two halves of a whole fictional world," I presuppose that there is an important symbiotic relationship between the narratives, and therefore do not follow Serlen in defining them as distinct "worlds" (Serlen 551).

5 It is perhaps noteworthy that the etymology of "Esther" points towards the Persian word for "star," just as, in *Great Expectations*, Estella's name points toward the Latin word for "star."

the annual celebration of *Purim*. As Jon Levenson writes:

Esther is not only in exile, but an orphan and a person who must disguise her ethnicity. Yet through good luck of mysterious origin, good personal courage, obedience to her foster-father, and rare eloquence, she rises to royal estate and effects the deliverance of her threatened nation. (16)

Just like her Biblical predecessor, Esther Summerson, by using her qualities of courage, patience, and eloquence, emerges from childhood adversity to finally attain adult happiness against all odds. Additionally, “Summerson” symbolizes a constellation of ideas suggesting warmth, light, and generation. Following the “death of the sun” seven years before, which Wilkinson has successfully demonstrated, Esther Summerson represents the figurative “second sun” which delivers civilization from destruction.

Too little attention has been given to the significance of Esther communicating her story seven years after the events depicted in the omniscient narration.⁶ First of all, this view from the future privileges her account; secondly, the fact that she has implicitly survived after the omniscient narrator suggests that the virtues of domesticity, patience, and good deeds favored in her narrative are more successful in avoiding extinction than the overwhelming cynicism, ennui, and Weltschmerz represented of the omniscient narrator. However, these are all simply ancillary observations. Most importantly, the seven-year phenomenon strongly associates with the Biblical account of 7-day Creation. With years typifying days, Esther’s society in the Arcadia of the second Bleak House requires 7

6 I disagree in part with Christine van Boheemen-Saaf’s remark that “Esther’s private first-person narrative, centering on domesticity and human relations, is presented as a contrastive remedy to the darkness called up by the omniscient narrator” (90; emphasis added). While the latter clauses are certainly in line with my thinking, it is certainly not true that Esther’s narrative is “private.” Cf. “The few words that I have to add to what I have written, are soon penned; then I, and the unknown friend to whom I write, will part for ever” (Dickens 767; emphasis added). Although she is indeed writing to an “unknown friend,” the phrase “to whom I write” indicates Esther’s wish to share her version of these events. To my knowledge, no scholarship has been directed towards the meaning of her correspondence, i.e. whether she is in fact writing to someone decipherable within the text or whether Dickens is simply conforming to or nodding at the epistolary tradition.

years to create itself after the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce “lapse[d] and melt[ed] away” and the death of Richard Carstone “begin the world” (Dickens 760, 763).⁷

The significance of the evocative phrase “begin the world” is underscored by its function as the title of Chapter LXV. What is most curious and telling about the phrase is the mechanism by which the world is begun, and that is primarily through the ending of other things—the lapsing of the Jarndyce case and the death of Richard Carstone. Were the Jarndyce case to continue, there would always be the possibility that it could contaminate or infect the new society the way it had the moribund society described by the omniscient narrator. A religious interpretation of this requirement, suggested by the chronicles of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah, supposes that societies that have broken their covenant with God must be punished while an elect few will be saved to “begin the world” anew.

In this case, a society in which the Jarndyce suit exists will always lead its population to the kind of greed, laziness, and mania that affect Richard Carstone, who must be excluded from the new world for fear that his mania could re-occur.⁸ Although Richard Carstone must die for the same reasons that the case of Jarndyce must lapse, there are other behaviors to consider in his death scene. He apologizes to John Jarndyce and repeats his pledge: “I will begin the world” (763). Unfortunately, the only way he can do this is to die, ensuring his absence from the world his survivors will begin anew.

In the June 8, 1853 edition of *Household Words*, published around the time Dickens was writing the closing chapters of *Bleak House*, the following encomium appeared under the title “Arcadia”:

7 This transformation in which days can signify years (and vice versa) was common to Victorian minds familiar with the arguments of Lyell et al., who convincingly demonstrated that the Biblical account of Creation was refuted by developments in geology, biology, and paleontology. In response, advocates of Biblical authority had to introduce a metaphorical reading of the Bible.

8 Cf. p. 745, where George Rouncewell and his brother ensure that no domestic case involving the disposition of a will can infect the new world by amiably agreeing that George, instead of writing himself out of the will (which would create textual ambiguities as in the Jarndyce case), will agree to receive his estate and dispose of it at the time he chooses.

A smiling landscape, all gently undulating—no fierce rocks or yawning chasms...Eternal summer. Fruit, flowers, and odoriferous herbs...There were no game laws in Arcadia, no union workhouses, no beer-shops, no tallymen, no police...And the sky was very blue, and the birds sang carols continually.
(Sala, 376)

The similarities between this description are important to consider in contrasting the environment of Esther and Allan's world from London and Chesney Wold. These account for the recurring images of the sun, flowers, and sparkling water in the novel's final pages compared to those of fog, floods, pollution, and epidemics in the famous opening paragraphs. Not just the environment but also the demographic of this new world intensify its difference from London and Chesney Wold. In contrast to the moribund world of unhappy marriages, bachelors, and orphans focused on in the omniscient narration, the closure of Esther focuses on images of maternity, family, and children.

The works of numerous critics have been instructive in detailing the scientific concerns of Victorian England and how Dickens used *Bleak House* as an object in which to work out and explore contemporary anxieties regarding them. Indeed, I have cited and agreed with scholars who have advanced the argument that Dickens not only deals with eschatological or apocalyptic fears in the omniscient narrative of *Bleak House*, but that he in fact depicts the destruction of the municipal society of London and the fashionable society of Chesney Wold. Starting where these scholars have stopped, I have demonstrated how the resolution of Esther's narrative retroactively counter-balances this "dead" world from 7 years after its demise. Like her Biblical predecessor, Esther, with the assistance of her guardian and powerful husband, she delivers the good people from the punishments of a fallen society. By rising like a second sun, Esther Summerson preserves a destroyed society and fulfills Richard Carstone's pledge to "begin the world."

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Street Cred: Economies of Shame and Homosociality in *Much Ado about Nothing*

Grace McCarthy

Much of the criticism surrounding Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* focuses on the traditional concerns of the patriarchy, including masculine anxiety. More specifically, critics tend to explain away Claudio's rejection of Hero at their aborted wedding (4.1.23-110) as a concern of chastity. However, the nature of the rejection and the stakes involved for Claudio suggest more than a patriarchal concern for the purity of a bloodline. Claudio, having just been involved in a war, returns to Messina in a state of intense homosocial bonding. This type of male bonding comes with its own hierarchy and economy, one manifestly different from the compulsory heterosexual hierarchy of Messina. While sexual jealousy was absolutely a concern in Early Modern England and for Shakespeare as a playwright, I argue that Hero and Claudio's relationship is based not on the traditional concerns of masculine anxiety and sexual jealousy, but on the economic structure based in the homosocial relationships between Claudio and his male counterparts.

Mark Breitenberg, in his essay "Anxious Masculinity: Sexual

Jealousy in Early Modern England,” sets up a model for early modern gender norms and sexuality based in Lacanian theory combined with the theories of Jacques Derrida. This model is based in women as “other,” but they are othered because they are unknowable to men. Breitenberg says that “...Lacan constructs the vagina as absence or “not-knowledge” and as the “barred place of the male subject’s origin,” a separation that functions similarly—perhaps analogously—to the bar between signifier and signified” (380). That being the case, then the sign for *Much Ado* might look something like this:

Knowledge/Masculine society

“Not Knowledge”/ The Place of a Male Subject’s Origin

This complete sign represents Messina in all of its compulsory heterosexual glory. A simpler way to set up this binary is in terms of Masculine/Feminine; however both of those binaries represent the expected Early Modern social underpinnings. What Shakespeare has done with *Much Ado* is brought together two groups of people who have been living exclusively on one half or the other of the binary for a period of time, and cannot readjust to the whole of the binary.

In terms of traditional heterosexual identity, since masculine identity is constructed based on not only the chastity of the wife but also on the ability of the husband to determine the wife’s chastity, then Claudio’s supposed inability to foresee Hero’s promiscuity ought to have been a serious black mark against his character (Breitenberg 382). That being said, however, Breitenberg also remarks that “male characters...written by men in the Renaissance so often anticipate being cuckolded, as if it were an unavoidable aspect of marriage” (381). If the expectation for men to be able to literally read women’s chastity is undercut by an assumption that they will be unable to fulfill the expectation, then the stakes for Claudio marrying Hero despite her lack of virginal status are far lower than many critics set them; particularly since Don Pedro was the first person to assert her chastity (1.1.221). If the

experienced Don Pedro seemingly misread Hero (who is inherently unknowable), then there is even less onus on Claudio to correctly interpret Hero; by the definition of the socially accepted sign for Messina, Hero's chastity is and must be unknowable.

Why, then, are these two men so overtly outraged by what should be a minor embarrassment? Because heterosexual identity is not what is at stake. Messina may be an environment that requires heterosexuality, but Claudio, Benedick, Don Pedro and Don John have all been at war. Their social environment during the war would have been one of intense male bonding, without the influence of women to inflict compulsory heterosexuality or complete the above sign for social society. These men have been living exclusively on one side of a binary where they were already privileged, and so have built their own sub-binary within the greater signified of masculine knowledge.

Celestino Deleyto's essay, "Men in Leather: Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado about Nothing* and Romantic Comedy," deals with homosocial desire and homosocial relationships in the context of the 1993 film adaptation of the Shakespeare play, but the text bears out Deleyto's thesis:

With the exception of Beatrice's initial hostility to men, it is mostly the young men that present the fiercest opposition to marriage. In fact, the film could be described as the story of a group of men who are confronted with the social reality of marriage and who are only half-heartedly reconciled to an immediate future of stable monogamy, because such a prospect will entail the abandonment of the company of men and the intense state of male bonding favored by war (93).

Deleyto then goes on to examine Freud's Theory of Castration, and its impact on the men who are suddenly thrust into a society that privileges heterosexuality after an extended period of homosocial bonding. He also examines Susan Laurie's feminist rewriting of Freud, noting that that mother represents not the traditional "penisless man," but a power that can castrate a son

(Deleyto 93). All of these factors and theories combine to make not only the women, but the heterosexual expectations they represent, a major threat to these returning soldiers. The threat, however, is not to Breitenberg's heterosexual identity; it is to the male unit and homosocial bond that is present at the beginning of the play.

The homosocial unit is a product of the sub-binaries built by the male characters during the course of the pre-play actions, and comes with its own set of standards, expectations and hierarchy. Shakespeare makes certain to lay out exactly how the male unit in *Much Ado* is ranked at the beginning of the play. Keeping in mind his title, Prince of Aragon, Don Pedro obviously ranks high, and Claudio has distinguished himself in the recent war, "doing in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion. He hath indeed better bett'ered expectation..." (1.1.13-15). So Claudio is set up with considerable "street cred" among the men from the beginning. Don Jon later makes it clear that he attributes his fall to Claudio's rise, so the tension within the male social unit is present long before Hero's chastity becomes an issue (1.3.66-67). The homosocial-unit binary built by these men may in fact be a balanced one, but the fact that the balanced sub-binary overbalances the greater binary is the reason it must necessarily be destroyed.

When the men of Messina ride off to war, the signifier ("not knowledge", the place of male origin) is no longer a piece of the foundation that codifies the behavior and social expectations of these men, so they necessarily take the signified from the sign that dictated behavior in Messina and create a binary for themselves within the greater binary. That might look something like this:

Secular/Religious

Warrior/Courtier _____

Noble/Common _____

Knowledge/Masculine society

"Not Knowledge"/ The Place of a Male Subject's Origin

What adding a sub-binary does, particularly on the privileged

side of an existing sign, is that it makes the original signified something that is inherently unachievable. Because in Messina's original sign, heterosexuality was the (achievable) goal, breaking down the homosocial sub-binary will return Messina to its pre-war sign, and the men will be once again in the realm of Early Modern masculine jealousy. In order to break the bonds down, however, the currency on which they trade must be shown to be worthless.

The ultimate test of the currency of the homosocial unit is not Claudio's public rejection of Hero; that rejection is in fact the aftermath of the falling of the unit, which is completed by Benedick's challenge to Claudio (5.1.143-150). By then, the homosocial bonds have been broken, and are in the process of being reformed to fit the Masculine/Feminine binary which is expected in Messina. Prior to the reformation however, Don John secretly takes Claudio and Don Pedro to witness a twist on Shakespeare's bed trick: Boracchio makes love to Hero's maid Margaret, who is at the time wearing Hero's clothes (This happens offstage and is later related to the audience by Boracchio). The word Don John uses to describe Hero to Claudio is "disloyal" (3.2.104). "Disloyal" is a very telling choice of words; it is a more martial betrayal than say, "unfaithful" or "adulterous" would have been. There are two compelling reasons for Don John to choose a martial term over a marital one: first, the homosocial-unit was a martial one, and in the initial exposition, it is inferred that Claudio rose to power within the unit because Don John was himself, disloyal in some manner. By applying the same term to Hero, Don John is symbolically bringing her within the bounds of the economy of the homosocial unit, placing her at his level in terms of comradeship. Second, by using the terminology of the homosocial-unit, Don John is assuring that Claudio won't simply accept the cuckolding which Breitenberg suggests all Early Modern men could expect. Between the martial language and the fact that Boracchio and Don John are both members of the homosocial-unit, Claudio will inevitably be more betrayed by his "boys" and by the economics of the homosocial-unit than by Hero.

All of this bubbling tension over the betrayal by the homosocial-unit comes to a very public head when Claudio tells Leonato to

take Hero back, and “Give not this rotten orange to your friend” (4.1.31). The linguistic link between fruit and sex has been well noted by critics through the years, but in this case, Claudio’s use of a spoiled fruit metaphor is more complex than a simple loss of chastity, and therefore marriage value.

In her essay “Rotten Oranges and Other Spoiled Commodities: The Economics of Shame in *Much Ado about Nothing*,” Stephanie Chamberlain asserts that “there is no shame, in other words, unless there is at least the threat of public exposure” (5). This statement works on every level of the main sign for Messina and the sub-binary built for the homosocial-unit. First of all, it is very obvious how it fit into the greater Messina sign, and that Hero’s perceived loss of chastity, when announced in public, fits neatly into Breitenberg’s model of Early Modern masculinity and the value system attached to that. Once again, however, Claudio’s heterosexual masculinity is not what is being publicly shamed here by his public shaming of Hero. According to Chamberlain’s argument, Hero has absolutely been revealed to be internally corrupt by her perceived lack of chastity (6-8). Chamberlain’s argument can also be extrapolated beyond the heteronormative language of Breitenberg’s heterosexual expectations. If one applies the same kind of “spoilage” economics to the homosocial-unit that is applied to Hero’s chastity, then Messina becomes a place where the fruit of the homosocial-unit becomes corrupt. In that vein, Ewan Fernie has suggested that,

Shame constitutes an unwelcome revelation of the self...the subject of shame may be ashamed of itself directly or because of others on whom its honor depends: The closer the connection the greater the shame here; the disgrace of one’s own parent, spouse or child is especially great. (Chamberlain 5)

While Claudio has no blood connection with Don Pedro, Don John or Boracchio, the bonds built by the homosocial-unit mirror those bonds Fernie is describing above. That being the case, then Hero being a spoiled orange is simply a microcosm for orange grove that is that homosocial-unit. While on the surface they seem to be a uniform, tightly-bound group, Don John paid

Boracchio to frame Hero in order to destabilize the unit. This internal strife mirrors the heteronormative strife that surrounds masculine anxiety over female chastity. Essentially, by making public Hero's spoilage, Claudio is also making very public the breaking of the homosocial-unit. The text states that Claudio is Benedick's new "sworn brother" (1.1.70-90), and yet the lines of the homosocial-unit at the marriage have broken down; Benedick is off in the crowd, and Dons John and Pedro are at Claudio's back (4.1.25-75). Therefore, all three of these men are publicly shamed, not because Hero is unchaste, but because the sub-binary has been shattered and Claudio has failed to reach not only the inherently unachievable masculine ideal of the sub-binary, but also the mediocre ideal of compulsory heteronormativity in Messina. Hero might be unchaste, but Claudio has been measured against and failed two standards of manhood. Because of that, Claudio has little choice but to publicly humiliate the woman he would have married, because he has lost all of his street cred with the boys.

Claudio shaming Hero has less to do with being cuckolded, and more to do with trying to reclaim the already lost unity that existed during the intense state of homosocial bonding that occurred during the war. By holding up Hero's chastity to public scrutiny, the heteronormative sign that governs social behavior in Messina will be brought to the fore, and the destruction of the sub-binary that was the homosocial-unit will (Claudio hopes) go unnoticed.

The other significant instance of shaming happening with the homosocial-unit when Claudio rejects Hero is the fact that, if the sub-binary has broken down, it must also be subsumed. Masculinity and knowledge are still the privileged signifieds of the heteronormative sign for Messina, but in the sub-binary, even the non-privileged signifiers are positions of power. For example:

<u>Priest</u>	<u>Warrior</u>	<u>King</u>
Governor	Courtier	Noble

are all examples of binaries within the greater sub-binary, and every

single one of those binaries demonstrates power or privilege of some kind, with the difference in privilege versus unprivileged being a matter of degree, not a matter of being othered or not. If a man fit into more than one of those sub-sub-binaries, like Castiglione's example of a perfect courtier who is also a warrior—Claudio fits this model as well, and Don Pedro is a king and a warrior—then the power or influence of that man only increases.

Having the sub-binary that is the homosocial-unit be destroyed and therefore removed from the greater binary necessarily means a symbolic and possibly literal loss of power. If Claudio or Don Pedro are implicated in the breakdown of the power structure, then the shame is not only theirs, but belongs to the entire privileged half of the greater binary, because in the subsuming of the sub-binary, the greater binary inherits the shame. That shame, brought down upon the masculine, and therefore privileged, side of an Early Modern binary that underpins the expectations of society would be unthinkable. It would shake society to its roots, and it might make the other (women) less other. That is what Claudio is gambling when he rejects Hero; her chastity is the ante in a very high-stakes poker game.

On the surface of the text of *Much Ado about Nothing*, the stakes Claudio is playing for are low, predictable, and based on traditional Early Modern gender roles. A deeper look at the linguistics of the text and the addition of modern homosocial theories reveal a new depth to traditional linguistic signs, and binaries within binaries that allow for power to grow exponentially the deeper into the sub-binaries someone goes. This potential for depth and breadth of power also allows for the possibility of terrifying and significant losses when those sub-binaries are destroyed and subsumed back into the greater binary.

The different binaries, and the homosocial relationships that Claudio enters Messina with allow for a reading of the play based in linguistics and economics that adds depth and complexity to a scene and a rejection which are otherwise written off as overly concerned with chastity. Hero and Claudio's relationship began, was nearly thwarted by, and will forever be defined by the

homosocial bonds Claudio has with the other men, and the stakes that come from those bonds.

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Los Angeles as Post-National Palimpsest in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

Meagan Meylor

There are maps and there are maps and there are maps.
- Karen Tei Yamashita

In her 1997 postmodern novel *Tropic of Orange*, Karen Tei Yamashita represents Los Angeles as a site of global convergence: a metropolitan center where trade routes, transportation networks, and cultures come together. To challenge dominant narratives of Los Angeles as a multicultural space with static ethnic enclaves, Yamashita employs a motif of alternative cartography to portray the city as a nexus of globalization, a space made up of individuals with hybrid identities who traverse boundaries. Though considerable attention has been given to the novel's themes of globalization and marginalized ethnic spaces, scholars have yet to adequately address Yamashita's literary treatment of contemporary Los Angeles through notions of alternative mapping.¹ As a result, I will examine the novel's recurring focus on maps and spatial politics, positing that Yamashita subverts the hegemonic concept of multiculturalism through her presentation of the multi-layered structures and ever-shifting palimpsest of Los Angeles.

1 On the interplay between global networks, cartography, and social justice in Yamashita's works, see Sherryl Vint's "Orange County: Global Networks in *Tropic of Orange*," Ruth Y. Hsu's "The Cartography of Justice and Truthful Refractions in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*," and Kandice Chuh's "Of Hemispheres and Other Spheres: Navigating Karen Tei Yamashita's Literary World."

Yamashita introduces the concept of multidimensional mapping through her use of paratext in the beginning of *Tropic of Orange*. By creating a diagram entitled “HyperContexts,” Yamashita divides the book into seven days of the week, each day consisting of a chapter of narrative from each of her seven characters. Each character holds a distinctive voice and narrative style as well as a thematic trope suggested by the titles that run horizontally across the “HyperContexts” section. For example, the horizontal titles for the character Arcangel consist of infinitive phrases such as “To Wake” and “To Dream,” suggesting that the chapters are all connected despite their irregular placement throughout the narrative. As literary scholar Sue-Im Lee explains, “this disjunctive organization leads to an atomistic sense of each character’s life, as each chapter seems to stand on its own with little continuity from the other” (506). This use of paratext in the beginning of the novel illustrates how instead of one linear storyline, *Tropic of Orange* is made up of overlapping layers and individual characters with their own thematic concerns: Rafaela, the native Mexican with a supernatural intuition and deep memory; Bobby, the polymorphous “new” American with an emphasis on work and providing for his family; Emi, the Japanese-American TV-station executive with a fondness for American consumerism; Buzzworm, the community activist who is always plugged into radio stations; Manzanar, the homeless ex-surgeon who conducts symphonies above the Harbor Freeway; Gabriel, the noir-detective Mexican American with an obsession with work and deadlines; and Arcangel, the fantastical artist who exists outside of the realm of time and symbolizes historical consciousness. Each narrative serves as a vehicle through which to traverse the novel, thus creating a motion-based method of reading rather than a fixed composition. Like the freeway system running through the Los Angeles basin, the novel is an assemblage of individual parts that are weaved together to make a heterogeneous whole. In this way, the “HyperContexts” section serves as a multilayered map of *Tropic of Orange* itself, offering various lenses through which the reader can imagine the novel’s portrayal of Los Angeles as a fluid network of hybrid identities, rather than a space of static multiculturalism.

Throughout the novel, Yamashita presents Los Angeles as an

urban space where people, capital, transportation networks, and geography connect. Focusing on transnational characters, the novel uses the recurring trope of maps to question literal and geopolitical borders, as well as to represent the city as a virtual site of global convergence. One of the novel's characters, Manzanar—an aged Japanese American homeless man who conducts traffic symphonies from above freeway overpasses—draws attention to these mapping layers in his chapter, “Downtown Interchange”: “The uncanny thing was that he could see all of [the maps] at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern, spatial discernment, body politic” (56). Manzanar is able to visualize these overlapping maps, representing the grid of “patterns and connections” that make up Los Angeles, such as transportation networks, cross-cultural interactions, distributions of wealth, and spatial politics (57). Yamashita asserts that ordinary individuals rarely notice this “great theory of maps” that serves as the blueprint for the city of Los Angeles; however, Manzanar allows the reader access to these diverse layers by transforming them into a more accessible form: music (57). Ultimately, Manzanar's symphonic mapping of Los Angeles brings together all of the discordant elements of the city, resulting in a collective universalism that does not exclude particular individuals and communities due to existing power structures or hegemonic systems that claim to speak for all.

Furthermore, the characters in *Tropic of Orange* question existing maps of the city, forging their own paths of mobility throughout Los Angeles and across the Mexican border. Buzzworm, for example, travels throughout the metropolis by foot, walking the streets of South Central and Watts that “you never had to see,” the freeway system acting as a bridge over the mixed-race poor neighborhoods (33). Within Buzzworm's chapters, Yamashita gestures toward the ways in which urban infrastructure planning neglects impoverished neighborhoods of color, allowing for the erasure of these communities within dominant representations of Los Angeles. In this vein, Buzzworm's narrative sheds light on how official maps and geographic lines overlook certain communities and alternative spaces that exist within the global metropolis.

Through the character of Buzzworm, Yamashita draws our attention to the social injustices that are overlooked in Los Angeles due to institutions that broadcast narratives of multiculturalism and equal access to resources. As an embodiment of social services and community activism, Buzzworm recognizes how maps reflect hegemonic power, and he aims to uncover the amalgamation of cultures and community networks that exists in Los Angeles. Buzzworm expresses: “If someone could put down all the layers of the real map, maybe he could get the real picture” (81). The *real* map Buzzworm is referencing is the layered grid that Manzanar can visualize while standing above the freeway, consisting of the multifarious global network of cultures, trade, and communities that is always in flux.

In her article about post-nationalism and space in *Tropic of Orange*, literary critic Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak notes that “to preserve the historical record and to foreground the relationship between space and power, Buzzworm attempts to construct a multi-layered map that accounts for the shifting nature of spatial inscriptions.” She continues by asserting that “this map offers no *grand récit* but is instead a palimpsestic collection of pieces from his excavation, one superimposed upon the other” (11). As Jozwiak highlights, Buzzworm searches for an alternative map that will restore the multiplicity of factors that make up this site of global convergence and interconnectedness. Though Buzzworm’s navigations appear the most emblematic, each of the novel’s characters creates his or her own map—his or her own methods of place-making—whether throughout the Los Angeles basin or across the Mexican border. For instance, Manzanar, arguably the only character who remains static within the novel, is able to grasp these multiple paths and transform them into a symphonic unity; in doing so, Yamashita is portraying Los Angeles as a network made up of multiple layers and geographic spaces that converge to form the global metropolis.

The novel reaches its climax on a stretch of the Harbor Freeway, as an orange laced with drugs causes a major traffic collision and shuts down the freeway for days. The freeway serves as a symbolic backdrop against which Yamashita can articulate her understanding

of Los Angeles as a post-national nexus of hybrid identities and communities. Built upon earlier modes of moving throughout Southern California, Los Angeles's contemporary transportation system is a palimpsest itself, as explored by Reyner Banham in his book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*: "The freeway system is the third or fourth transportation diagram drawn on a map that is a deep palimpsest of earlier methods of moving about the basin" (57). With origins in the ancient networks utilized by Native American populations in the area, the modern freeway infrastructure can be traced back to earlier patterns of migration and settlements, such as the Spaniards' El Camino Real of the 18th and 19th centuries and the Pacific Electric railways of the 20th century. In other words, Los Angeles' contemporary freeway networks followed roads that followed trolley rail lines, which followed Native American pathways. The freeway system within *Tropic of Orange* works as an emblem of this spread of layered development in Los Angeles, which consists of the "prehistoric grid of plant and fauna and human behavior," as well as the "historic grid of land usage and property, the great overlays of transport" (57). In this way, Yamashita evokes this historical context as a vessel through which she can represent the city as a post-national site of shifting social spaces and interconnecting cultural spheres.

The alternative maps that are weaved throughout the novel critique the hegemonic concept of multiculturalism by highlighting the hybridity of the post-national metropolis. The characters in *Tropic of Orange* do not fit into singular ethnic categories, as expected from the idealized concept of multiculturalism. To quote Lee again from her article about the global village and universalism in *Tropic of Orange*: "Globalization as a force of deterioration is a constant interest in all of Yamashita's novels, as she explores the unmooring of fixed ethnic, national, and geographical identities and of established categories by which humans are organized and distinguished" (503). Yamashita's novels explore the heterogeneous identities that exist in Los Angeles as a result of globalization, while subverting the myth that the city is a unified village made up of singular multicultural enclaves. In a scene involving Emi and Gabriel at a Japanese restaurant in Los Angeles, Emi complains,

“I hate being multicultural,” rejecting the image of the city as a global village with static ethnic identities (128). While a liberal white woman emphasizes what she sees as the importance of cultural diversity while enjoying Japanese food, Emi sheds light on the consumerist logic of multiculturalism: “I’m invisible. We’re all invisible. It’s just tea, ginger, raw fish, and a credit card” (128). Through Emi’s diatribe, Yamashita is examining the imperialist aspects of multiculturalism, and how the philosophy tends to fetishize different cultures through its unidirectional stance.

Los Angeles literary scholar Kevin R. McNamara elucidates how “Yamashita’s Los Angeles is no multicultural paradise,” arguing instead that “Yamashita’s multivalent, multivocal rendition of contemporary Los Angeles invites the reader to imagine the region’s landscape as evoking, even if intermittently and imperfectly, an ethos of what Vijay Prashad calls ‘horizontal assimilation,’ the concept that different communities of color forge relations with each other against the grain of U.S. white supremacy” (89). Yamashita’s alternative mapping enacts a spatial justice by re-claiming urban space destroyed or altered by the systematic displacement of marginalized ethnic communities through urban planning projects rooted in a system of white supremacy. In *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita draws attention to this social history by constructing imaginary maps of community life, thus foregrounding a social reality that is continually erased—both implicitly and explicitly—by the collective memory of Los Angeles as a stable, multicultural Eden. These Asian American and Latina/o re-imaginings of the city question official maps and boundaries of class, culture, and nationhood within Yamashita’s narrative. Although the borders created by official maps and geo-politics displace communities of color, Yamashita also points out the variable ways in which these hybrid communities converge to re-claim space and fight to make their voices heard.

Yamashita also critiques the concept of multiculturalism through her characterization of Bobby, Emi, and Gabriel, who emerge as hybrid characters rather than representatives of fixed ethnic cultures. Bobby, a “Chinese from Singapore with a Vietnam name speaking like a Mexican living in Koreatown,” represents the

multifarious nature of identities that emerge from globalization, thus undermining the concept of Los Angeles as an embodiment of multiculturalism (15). Furthermore, Emi wonders if she even has an identity because she is “so distant from the Asian female stereotype” (19). This rejection of a static identity and affiliation with a particular culture emphasizes Yamashita’s representation of Los Angeles: as a post-national palimpsest made up of hybrid individuals. Gabriel also emerges as one of these porous characters, failing to fit into pure ethnic or cultural roles. In Emi’s narrative, Yamashita explains that “she had starting dating Gabriel because he was Latino, part of that hot colorful race, only to find out that, except for maybe his interest in tango (and even that was academic), he wasn’t what you call the stereotype” (19). Although Gabriel is Mexican and builds a home in Mazatlán to connect to his cultural heritage, his attempts at authenticity continually fail, thus undermining the romanticized concept of multiculturalism. Throughout *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita depicts the city as a metonym for the global, a fluid network where cultures, trade, and individuals converge, rather than a multicultural haven with unified ethnic spaces.

By the time the novel approaches its exit, the multidimensional grid of Los Angeles has already started to shift. As Arcangel, Rafaela, and her son Sol travel from Mexico to Los Angeles with the fantastical orange, they bring the Tropic of Cancer with them, physically altering the geographic landscape of the city. As Manzanar watches this shift occurring from atop the freeway overpasses, he acknowledges a new, all-inclusive way of seeing Los Angeles and its inhabitants:

Little by little, Manzanar began to sense a new kind of grid, this one defined not by inanimate structures or other living things but by himself and others like him. He found himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor. On a distant overpass, he could make out the odd mirror of his figure, waving a baton. And across the city, on overpasses and street corners, from balconies and park benches, people

held branches and pencils, toothbrushes and carrot sticks, and conducted. (238)

This alternative “mapping” of the city reflects Yamashita’s understanding of Los Angeles as a collective subject, a virtual network of local and global interactions. Equating the symphony with globalization, the novel suggests that once the landscape is no longer fixed geographically, the diverging threads of Los Angeles can embrace, forming a hybrid union. Throughout the novel, Yamashita’s characters transgress boundaries and offer alternative maps of the city, in order to serve a political and cultural purpose: they get us to question ideas of borders, territorial distinctions, and official lines that separate people. Yamashita writes the following in Bobby’s final chapter: “What are these goddamn lines anyway? What do they connect? What do they divide?” (268). By questioning these lines and boundaries, *Tropic of Orange* subverts the hegemonic narrative of Los Angeles as a multicultural city with distinct ethnic enclaves and a static geography; instead, Yamashita offers a counter narrative that suggests that the global metropolis is a palimpsest of cultures, trade, and transportation networks, resulting in an interconnectedness for the people who immigrate and live there.

In *Tropic of Orange*, Yamashita questions the concept of Los Angeles as a representation of multiculturalism, with its emphasis on unified social spaces and static ethnic identities. Through her use of paratext in the “HyperContexts” section—which creates multiple lenses through which the reader can examine the novel—as well as the multidimensional maps that are weaved throughout the book, Yamashita explores Los Angeles as a palimpsest of global connections. Like the ground below us, this network that Yamashita is exploring in the novel continually shifts, as space is claimed and different boundaries are crossed. Encouraging us to look past national borders, ethnic categorizations, and official delineations, *Tropic of Orange* presents Los Angeles as a nexus of globalization with multiple maps, each offering its own story or way of understanding the city. The key to truly embracing these various layers, Yamashita suggests, is to be able to “see them all at once” (56).

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Colonial Discourse as an Instrument of Empire in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Michelle Moreno

Written around 1610, during the peak of the age of exploration, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is inextricably bound to its context and enters directly into the 17th century discourse on colonialism. Through the figures of Prospero and Caliban, the play demonstrates the way in which the colonizer constructs the baseness of the colonized as an attempt to justify colonization. With his ambiguous nature and lack of restraint, Caliban emerges as the native savage whose isolation and repression by Prospero is necessary. As such, Shakespeare's play is part of the colonial discourse that not only produced the backwards Other, but also authorized it by depicting this backwardness as an "unchallenged coherence" (Said, *Orientalism* 205). More than simply constructing Caliban as the prototype for the uncivilized native, *The Tempest* illustrates the process of domination through language. Prospero uses language to impose ideology that in turn serves to justify his domination. However, more than purporting ideas of European superiority and native inferiority, the discourse of colonialism proves to have material effects both on Prospero and Caliban. It is precisely its material existence that crystalizes Prospero's power at the same time that it binds Caliban. While Caliban demonstrates moments of agency by attempting to resist language, the fact that he is repressed

and essentially created by this very language mars his moments of agency with partiality. In the end, language functions as the most potent vehicle of colonization that not only creates and rules over the Other, but ultimately demonstrates the extent to which the discourse of colonialism renders powerless the native voice.

Connoting ideas of empire, right to conquest, civilization, and native savagery, *The Tempest* displays significant investment in British ideals of colonial expansion. While critics have cited various reports, pamphlets, and manuscripts as direct sources for the play's investment in colonial discourse, the most certain of these sources is Montaigne's essay, "Of the Cannibals." Montaigne's account concerns the native inhabitants of the Americas. It uses the figure of the cannibal to address the debate of whether to regard the natives of the New World as human or animal. In the lines that would later reappear in *The Tempest*, Montaigne describes the nation that seems "so barbarous to him" saying, they "hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle" (Montaigne 120). In reading Shakespeare's play alongside Montaigne's account, there is no denying that the wording of Gonzalo's speech in 2.1 directly borrows from Montaigne:

For no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession
.....
No occupation, all men idle, all (2.1.145-150)

In the same way the Montaigne's account illustrates an image of "noble savages," Shakespeare creates a character whose utopic vision of the island also implies such a reading of the natives. This reading is further emphasized in a later passage when Gonzalo remarks that the islanders, "though they are of monstrous shape, yet note/Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of/ Our human generation you shall find/ Many, nay almost any" (3.3.30-34). Gonzalo, like

Montaigne, uses the natives in order to critique the way Europeans sought to solidify the representation of natives as “monstrous.” However, the fact that the source of Gonzalo’s words is Montaigne’s essay does not indicate that the play itself supports this reading. The very act of naming the island’s native “Caliban,” whose “name is a kind of anagram for cannibalism,” suggests not that Shakespeare shared in Montaigne’s view, but that he was entering directly into the controversy of his time concerning the nobility or wildness of natives (Skura 51).

In the play, colonial discourse (and its material effects) proves largely responsible for the way Caliban comes to be in the service of Prospero’s hegemonic power. It produces Caliban as the colonial subject whose voice does not contribute to his own production. Analyzing the power of colonial discourse, Edward Said’s book, *Orientalism*, aids in the reading of Caliban as a Western construct. Said argues that texts so heavily invested in the colonialist discourse of the time (such as *The Tempest*), “can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe” (94). Significantly indebted to Michel Foucault’s idea of discourse, Said sees colonial discourse as an instrument of empire that enables dominant groups to impose “specific knowledges, disciplines, and values upon dominated groups” (Ashcroft 35). These, in turn, come to constitute reality not only for the colonial subjects it appears to represent, but also, for the colonizing powers. *The Tempest* does not merely suggest the primitiveness of natives, but actually produces that reality through Caliban as the colonial subject whose savagery can only be restrained by Prospero’s hegemonic control. However, to arrive at the point in which hegemony is fully justified, it is necessary to firstly legitimize the representation of Caliban as the colonial subject. To do so, the text gives him “a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary,” which in turn, transforms him into a “reality and presence in and for the West” (Said, *Orientalism* 5). Even before Caliban speaks his first line, Prospero employs vocabulary that is characteristic of the colonizer to present Caliban as his colonial subject, referring to him as a “slave,” a “tortoise,” “poisonous,” and as begot by “the foul witch Sycorax” and “by the devil himself” (1.2.8, 17, 57, 320). The latter

description, more than just serving to create the image of the Other, also functions as a means of authorizing those very descriptions. In attributing Caliban this ambiguous parental lineage, Prospero demonizes him. Certainly Caliban has a history; however, the history Prospero cites is centered on the fact that he originates from a line of sorcerers and demons. By telling this history before Caliban speaks, Prospero situates him as a figure predestined to be “poisonous.” It is this idea of the malignantly predestined Other that constitutes part of the knowledge that colonial discourse produced about the silent Other. Such a discursive strategy speaks to the demonization of the native, which colonial discourse used in order to justify conquest. That the initial images and history of Caliban originate from the European voice points to the way in which the text participates in masking these “stereotypical notions” about the natives as “objective knowledges” that do not “simply announce a triumph for civility...but continually *produce* it” (Brown 216).

And indeed even after it produces Caliban as the uncivilized native, the text continues this production through Prospero’s accusation of rape in order to further naturalize the hegemonic power relations between colonizer and colonized. Prospero begins the process of naturalizing his power by suggesting that Caliban’s actions were completely unwarranted: “I have used thee,/Filtth as thou art, with humane care, and lodged thee/ In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate/ The honour of my child” (I.2.332-49). Despite appearing to be a savage, Prospero claims that he treated Caliban with the care appropriate to a human being, even allowing him to share his own physical space. In this way, Prospero manipulates the context so as to appear that it was never his intention to subjugate the island’s native. Instead, the accusation paints Caliban as the primitive savage whose subjugation by Prospero’s invading power is not only justified, but also necessary to tame his unbounded sexuality. The European language thus places Caliban in a double bind: On one hand, it produces him as the savage figure that lacks restraint; on the other, it expects him to behave like a European. Prospero uses Caliban’s failure to meet these expectations as a means to “circumvent [his] version of events by reencoding his boundlessness as rapacity: his inability

to discern a concept of private, bounded property concerning his own dominions is reinterpreted as a desire to violate the chaste virgin, who epitomizes courtly property” (Graph, Phelan 221). Thus, Caliban’s “boundless rapacity” and his incapacity to discern justify the need for a relationship characterized by hegemony between the Old and New World. What Prospero does, then, is create a “narratives of native ‘treachery’” in order to “evade the charge of unjust expropriation” (Lindley 33). By making use of such a narrative, Prospero triggers a reversal: it is not Caliban who is the victim of his crude, colonizing power; instead, Prospero surfaces as the voice of reason whose sincere civilizing mission is disrupted by Caliban’s abuse. Moreover, the non-European is produced through a discourse that is carefully constructed to naturalize the conquest of the New World. The result of such naturalization is the transference of responsibility: it is Caliban’s own conduct that is responsible for his own repression. In this way, the cultural and historical knowledge about the demonized and sexually unbounded native directly aids in the historical interests of European colonization. It is against this vocabulary, imagery, and history, that Shakespeare’s text produces Caliban as a real presence, a constitutive Other against which Prospero materializes his own identity as everything that Caliban is not: civilized, knowledgeable, and powerful.

After constructing Caliban as the inferior and base Other, Prospero’s attempt to secure control manifests itself via his daughter, Miranda, who aids him in imposing the European language on Caliban. Such an imposition simultaneously carries with it the imposition of knowledge, values, and discipline. It is Miranda who first connects the concern over language with the broader colonial concern over the native’s condition:

Abhorred slave...I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known. (1.2.351-358)

Miranda’s speech epitomizes various colonial assumptions about

language that were shared by colonizing powers. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Said describes one of these assumptions saying, “Without significant exception the universalizing [colonial] discourse of Modern Europe...assume[s] the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world...There is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known” (50). Indeed, when Prospero arrives on the island and imposes his language on a native who did not ask to learn it, he participates in the assumption of native silence. His daughter inherits this assumption, as is evident when she says, “I took pains to make thee speak,” implying that Caliban was mute before she forced him to speak. Assuming his silence, Miranda ignores the possibility that Caliban had the capacity of speech through his own native language. Equally telling is her denial of native understanding and purpose. In saying that she “endowed thy purposes/With words that made them known,” Miranda suggests that things are not “known” for the native until they have words to express them.

As such, Caliban’s understanding of the world is not simply reduced to inferior knowledge. More so, it is portrayed as non-existing before the preeminent European language that taught him “To name the bigger light, and how the less,/ That burn by day and night. (1.2.358). Undoubtedly this allusion to Genesis 1.16 highlights the manner by which the European language exudes the apogee of civilization in contrast to the explicit absence of the native language. The text endows Prospero and Miranda with the power to do that which was generally thought to be reserved for God; that is, to name things, and therefore, give them meaning and purpose. In the same way that, biblically, God claims power over the universe by speaking it into existence, Prospero too possesses this power. He names Caliban his “poisonous slave” and the text itself reveals that such a label aids in his appropriation of Caliban. Possessing this powerful instrument of language and constantly striving “for the bettering of [his] mind,” Prospero “embodies the highest ideals of his culture which exist in the space of the ‘timeless’ and ‘universal.’ This, indeed, is precisely the way in which European culture maintains a hegemony of ideas and values”

(Ashcroft 85). For Prospero and Miranda, then, Caliban is merely a natural occurrence that can be molded to fit the European standard of humanity because he lacks not only language, but purpose.

The imposition of language does not stop simply at reinforcing ideas of European superiority and native inferiority; rather, it manifests itself materially on Caliban. While Prospero's language indeed forms Caliban, it also creates an understanding about his relationship to other people and his place in the world. That he emerges as the rapacious and mute native whose humanity is in question is enough to sanction a physical separation. It is Caliban, nevertheless, who suffers the physical repercussions, as it is he who Prospero confines to a "hard rock" while keeping him from "The rest o'the'island" (1.2.344). As the play progresses, the hard rock becomes a metaphor for Prospero's linguistic prison from where Caliban cannot fully escape. More than geographically, the material effects of Prospero's language also register corporeally. Prospero spews out verbal curses intended to take form on Caliban's body:

For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee; thou shalt be pinched
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em. (I.2.325-330)

Unlike Caliban's curses, which are confined to an oral reach, Prospero's curses go as far as to induce harm so severe that it threatens to "pent [his] breath up." Along with threatening his life by inhibiting his breathing, he also inflicts prolonged torture in the form of incessant pinches. These, in turn, result in marks as innumerable as the cells in a honeycomb. As severe as it is, the physical effects of Prospero's language do not trigger violence (on Caliban's part), but result in more silence in the form of obedience. Recognizing the power Prospero exerts through his language, Caliban says, "I must obey; his art is of such power,/ It would control my dam's god Stebos,/And make a vassal of him" (1.2.371-374). That Prospero's control of language is so powerful as to even subjugate a devil is enough to elicit obedience from Caliban.

But, even as he is obediently silenced within the confines of the rock, Caliban does attempt to speak by rupturing the claims of objective knowledge and telling his own history. Still, that the retelling of his history is done in the colonizer's language problematizes his attempt at escaping it. In his first speech, Caliban delineates clearly the dichotomy between Prospero the colonizer and him the colonized. Situating himself as a natural citizen of the island who is a victim of Prospero's usurpation he says,

This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first
Thou strok'st me and made much of me

.....
And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle

.....
Cursed be I that did so!

.....
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th'island." (1.2.332-345)

In this passage, Caliban identifies himself not as the demonized native, but as the island's natural king who was robbed of his territory. Through such identification, he recovers the history that colonial discourse (and Prospero as its enactor) had previously repressed. Quite notably, Caliban does not only recover this history, but he does so with great eloquence. Many critics view his command of language as an appropriation of Prospero's language and thus a means of resistance. In what Paul Brown calls Caliban's "production of the island as a pastoral space," Caliban describes his desire to escape his reality as a colonial subject (149):

Be not afeared; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,

The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again. (3.2.130 126-135)

Steering away from Prospero's narrative of native treachery, in this passage Caliban exudes all that is artistic and graceful. Yet, in all its resonance and harmony, his poetry is ultimately illusory on many levels. Firstly, while describing the charming qualities of the island, the text concurrently exposes the deceptive nature of these qualities. Despite claiming that the sounds he hears are the natural sounds of his native land, the word "noise" can also be used for "a company of musicians or a musical ensemble" (OED Noise n 5b). This definition (along with the stage directions) reveals that the noises are not natural, but played by Ariel on a tabor and pipe. Consequently, they are part of Prospero's grander plan to deceive Caliban by manipulating something that is so familiar to him. Such a distortion of Caliban's native space renders him incapable of distinguishing between the natural sounds of the island and Ariel's fraught sounds. Though he characterizes the "noises" of the island as "sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not," it is these very noises that deceive Caliban. Additionally, they lead him toward recognizing the futility of his desire to escape his external reality, which is no longer characterized by the island's delights, but by the crude sounds of Prospero's verbal curses. As such, a passage that is often cited as demonstrative of Caliban's nobleness and agency is, more than anything, a demonstration of the native's inability to speak words with material resonance. As dignified as his poetic abilities are, they do not constitute a moment of resistance. Firstly, they are incapable of transporting him to his desired dream state. Secondly, and more importantly, he produces them using the language of the colonizer. Brown argues, "this production of a site beyond appropriation can only be represented through colonialist discourse...since Caliban's eloquence is after all...the language of the colonizer" (225). However beautifully he reproduces the island, Caliban nevertheless engages the very language that creates him as a "poisonous slave." That he cannot reproduce it in his native tongue speaks to the all-pervading presence of the European language and Caliban's inability to inhabit a space where he can indeed speak.

Further evidence of Caliban's silencing can be seen during his curse to Prospero and his defense against the alleged rape. In his first address to Miranda, Caliban denounces her saying, "You taught me language, and my profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse" (1.2.363-365). Caliban's exchange with Miranda speaks to the idea that "control of language is a means of ensuring that the subjected can articulate their subjection only in a language which already defines their subordinate relationship to the powerful" (Lindley 40). While his curse is certainly a demonstration of resistance, it is (once again) filtered through the language that defines his native condition as subordinate. Additionally, it serves to fulfill the expectations of this very subordination. He is angered to such a point where the foulness of his curse reinforces Prospero's need to subjugate him. Another moment in which Caliban's attempt at resistance is thwarted by the very language he uses is seen when he responds to the attempted rape of Miranda. Giving a justification that is excluded from Prospero's narrative, Caliban responds, "O ho, O ho! Would't had been done./ Thou didst prevent me—I had peopled else/ This isle with Calibans" (1.2.332-345). Caliban gives his justification for what Prospero deems an attempted rape, expressing his desire to people the island with little Calibans. As a native who has been imprisoned within his own territory, it certainly seems plausible that his intentions were simply to populate the island so as to reclaim control. The text supports his justification when Caliban tells Stephano, "Ay, lord she will become thy bed, I warrant,/ And bring thee forth brave brood" (3.2.97-98). This line shows consistency in Caliban's view of Miranda as a fertile breeder and not as someone he can sexually abuse. What is problematic, nevertheless, is his initial interjection, "O ho, O ho!" which historically appeared in dramas as a characterization of "a villain or mischief-maker, and especially of Satan himself" (Lindley 119). Thus, however plausible his explanation is, the very language Caliban uses reinserts him into the imagery of the demonized native.

If the aforementioned examples constitute Caliban's covert, yet always thwarted, attempts at making his voice heard, his explicit and comical revolt against Prospero eliminates the possibility of

enacting any form of meaningful resistance. Recognizing that the source of Prospero's power is his language (aided by his books) Caliban sets out to destroy his books. To do so, he must solicit the help of clown figures, Trinculo and Stephano, in addition to subjecting himself to them. It is in their revolt that the power of colonial discourse culminates in subjection, resistance, and silencing all at once. Indeed, the subjection of Caliban by Trinculo and Stephano is perhaps the most denigrating one, as it reinforces the perpetual Othering of Caliban even by masterless clown figures. Colonial discourse is so powerful precisely because "the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves, reiterate European superiority over Oriental backwardness" (Said, *Orientalism* 7). Regardless of how they measure with other Europeans, Trinculo and Stephano are, in the end, Europeans who are therefore entitled to reinforce the idea that Caliban is the subhuman, backwards Other. He is a "puppy-headed monster," a "Servant monster," a "half a fish, and half a monster" whose very state inhibits him even from telling a truly "monstrous lie" (3.2.2-25). Undoubtedly, Trinculo and Stephano's insistent Othering of Caliban aids in the text's overall subjection of him. However, what cements Caliban's state as the alien Other is the manner by which the text characterizes his revolt. At the point in which he decides to escape Prospero's control, the text's language ridicules his attempt by depicting it as "a parody court, with Caliban kneeling to make his 'suit' to the drunken 'monarch' Stephano" (Lindley 57). Caliban's protest is "arrested by its implication in the convention of clownish vulgarity represented by the 'low-life' characters of Stephano and Trinculo," thus rendering vain his conspiracy (Barker, Hulme 243). Said directly speaks to this end saying, "in the native's resistance to foreign colonialist [he] was either a stupid savage or a negligible quantity, morally and even existentially" (*Orientalism* 307). In this statement, Said captures perfectly Caliban's condition upon enacting his revolt. He assumes the role of an obedient subject, a "deboshed fish," whose act of licking Stephano's shoe solidifies his excessive servility and willful obedience. In all of this, he emerges not only as a savage, but as a "stupid savage," a clown even in the presence of clowns, an easily exploitable colonial subject whose

resistance is continuously silenced by the language that creates him.

In the end, *The Tempest* illustrates the way in which the discourse of colonialism exerts so much power through the language of the colonizer. Language is not simply verbal, but carries with it knowledges, values, ideas, culture, and tangibility. Equally as important, it has the ability to produce, oppress, and alienate. Because of this, it becomes Prospero's ultimate instrument of colonization that enables him to take control and subsequently justify that control. Throughout the play, it is Prospero's language that materializes in the form of Caliban: it produces him as the Other, it inflicts physical injuries on him, and lastly, it subverts his attempts at breaking from his linguistic bind. In contrast, Caliban's language does not materialize in his favor. While his native language is notably absent, the language he employs is fraught precisely because he employs it. Moreover, Caliban's futility makes it difficult to conceive a future for him outside of the one to which the text has bound him. Still, he does emerge as a symbol of the marginalized, colonial subject whose presence, for readers, is eternally relevant, but only because it is in fact silenced.

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Gulliver's Travels: Does the Family Matter?

Nataliya Shpylova-Saeed

Published in 1726, *Gulliver's Travels* has continuously been a focus of literary analysis and inquiries. The book travelled throughout centuries, delivering the writer's voice and incorporating and reflecting multiple voices of the changing environments. An ongoing interest in *Gulliver's Travels* demonstrates not only the outstanding talent of the writer, but also the vitality and responsiveness of the book. Swift's book seems to find its way over the centuries and cultures as if responding to the changes and perturbations of the environment.

Over the decades, *Gulliver's Travels* scholarship has grown into an impressive and abundant collection of insightful readings. The book seems to have responded to trendy interpretations: colonialism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, utopian literature, feminism, to name but a few. Additionally, the research has shifted from general interpretations of *Gulliver's Travels* to specific issues and concerns that constitute the periphery of the book. Contemporary *Gulliver's Travels* scholarship is largely based on the vectors defined by authoritative works of Irvin Ehrenpreis, Harold Bloom, Frank Brady, and Arthur Case, to name but a few. In his recent essay, David Alff interprets *Gulliver's Travels* from the perspective of anti-project literature: literature that subverts and ridicules Enlightenment projects for experiments and innovations. Alff also underscores, for

Swift, the project pastiche offered “a mode of subversive humor and genre of colonial resistance” (248). Satire still remains a pivotal point of contemporary research. Kristen Girten discusses Jonathan Swift’s skepticism about the new science of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and his ambivalent exploration of the sense of touch through microscopy in the Brobdignag chapters of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Deborah Armintor explores satirical aspects of Swift’s book from the feminist perspective. In spite of the abundant research, most critiques focus on satire, parody, irony, and sarcasm; little research has been invested into disclosing the “other” side of the book, which can be highlighted through the dialogical influences of dominant and dominated narratives.

The family topos is one of the aspects that has been excluded from academic discussion of *Gulliver’s Travels*. In this essay, I would like to let Gulliver, the family man, speak. In the beginning of his story he positions himself as son, husband, and father. This aspect opens up the family domain, which is underrepresented in the scholarship of *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Although diversifying the exploration of the *Travels*, contemporary academic discourse has not responded yet to the family topos, embedded in Swift’s book. Gulliver, playing the role of husband and father, introduces unexpected undertones, disrupting and modifying the domineering narrative of sarcasm, parody, and poignancy, which seem to be delivered by Gulliver, who is comfortable performing the roles of traveler and philosopher. Family topos sheds a new light on *Gulliver’s Travels*, which contributes to the re-reading of Swift’s work in general. Swift was revealing repulsive sins and vices of the society; however, he was also trying to communicate with his environment. Although the communication is presented as painful and torturous willingness to see and recognize a different side of the environment signals a movement toward openness and connection.

In spite of loyalty to academic traditions, contemporary re-readings of *Gulliver’s Travels* are marked by attempts to blur the territory of Swift’s book that has been clearly defined by the scholarship of the previous years. Although the *Travels’* motif

of relativity has been identified long before the proliferation of postmodern uncertainty, recent research has restored its interest in narrative multiplicity that can be discerned in Swift's book. The research conducted by Kevin Barry, Michael Franklin, and Chlöe Houston, to name but a few, blurs the territory of *Gulliver's Travels*, underscoring the ambiguity, which seeps into Swift's book. Nevertheless, these attempts serve to confirm the findings of the previous discussions – satire, parody, and sarcasm – rather than map out an alternative route of Swift's multiple narratives, which constitute his mysterious and puzzling book.

Research in recent years attempts to identify undercurrents and undertones of Swift's book, which have been overshadowed not only by ample narrative discourses (travelling, politics, philosophy, religion, science etc.) but also by “canonical” academic interpretations, is sporadic, although rather eloquent. In this context, Leo Damrosch's recent biography of Swift is one of the most powerful gestures toward a different Swift, which can shed a new light on interpretations of *Gulliver's Travels*. Scholarship, which seems to deviate from the “canonical” trends, opens up space, where miniature fragments of the book, such as the family topos, can be introduced into the textual explorations.

Throughout his research, Damrosch creates a portrait of a man who is desperately trying to understand his environment. Vulnerability, sensitivity, and fragility, which were thoroughly disguised with multiple masks, combine with Swift's humor and wittiness that to some extent point to his joviality, contributing to ambiguous worlds materialized in *Gulliver's Travels*. Damrosch discusses the *Travels* in the context of Swift's personal and professional frustrations: the writer's boiling emotions add to the poignancy of the book. Swift's fragile—although thoroughly covered and camouflaged—emotional state discloses pains that imbue his writing with subtle sincerity.

Damrosch's biography epitomizes “a new sensibility,” which can be discerned in the puzzling world of *Gulliver's Travels*. Apart from irony and sarcasm, which accentuate bitterness, frustration, and anger, Swift's book contains undertones that deliver vulnerability,

sensitivity, and gentleness, presented, first and foremost, in his desire to connect with others. An attempt to decode Swift's gentleness is undertaken by Neil Chudgar, who argues that *Gulliver's Travels* repeatedly and explicitly insists on the importance of gentle touch: subtle gentleness overshadowed by ferocious violence "allows readers access to Swift's positive ethics" (137). Although the term "positive ethics" may sound ambitious, Chudgar points out "other" sides of Swift's book, which the *Travels'* scholarship has overlooked.

Ann Kelly's interpretation of Gulliver's conversation with his pet horses also yields a whole new crop of interpretative possibilities, which contribute to the delineation of Swift's "new sensibility." The exploration of the animal fragment in the *Travels* opens a perspective that can expand the territory of "positive ethics," which Kelly sees in Gulliver's tender and gentle communication with horses. Analyzing Book IV, Kelly draws attention to an episode when the Master Horse asks Gulliver to leave the island. The critic argues that the Master Horse's relationship with Gulliver "marks him as a creature of sensibility, one who is capable of empathy" (219). Basing her conclusion on the analysis of potentially positive emotions sustained through the communication with animals, Kelly points out that Gulliver's narrative ends on a relatively upbeat, optimistic note (227). Positive angles like this let us look at Swift's book differently: seemingly miniature fragments, while interacting with ample discourses produce and deliver undertones that can re-configure the relationship between the dominant and dominated narratives.

The family fragment is one of the miniature components, revealing the "multi-leveledness" (Bakhtin 10) of *Gulliver's Travels*. It is probably fair to say that Swift tends to play with the reader by tricking and misleading him/her. I would like to suggest that the topos of family is one of trickster's techniques, which Swift uses to disguise Gulliver's vulnerability and gentleness, gesturing to a different Gulliver who is hurt and tortured yet yearning for acceptance and connection. Having spent years traveling to exotic countries, Gulliver eventually comes home. This return to his family, presented as Gulliver's choice, marks his attempt to sustain

openness to and connection with other.

Swift subverts readers' expectations relying on his serious protagonist to narrate his story faithfully. Multi-voicing blurs the boundaries and dimensions of the narrative, where multiple constituents intermingle. Gulliver, who barely laughs (he is rather laughed at), is expected to produce a humorless story, which is more likely to deliver frustration and bitterness, defiance and anger, even violence; nevertheless, Swift's multi-voicing strategy introduces other tones, which are different from bitterness and roughness. Neil Chudgar notes, Swift is not kind to Gulliver – he subjects his protagonist to injuries and assaults. “To feel Swift's gentleness,” says Chudgar, “we must read in an unaccustomed way: not critically, indeed, but with bodily attention – attention, that is, to the literal, material properties of creatures and the objects in the world around them. If we fail to pay this kind of attention, Swift warns us, somebody is bound to get hurt” (140). Chudgar is explicitly hinting at all-inclusive reading, where all voices are heard and considered. An individual's voice signals an attempt not only to articulate one's own self, but also to hear other. Gulliver speaks in multiple voices and each of them exercises its power over the narration, triggering transformations and mutations.

It is probably fair to say that Gulliver has his own voice(s), he is, as Bakhtin would have put it, “capable of standing alongside [his] creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him” (6). Multi-voicing mixes narratives, producing textual crevices: the reader hears the voices of Gulliver the Traveler and Gulliver the Philosopher. In addition, the audience also hears the voice of Gulliver the Family Man: this voice is feeble and muted rather often; nevertheless, it contributes to the plurality of voices presented in Swift's book. In the *Travels*, diverse fragments, narrated by different voices, combine and create sub-stories, which, like Gulliver would say, are left to “the reader's imagination” (46).

Gulliver addresses his reader in such a respectful and courteous way that there is a temptation to believe him. For example, in his letter to cousin Sympson, Gulliver expresses his frustration with the printer who confounded the times and mistook the dates of

some voyages and returns; moreover, Gulliver finds out that the original manuscript is destroyed and he himself has no copy left. Nevertheless, instead of fixing mistakes and re-constructing the lost book, Gulliver entrusts his reader with co-authorship: “. . . [but] [I] shall leave that matter to my judicious and candid readers to adjust it as they please” (vii). When narrating his adventures in Brobdingnag, Gulliver addresses his reader in an apologetic way. He thinks he is including many details which may sound redundant and unnecessary: “I hope the gentle reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like particulars, which, however insignificant they may appear to groveling vulgar minds” (87).

Leo Damrosch makes a point that Gulliver is serious, never ironic; he is humorless and he “seems real”: Gulliver seduces his reader with his reliability. At the same time, stories that Gulliver narrates are full of humor, irony, and sarcasm. Discussing the novel, Damrosch draws attention to an episode that describes Gulliver’s interaction with the Lilliputians: following their orders, Gulliver presents the contents of his pockets. Damrosch points out that this episode has been of particular interest to the recent studies of the *Travels*: “Most recently it has been observed that the contents of Gulliver’s pockets, if you put them all together, would fill a suitcase” (362). The description of the contents, ranging from handkerchief to telescope, may sound humorous. However, it also targets the audience, probing their gullibility and innocence. This episode, to some extent, presents Swift’s attempt to receive a response—either negative or positive—from other: “Conceivably this overload is Swift’s joke for attentive readers to pick up. But it also possible that he didn’t care. He wanted the illusion of reality, but only the illusion . . .” (362). The *Travels* produces a baffling effect: is the reader allowed/supposed to laugh or is it better to follow Gulliver’s narrative guidance?

In his informative story, Gulliver does not provide much information about his family but we do know that he is married and has children. In spite of the sparse information regarding his marriage, the family topos delivers positive connotations, rather than negative. Initially, Gulliver leaves his wife and children,

following not only his adventurous spirit, but also his family-man responsibility to provide financial stability. Gulliver's family is also one of the reasons why he eventually aborts his travels. At first glance, it may seem that family ties make him settle down. However, when reaching out to his wife and children, Gulliver leaves the premises of his isolated world to include other and to extend his vision of the environment.

Family fragments, although sparse and almost invisible, interrupt Gulliver's narrative, which primarily focuses on his travelling experience and his speculations concerning impacts and transformations, triggered by encountering various cultures and environments. Travel fragments arguably constitute dominant discourses of the book; in spite of its overpowering presence, the family aspect does not disappear. By interrupting the dominant travel discourses, the family component exercises its influence on the seemingly dominant parts.

Analyzing controversies and intricacies of the connections between the dominant and the dominated, Homi K. Bhabha points out "double vision," a menace of mimicry, which discloses the ambivalence of the colonial discourse and disrupts its authority (126). Re-considering and re-defining the relationship between the dominant and the dominated, Bhabha delineates the potential influence of both components, rather than assigning power to only one of them. In the *Travels*, the family theme reveals its presence through collaborating with dominant discourses, hybridizing the textual narrative. Consequently, the dominant travel narrative undergoes transformations, reflecting "silent" and "invisible" power of the family fragment. The dialogical interinfluences of the components, which at first glance seem to oppose each other—as one being dominant and another dominated—can be considered in terms of hybrid textual entities that re-define the relationship between multiple textual fragments.

In *Gulliver's Travels*, family discourse defines and is defined by other narrative discourses, where the travelling seems to overpower. Its specificity, which introduces elements of connections and gentleness, diffuses the monolithic surface of a travel story and

contributes to the production of a hybrid site where travelling experience and family life collaborate.

It is true that Gulliver got married because of financial concerns but this factor does not seem to intensify negative emotions: "I took part of a small house in the Old Jury; and being advised to alter my condition, I married Mrs. Mary Burton, second daughter to Mr. Edmund Burton, hosier, in Newgate-street, with whom I received four hundred pounds for a portion" (3-4). Although Gulliver does not elaborate on his feelings toward his wife, it should be noted that he respects her. Before going back to sea, he finds it necessary to mention that he asked his wife for her opinion: "Having therefore consulted my wife, and some of my acquaintance, I determined to go again to sea" (4). After having experienced misfortunes at sea, Gulliver is prone to stay home: "The last of these voyages not proving very fortunate, I grew weary of the sea, and intended to stay home with my wife and family" (4). Before launching into his story, Gulliver narrates his life, marked by uncertainty and instability. In this context, family functions as a counterpoint, introducing not only hope but also yearning for stability and certainty, which diffuses satirical poignancy of the book with glimpses of hope for something positive.

Positive connotations of family representation in *Gulliver's Travels* are intensified when Swift's book is considered in the context of another Enlightenment travel narrative, *Robinson Crusoe*. Undoubtedly, the family aspect in the *Travels* is given much more attention. Being enchanted by the sea, Robinson Crusoe leaves his parents, disobeying his father, and embarks on his adventures. During his years of solitude and isolation, his sense of roots, connections, and heart is supported by his ambiguous relationship with God: marriage and family do not seem to be significant for his spiritual journey. In the end of the book, there is a quick remark, concerning Crusoe's attempt to settle down: "In the mean time I in part settled myself here; for the first of all I marry'd, and that not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction, and had three children, two sons and one daughter. . ." (283). Family ties signal his desire to re-enter the society after the years of isolation rather than his

willingness and readiness to include other into his world.

Gulliver, like his counterpart who tends to choose an adventurous life, travels for more than sixteen years and does not prioritize family connections and values. However, it is noticeable that he always comes back to his family, no matter what his travelling experience is, repulsive or encouraging. Thus, family can be interpreted as a potential harbor: Gulliver comes back home to reconnect with his family, and consequently to re-enter and re-built his world, which is also re-shaped by his travelling experience.

Throughout the book, Gulliver mentions his wife and family, which triggers tenderness and, most importantly, some sense of stability. An episode, where Gulliver loses his freedom in Brobdingnag, is of particular interest. In the farmer's house, Gulliver is confined to little space: his fear intensifies as he loses control over his life. His home, his wife and children, introduce hope which helps Gulliver cope with his fear: "I slept about two hours, and dreamt I was at home with my wife and children, which aggravated my sorrows when I awaked, and found myself alone in a vast room, between two and three hundred feet wide, and above two hundred high, lying in a bed twenty yards wide" (86). Although Gulliver's connection with his family is subtle and frail, he never completely forgets about his wife and his children. Not only does this aspect signal vulnerability and fragility, but it also points toward some potential for gentleness, which produces dissonance for the dominant discourses of irony and sarcasm. Vulnerability and poignancy interact, changing each other and revealing multiple sides of the book.

Gulliver does not spend much time with his family; being driven by an inquiring spirit, he is intrigued by the unknown, in spite of the fact that it intensifies uncertainty and instability. After his voyage to Lilliput, he re-unites with his family but does not stay home long: "I stayed but two months with my wife and family, for my insatiable desire of seeing foreign countries, would suffer me to continue no longer" (71). It should be noted, however, that Gulliver makes sure his family is taken care of before starting his new adventure: "I left fifteen hundred pounds with my wife, and

fixed her in a good house at Redriff” (71). Gulliver’s individualism is somewhat diffused by his genuine desire to provide for his family. Yet it is important for Gulliver to exercise his independence. The family fragment reveals the ambiguity of Gulliver’s world: Gulliver is yearning for stability but his seeking spirit, which is accentuated by a seeming detachment from his family, sustains his restlessness and splitness.

Swift orchestrates the seemingly oppositional aspects in a dialogical way: stability and uncertainty combine rather than contradict each other. Although driven by his desire for adventure, Gulliver, embarking on his second voyage, leaves his family with heavy heart: “I took leave of my wife, and boy and girl, with tears on both sides, and went on board the *Adventure*, a merchant ship of three hundred tons, bound for Surat, captain John Nicholas, of Liverpool, commander” (75). Gulliver reveals only glimpses of vulnerability, which, however, keep him connected to other.

When Gulliver has a chance, he comes home and he is always greeted warmly by his family. He also seems to respond to their affection and fondness:

My wife ran out to embrace me, but I stooped lower than her knees, thinking she could otherwise never be able to reach my mouth. My daughter kneeled to ask my blessing, but I could not see her till she arose, having been so long used to stand with my head and eyes erect to above sixty feet; and then I went to take her up with one hand by the waist.”
(147)

Having spent much time with the giants, Gulliver became rather awkward in terms of physical contact: his awareness of touches and embraces signal his discomfort and distance that arises between him and other. Nevertheless, he attempts to reconnect with his family. Returning home, Gulliver’s gentleness toward his wife is rather notable: “I looked down upon the servants, and one or two friends who were in the house, as if they had been pigmies and I a giant. I told my wife, she had been too thrifty, for I found she had starved herself and her daughter to nothing” (147). For Gulliver,

family is not just a “social decoration,” which, in the context of his travelling accounts, serves to support the reliability of his story and camouflage his vulnerability, exposed through the loss of contact and connection with other. Being involved in the relationship, Swift’s character takes a turn toward a dialogue, which is weak and feeble but still powerful to defuse self-centeredness.

Gulliver’s wife, who barely says a word, does have her voice—quiet, yet powerful: “The only difficulty that remained,” complains Gulliver before his new voyage, “was to persuade my wife, whose consent however I at last obtained, by the prospect of advantage she proposed to her children” (155). In eighteenth-century England, for a man to mention that he seeks his wife’s consent before realizing his plans was an exception rather than a common practice. Although Swift is often accused of misogyny, the family fragments in the *Travels* seem to contribute to his ambiguous position concerning women, as well as the institution of marriage. After travelling to distant countries and lands, Gulliver always comes home: unlike Crusoe, Gulliver is willing, at least he makes an attempt, to include other into his worldview. In this sense, the family topos exercises its influence over Gulliver’s ego-centrism and his stereotypically male behavior, which is subverted and ridiculed through ambiguous experiences, such as piquant Brobdingnag stories.

Gulliver leaves his wife and his family if he finds it is time for him to launch a new voyage. At the beginning of Book IV, Gulliver notes, “I left my poor wife big with child, and accepted an advantageous offer made me to be captain of the Adventurer, a stout merchantman of 350 tons. . .” (225). These words are preceded by a remark, which in the context of a male voyage story seems redundant. Yet for Swift’s story it appears to introduce shades that diffuse the dominant discourse of travelling (“male” travelling): “I continued at home with my wife and children about five months, in a very happy condition, if I could have learned the lesson of knowing when I was well” (225). These two sentences, which at first glance seem insignificant, represent ambivalences that imbue Gulliver’s world. Gulliver is capable of maintaining relationships with, like we would say today, his “significant other.” Although

he is always seduced by curiosity, which rather often signals his restlessness, he definitely appreciates his happy marriage. (The concept of happiness deserves particular attention; however, in this essay the focus is kept within the realm of family.) Gulliver does leave his wife who is expecting; this decision may seem selfish and ruthless. Nevertheless, the sense of guilt, which surfaces in the above fragments, is hard to ignore: the family topos discloses aspects of vulnerable and even sentimental Gulliver, which are dominated and muted by the travelling discourse.

The family component marks Gulliver's hybrid consciousness, revealing his inner struggles and tensions. Travelling to various lands and communicating with diverse societies, Gulliver compares his world and his own self to the environments and inhabitants he encounters. While discovering new worlds, he re-invents and re-configures his own, becoming aware of his anxieties and dissatisfactions. Throughout his adventures, Gulliver's connection with his family is stable: his comments about his wife and children reveal tenderness and gentleness. However, family ties seem to start losing their significance during Gulliver's voyage to Houyhnhnms: his disgust toward humankind appears to be so strong and overwhelming that he is willing to detach himself from his native land and from his family:

When I thought of my family, my friends, my countrymen, or the human race in general, I considered them, as they really were, Yahoos in shape and disposition, perhaps a little more civilized, and qualified with the gift of speech; but making no other use of reason, than to improve and multiply those vices whereof their brethren in this country had only the share that nature allotted them. (290)

Even when Gulliver is compelled to leave the island, he is more anxious to find the ways to preserve his Houyhnhnms lifestyle – not only frugal and “free of vice” (according to the Houyhnhnms standards) but isolated from the human-beings as well – rather than to restore his connections with family and friends. When on

board of the ship amidst humans, Gulliver is dreaded by the idea of returning to native land:

My design was, if possible, to discover some small island uninhabited, yet sufficient, by my labour, to furnish me with the necessaries of life, which I would have thought a greater happiness, than to be first minister in the politest court of Europe; so horrible was the idea I conceived of returning to live in the society, and under the government of Yahoos. For in such a solitude as I desired, I could at least enjoy my own thoughts, and reflect with delight on the virtues of those inimitable Houyhnhnms, without an opportunity of degenerating into the vices and corruptions of my own species. (295)

Gulliver sounds rather resolute about his desire to isolate: his wife and his children, whom he would always mention during his previous voyages, seem to be completely excluded from his world, which significantly transformed under the influence of the Houyhnhnms inhabitants.

Gulliver would have probably succeeded in his detachment from his family and in his isolation from the world of the Yahoos if it were not for Captain Don Pedro: "In ten days, Don Pedro, to whom I had given some account of my domestic affairs, put it upon me, as a matter of honour and conscience, that I ought to return to my native country, and live at home with my wife and children" (301-302). Don Pedro makes Gulliver's story take an unexpected and unpredictable movement. Additionally, this episode eloquently reveals Gulliver not only as passive, but also responsive to outer influences. It is Don Pedro who organizes Gulliver's trip back home:

He told me, there was an English ship in the port just ready to sail, and he would furnish me with all things necessary. It would be tedious to repeat his arguments, and my contradictions. He said, it was altogether impossible to find such a solitary island as I desired to live in; but I might command in

my own house, and pass my time in a manner as
recluse as I pleased. (302)

This episode sheds some light on the contradictions that Swift's book revolves around. Don Pedro sounds somewhat supportive about Gulliver's vehement desire to isolate and to become a recluse; at least, he does not express strong resistance to Gulliver's plans. Nevertheless, he does urge Gulliver to go back home, to his wife and his children. It is also noteworthy that Don Pedro does not mention friends or other relatives: this brings particular attention to the family topos, which functions as an environment of potential comfort, connection, and understanding.

When reluctantly returning home, Gulliver, in fact, is showered with love and warmth. His wife and children are happy to see him; however, Gulliver is repulsed by all Yahoos. The Houyhnhnms appears to cause deep transformations: "My wife and family received me with great surprise and joy, because they concluded me certainly dead; but I must freely confess the sight of them filled me only with hatred, disgust, and contempt; and the more, by reflecting on the near alliance I had to them" (302). What seems to be enlightening for Gulliver in terms of understanding the world causes more gap between him and other, between him and the world: "As soon as I entered the house, my wife took me in her arms, and kissed me; at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell into a swoon for almost an hour" (302-303).

The first year at home brings Gulliver nothing but pain: ". . . during the first year, I could not endure my wife or children in my presence; the very smell of them was intolerable; much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room" (303). Even some time later after his returning, Gulliver seems to stubbornly maintain distance with his family: "To this hour they dare not presume to touch my bread, or drink out of the same cup, neither was I ever able to let one of them take me by the hand" (303). In spite of repulsion and unhappiness with which Gulliver targets his family, they demonstrate not only love but patience and tolerance.

Gulliver, who seems to have very strong beliefs regarding his

environment and society, changes again: “I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me, at the farthest end of a long table; and to answer (but with the utmost brevity) the few questions I asked her” (309). Moreover, Gulliver starts to show some signs of flexibility, intensified by his desire to emotionally reconnect with his wife and children. (Just like he did at the beginning of his adventure when he was easily acquiring new languages in order to communicate with the inhabitants of unknown lands.) “And, although it be hard for a man late in life to remove old habits, I am not altogether out of hopes, in some time, to suffer a neighbour Yahoo in my company, without the apprehensions I am yet under of his teeth or his claws” (309). Gulliver is a site of multiple influences and interactions: he is trying to produce his world based on his experiences. In this context, the family topos appears to be a hope for an interactive world, not isolated and remote.

One of the final paragraphs of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* is of particular interest, especially if we are tempted to get in touch with Lemuel Gulliver’s life and world:

My reconciliation to the Yahoo-kind in general might not be so difficult, if they would be content with those vices and follies only which nature has entitled them to. I am nit in the least provoked at the sight if a lawyer, a pick-pocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a whore-master, a physician, and evidence, a suborner, an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things: but when I behold a lump of deformity and diseases both in body in mind, smitten with pride, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience; neither shall I be ever able to comprehend how such an animal and such a voice could tally together. (309-310)

While signaling a search for inner harmony and acceptance of self and the world, desire for reconciliation and patience is also a symptom of injured soul (and body) yearning for comfort and healing. Gulliver makes an attempt, although somewhat reluctantly,

to re-enter his home and to re-connect with his family. Although he is still disgusted and repulsed by the Yahoos, by their vices and their morals, his resistance to his counterparts somewhat subsides through his idea of reconciliation. Throughout his journeys, Gulliver moves along borders: his hybrid consciousness puts his experiences in dialogical interactions, rather than oppositions. Gulliver's hybridized consciousness contributes to re-establishing bridges with other and with the world, which, however, transform: they are never the same as they communicate, negotiate, and respond to each other, re-configuring the relationships between what seems to be dominant and dominated.

In the *Travels*, the family topos is one of the agents that sustain the overlapping of the dominant and the dominated and contribute to hybrid consciousness and narrative. Although almost invisible at first glance, family discloses Gulliver as a man seeking connection and reconciliation with a baffling and restless world. It is rather eloquent that Gulliver finishes his story in the family setting: he might be struggling to accept the Yahoo world, nevertheless, there is hope to understand other and to be understood. Gulliver's hope, which is vague and fragile, reveals his gentleness and vulnerability, which appear to be anchored in his family connections, dissolving seemingly overpowering frustration and poignancy.

In the context of narrative hybridization, when different entities combine, exercising mutual influences, *Gulliver's Travels* appears to respond to and reflect ambiguity that goes through the Enlightenment. Referring to Carl Becker's observations regarding the weaknesses of the Age of Reason, Louis L. Snyder notes:

They had an exaggerated belief in the perfectibility of man, a blissful state that had not been attained by the pagan Greeks with their accumulated wisdom nor by Christianity in two millennia of its existence. Yet, the agents of reason assumed as a matter of course that man could attain a state of perfection on earth if only their precepts were followed with religious intensity. It was a monumental simplification.

. . . They failed to see that between black and white
are subtle shades of gray. (13)

Through the hybridized narrative, Swift seems to reveal “subtle shades of gray,” interrupting the Enlightenment dichotomies and oppositions and introducing variations. Although including strong beliefs and statements (e.g. the Houyhnhnms experience), Swift does not push them to the point of a closed system: there is some space left for negotiation and transformation. Hybrid narrative reflects the hybrid worlds and consciousness, where dichotomies dissolve and transform into negotiating entities. Both Gulliver’s voyage and Gulliver’s world are disrupted and disintegrated: four voyages reflect four different experiences, which can either contradict each other or corroborate.

In the chapter dedicated to *Gulliver’s Travels*, Damrosch notes that the book that Swift intended to be a “major achievement” (357) had something for everyone. To support this statement, Damrosch quotes Walter Scott: “It offered personal and political satire to the readers in high life, low and coarse incident to the vulgar, marvels to the romantic, wit to the young and lively, lessons of morality and policy to the grave, and maxims of deep and bitter misanthropy to neglected age and disappointed ambition” (qtd. Damrosch 360). Walter Scott’s description of the book blurs its thematic boundaries: depending on our encyclopedia, in the book we can find elements that will guide us through the labyrinths of Gulliver’s world.

Pointing out “fuzziness” of *Gulliver’s Travels* – genre in particular – Damrosch notes, “The book is usually classified as a satire, but it’s much more than that too – it’s a novel, and an antinovel, and a fantasy, with parody and science fiction mixed in” (358). Although these observations point toward amorphousness of the *Travels*, they also reveal the book’s structural chaos and hybridity as a source of/for creativity and vitality. Narrative fuzziness reflects fragmented and hybridized representation of experience, which translates Gulliver’s attempts to produce his picture of the world and his own self out of the pieces that he has at his disposal.

Revolving around multiple fragments, *Gulliver’s Travels*,

which could have been categorized as an account of exotic travels, becomes multileveled, where linear narration is distorted, narrative undercurrents are multiplied and where Gulliver's story turns into a hybrid puzzle. Published in 1726 Swift's book still intrigues contemporary readers: it has so much to say and it discloses so little. After all, this is the beauty of a hybrid puzzle.

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Laughter's Abject Underbelly and the Discursive Potential of *Nightwood*

Kristen Skjonsby

Laughter a peculiar social gesture, bubbling from our own interior, bypassing the labyrinth of linguistic formation and churning forth from the realm of instinct. Each escaping breath an implicit criticism of its own subjective world. Modernist critics have devoted considerable effort to uncovering the strange evolution of humor that Joyce, Stein, and Miller, to name a few, have displayed (Crangle 107). Donald J. Greiner of "Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and the American Origins of Black Humor," describes modernist "black" humor as, "the most stimulating development in contemporary American literature," and characterizes it as "comic, violent, experimental, and intellectual" (41). What does it mean about our lauded authors, this seemingly ironic blend of hostility and comedy? The laughter of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* is the daring, abysmal glance into the paradigm of unreason, disorder, and the presymbolic chaos of language formation. Aligned with Schopenhauer's interpretation, the presence of laughter signals, even to the unconscious subject, the confirmation of incongruity between reason and reality (Schopenhauer 95). The very locus of humor in the text acts as a spectacle of laughter stemming from the horrifying, generative realm of the abject which Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* describes. Dr. Matthew O'Conner, Jenny, Nora

and Robin are fissured identities baptized in laughter to expose the extent of their persecution, their helpless appeals to society, and ultimately, their potential to live. Laughter, for these characters, is the recourse of the impoverished spirit; maniacal and erudite under the strain of political and cultural pressures. The purveyors of “rational” history attempts to make submissive, and Barnes responds with a flood of discursive text. Despite these pressures, laughter remains the indicator of potential in the novel, an anarchic identity capital in a world which seeks to render their identities culturally valueless. Djuna Barnes explores the fragility and potential of these liminal zones in both social and interpersonal settings through her characters’ expressions of hilarity.

Laughter as a Mechanism of Discourse

Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Idea* captures this sense: “All laughter then is occasioned by a paradox, and therefore by unexpected subsumption, whether this is expressed in words or in actions. This, briefly stated, is the true explanation of the ludicrous” (95). The “ludicrous” denotes not only the absurd, but the playful. It describes an intensity, a fervor, and a passion constructed like a game. This game, composed of two “reasonable” parts: dominance and submission. Schopenhauer considers laughter to be the epicenter of a fascinating dynamic between thought and physical action. Wit is understood as the intellectual acknowledgement of incongruity, manifested in words (96). This is portrayed through the figure of the jester; a character who consciously relays verbal contradictions as performance. Folly, as exemplified by the clown, is performed through the mockery of actions as performance (96). Both perform a crucial social function. Wit, Schopenhauer argues, unites the dual concepts of reason, being language, and emotion, being amorphous, under a singular umbrella of meaning (98). Wit, therefore, imposes an artificial binary upon sensation. Postmodern linguistics would later reveal similar revelations about the duplicitous nature of language formation. The incongruent nature of wit appears obviously as, “familiar and more superficial, because it does not spring from the nature of things, but merely from the accident of nomenclature” (Schopenhauer 98). The act of naming,

or producing signifiers, is an “accident” because it applies order to the original, radical nature of language. This “zone” of essence outside of language Kristeva envisions as, “outside the symbolic order which, contrasted with Lacan’s desire, is known as the “abject” (11). In the realm of the abject are expressions of horror, as physical as vomiting and as cerebral as the shock +which proceeds trauma. Laughter is unique as an expression which bypasses the “sense” which language prescribes. This landscape, according to Kristeva, is the locus of a “primal repression” (Kristeva 11).

Nightwood engages this terror instead of prescribing “sense” to its power. Humor, drawing on the realm of the abject, to infuse the text with radical possibility. Used to critique the position of the individual within society, Barnes presents humor as a binding agent of logophallogocentric discourse, a kind of “empty” language prescribed to history: “Legend is expurgated, but history, because of its actors, is deflowered -- every nation with a sense of humor is a lost nation, and every woman with a sense of humor is a lost woman”(18). Dr. Matthew O’ Conner is a character of prophetic quagmire, reflected both within and without his body. His advice maintains a perpetual summersault; equal parts playful and morose, tiptoeing to the cliff of the ludicrous. Here, he claims legend is “expurgated”, or sterilized, censored, having its unseemly parts removed for public consumption. History is contrasted to legend as narrative without authorial control, its essence assumed and never returned, or “deflowered.” This sense of violation the doctor attributes to its “actors,” implying a performativity apart from fact. The bodies of nation and woman analogized, their shared humor indicates an acceptance of their treatment in logophallogocentric discourse, which functions to their detriment. Victoria Smith’s “A Story beside(s) Itself: The Language of Loss in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*” asserts that the doctor’s character, “implies that the stories of the disempowered only get remembered in legend, which has the valence of fiction or myth, whereas the stories of the powerful get remembered in history, which has the valence of fact” (197). History and legend are thus fruitless, fatigued pursuits; neither portray reality. The danger foreshadowed here by the doctor is of a “lost” woman, one without origin who cares not for

the logophallogocentric word in all its institutional manifestations. Though the portrayal of humanity is indeed bleak, its sense of melancholia contrasts to the patriarchal world which demands submission. Smith notes that, “Melancholia is a tool that sculpts the ego in moving back and forth between the psyche and culture” (196 Smith). A sense of reflective sadness thus enables the individual to observe their role within the culture which surrounds them. Combining humor with melancholy here proposes a method by which to see outside the power structure the characters live within. Interpersonal relationships in the novel crystallize this effort. First, the relationship between humor and power must be identified.

Laughter and The Alignment to Power

As laughter conveys the incongruent power of reason and feeling, it simultaneously reflects the tilted balance of power between the social and individual world. Barnes illustrates this balance through the laughter of authority. “A priest, standing in the crowd, began to laugh, and a priest laughing always makes me wring my hands with doubt. The other time was when Catherine the Great sent for me to bleed her. She took the leech with rowdy Saxon abandon, saying: ‘Let him drink; I’ve always wanted to be in two places at once!’” (173). As the vessel of the Word, ecclesiastical power imbues itself with the organizational control of language. The church utilizes language to control discursive expressions from the semiotic realm. This includes enforcement through decrees detailing the ways in which individuals are to function sexually within society. It is the laughter of the priest which, in this scene, has triggered immediate feelings of discomfort within Dr. Matthew O’Conner. If the priest were to indulge in the ludicrous, what would that say about the stability we seek from investing power into such an authority figure? If laughter is the realm of the abject, then the words of the priest are no longer verifiable, causing the Doctor to gesticulate nervously. Moreover, the priest’s presence in a crowd signals his very public position of power. The Doctor then moves into a characteristically abrupt change of temporal position, insisting that Catherine the Great, born hundreds of years prior to his lifetime, had him bleed her with a leech. As Shin describes in

“Djuna Barnes, History’s Elsewhere, and the Transgender” the “... temporally ambiguous linguistic landscapes” are “situated outside the bounds of a repressive patriarchal history” (21).

By progressing immediately through time, the Doctor at once compounds the fear of authority and rewrites himself within history as a significant figure within it. Simultaneously, he proves the fallibility of the narrative. Inserting his presence verifies his culturally “transgressive” identity as valid and historically real. Marcus contends in “Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman’s Circus Epic” that the Doctor represents “alternative” identities within the novel, which constitute sexuality, blackness, Jewishness, and disability (127). These identities are exhumed intentionally by Barnes as the victims of Hitler’s coming “prescriptions for racial purity” (127 Marcus). By portraying the Doctor in frequent carnival-esque settings, Marcus argues, Barnes accesses a realm of mythological and historical tradition, upending cultural normativity.

The foretelling of fascist persecution is therefore embodied by the characters within the novel in order to display alternative modalities by which to resist. Marcus highlights Barnes’ use of thematic dominance and submission as a method by which to incite political resistance in *Nightwood*. This anarchic inversion of power displays itself in the final scene of the novel, when laughter is used to convey dominance/submission in a most climactic pairing of human and animal: “Then she began to bark also, crawling after him – barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding” (Barnes 180). An alien presence in the human world, Robin moves in a seemingly cold manner through interpersonal relationships. Her character exhibits little verbal expression, rampantly desirous, searching the streets for indiscriminate sustenance. Smith describes Robin’s character as a “lost object,” a walking void of trauma whose vacuous presence undergirds the text (Smith 203). With the dog, however, Robin seems to have achieved a power dynamic which brings her out of the realm of the abject into the realm of sense. She celebrates this dynamic interplay of dominance and submission with a “fit of laughter,” an exaltation both “obscene,” falling out of the realm

of proper decorum, and “touching,” or deserving sympathy. Her laughter is met with the cries of the dog. They communicate without language, Robin’s laughter alluding to a fragile hold of the dichotomy between person and animal, proper and improper. The scene ends with Robin’s successful conquest in the interaction. The dog’s “head flat along her knees” concludes the scene with a posture of submission (Barnes 180).

As her identity blends human and animal in this performance, she assumes a transcendence of identity outside the “unreal” of history and outside the bounds of logophallogocentric control of discourse. Kristeva acknowledges this display of anarchic potential: “...all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its socio-historical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (Kristeva 207). While the modern landscape figures heavily into *Nightwood*, Kristeva’s assertion that literature verges on the “apocalypse” portends a playfulness with the “end” of meaning as we conceive it. It is an act of individual rebellion, a rewriting of history, which demands to reconstitute the lines of identity as they are culturally assumed. Where laughter relishes in its attempt to reconstruct reason with chaos, the individual always makes messy the rigorous attempts of political regime to shape the expression of identity. Marcus supports Kristeva’s approximation of identity, offering that in *Nightwood*, these “portraits of the abject constitute a political case, a kind of feminist-anarchist call for freedom from fascism” (221). This effect enables laughter to be used as “weapon” (Marcus 221). With the potential to shift the balance of power, Barnes wields her portrait of nihilistic society with identities on the fringes of existence, writing the “unwritable” identities.

Laughter and Its Interpersonal Reflectivity

The intercourse between institutional and individual power are most dramatically inscribed onto the intimate relationships of the novel. Nora describes to the Doctor the quandary of desire that her love for Robin presents: “A man is another person—a woman is

yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own. If she is taken you cry that you have been robbed of yourself. God laughs at me, but his laughter is my love” (Barnes 152). Here, Nora confronts the uncanny sensation of loving another woman as being in love with herself. This reflective process cleaves into binary what is man (other) and woman (self). On this heels of this realization Nora envisions a “panic” upon which she meets her own mouth, inescapably. The nature of romantic bonds between women is both frightening in its implications to one’s personal identity and simultaneously so close, perhaps unbearably so, implying that two women may become one another or be of the same flesh. Schopenhauer notes the reflective similarities of laughter and weeping: “...we never weep directly on account of the pain we experience, but always merely on account of its repetition in reflection” (Schopenhauer 482). This “repetition” of memory and it’s “reflection” are both the self and other simultaneously. One has the power to reflect on the self’s choices and feelings, a dichotomized self reflected in the mind’s eye. God’s presence disrupts this union as a male authority, a representation of logophallogocentric anxiety. Nora’s relationship with another woman challenges the institution of heterosexual monogamy. God then laughs at her, a remark on the folly in her desire. Nora quickly reclaims the potential of this persecution by insisting that God’s very laughter, and its potential meaning, are “her love” after all. Nora sees herself in the socio-cultural mirror his imagined presence installs. Nora’s identity undergoes the traumatic effect caused by giving birth to oneself outside the bounds of patriarchal control exercised through logophallogocentric discourse. God’s laughter, his gesture of incongruity, only points to the fragile power he commands. He is a legend unto himself, and outside the realm of the “real.” This “pulling away” from God was acknowledged by Kristeva as a staple of Modernism: “Who would want to be a prophet? For we have lost faith in One Master Signifier” (Kristeva 209).

This loss of faith is perhaps the site of the traumatic void located by a number of critics within the novel. This “void” is evidence of a justifiable fear to rescind the investment of power in the phallogocentric model of Christianity. We may not replace

it with another model of “oneness” in signification. The implicit power in free will causes fear of an apocalyptic world of non-sense and of the ludicrous. Interestingly, the Doctor answers Kristeva’s call as to “who would want to be a prophet?” Indeed, he is not exactly that. Rather, the Doctor is an emotional gyroscope; a being that claims neither to have transcended this world nor his part in its terrestrial struggles. This liminal space creates a discursive explosion of potential, spilling over in a blend of forecasts, tales, facts, and metaphor. Cringle’s *Prosaic Desires: Modernist Knowledge, Boredom, Laughter, and Anticipation* reinforces the significance of characters like Nora, Robin and the Doctor in *Nightwood*: “For if humor underscores the present, our return to temporal continuity is signaled by risibility or the desire to laugh, a desire necessarily rooted in otherness, a desire infinite and infinitely available” (Cringle 108). When Nora takes ownership of God’s laughter, she takes hold of the void of “otherness” that the character of God once inhabited. As purveyor of the Word she has thus usurped the monarch of her linguistic, sociopolitical world. Smith sees the absence of God as a glaring “loss” of the text, finding its trail throughout Barnes’s narrative: “Barnes’s text articulates such losses through circuitous or eccentric methods of representation, through stories, tropes, and metaphors of indirection” (Smith 203).

This intentional “indirection” shows a willingness to confront the boundaries of identity and, while the text does flirt with nihilism, ultimately upholds potential through its persistent use of laughter. Jenny is persistently interrogated by the narrator as a pathetic figure, never acting of genuine accord but purely in mimicry of others. She is without identity, making her all the more abhorrent as the woman who “stole” Robin from her. Jenny asks to be inscribed upon by the world around her, a victim of discourse collecting, hoarding, stealing from a sense of insatiable need to fill her empty persona. Jenny is as unwanted a third party as God. She disrupts the reflection of self for Nora. Barnes treats this contentious interpersonal drama with laughter: “That poor shuddering creature had pelvic bones I could see flying through her dress. I wanted to lean forward and laugh with terror. She was sitting there doubled up with surprise, her raven’s bill coming up saying, ‘yes.’ Then I

looked up and there on the wall was the photograph of Robin when she was a baby (the one that she had told me was lost)” (Barnes 150). Nora is halted in her confrontation of Jenny by her pathetic figure. Her pelvic bones jutting forward revealed a fragile human form. Jenny should be the figure of power, imbued with emotional investment, as she is responsible for “taking” Robin away from Nora. In reality, Jenny appears quasi-human, a “shuddering creature” with a parodied bird beak. What is “lost” in her relationship with Robin is a piece of her past; a document of her personal history. Nora’s desire to “laugh with terror” makes frightful the complexity of her emotion at the loss of her lover. She loses a part of herself, and the dreadful cleavage of this “other” which seemed to make her whole. Nora resists investing Jenny with the power of conquest and resists the urge to laugh, to release hostility from the realm of the object. Barnes champions the individual’s power to ascend desire to laugh through embracing the horrific possibilities of the object.

Laughter and Its Relationship to Art

The laughter of these characters admits the maniacal way of humanity; its folly and its incredible methods of self-preservation amongst forces of external influence, whether social or interpersonal. It is enforced early on in Barnes’s text that Nora has no sense of humor. She seems to feign its effect, understanding it as a “person who looks up to discover that they have coincided with the needs of nature in a bird” (Barnes 58). A distinction seems to be made between the kind of laughter which promotes what it is told by others to ingest and laughter that admits the incongruity of its own foundation. Gone are the days of laughter based on contented certainty; the world of *Nightwood* is dreadful in its seriousness, the converse effect of grim nature, which only imbues the hilarity of life, making it that much more of an obscene, transgressive act. Nora’s identity is described as though alien from society, a thread running through each character in turn. Greiner locates the strained relationship between individual and society that Nora embodies: It contained, “the painful awareness of alienation; or to be primarily animal, which means the longing for moral consciousness” (46). For Nora and Robin, to be not entirely human seems only to benefit

their emotional nature. Nora is not entirely human, not entirely animal, her identity unabashedly polymorphic: “Cynicism, laughter, the second husk into which the shucked man crawls, she seemed to know little or nothing about. She was one of those deviations by which man thinks to reconstruct himself” (Barnes 58). Nora’s humor is not that of a recalcitrant, it is much more innately her own. She does not argue with society itself, for that would imply that she lies along the binary of right/wrong. Both, in the end, fighting in the belief of a singular truth. Rather, Nora, and the characters of *Nightwood*, seek to “reconstruct” themselves from entirely new origins, doing away with the prescriptions in government, history, and culture that logophallogocentric discourse assures. To create art from the “old roots” of patriarchy would result in the “effect of the pedantic,” which Schopenhauer describes as the makings of a failed artist: “In art, in which the concept is unfruitful, he produces lifeless, stiff, abortive mannerisms” (Schopenhauer 97). The performance of this figure is hopelessly imitative, it offers nothing original. Laughter reengages its subject to consider the possibility of futility and creation at once. When Barnes delves into the nihilistic, it is not in an effort to contain something deeper and unbearable. Instead, it laughs in the face of this terrifying circumstance in the reality of there being no “after” for humanity (Shin 35). This ability Shin attributes to the “poetic spectacle” that *Nightwood* makes of itself (35). It is a performance which intends to reestablish art of new origin for an audience on the eve of incredible change. With its horror comes its metamorphosis, should we choose to witness the terrible ambiguity of change. Kristeva confronts abjection by questioning its very inevitability in creating art: “Does one write under any other condition than being possessed by abjection, in an indefinite catharsis? Leaving aside adherents of a feminism that is jealous of conserving its power—the last of the power-seeking ideologies—none will accuse of being a usurper the artist who, even if he does not know it, is an undoer of narcissism and of all imaginary identity as well, sexual included” (208). There is always, then, a void beneath each text, propelling each author’s imagination, whether in search of a singular “truth” or delving into the generative “night” of the signified. Kristeva, in an interesting

move, evinces feminism as “the last of the power-seeking ideologies,” as much involved in the binary of male/female as those claimed to be fought against. Illustrating the world outside these power struggles, the artist reflects to us the possibility of otherness. Good “art” encourages an intimacy between ourselves and the characters, whether turbulent or comforting, bad or good. To understand the so-described void of *Nightwood* would thus evince its truest essence of primal repression, fear, horror, rejection, and expulsion. As soon as we attempt its “meaning,” it becomes shallow mimicry. It loses the hilarity necessary to convey its performance. It would be a perversion of the text. The text would cease to be the illusive question mark it is. Why does our human nature require both the unreal and the real? Schopenhauer argues that the unseen and seen are the truest design of art, separated only by the phantom of sensation: “And thus, as we have seen, many human actions can only be performed by the help of reason and deliberation, and yet there are some which are better performed without its assistance. This very incongruity of sensuous and abstract knowledge, on account of which the latter always merely approximates to the former, as mosaic approximates to painting, is the cause of a very remarkable phenomenon which, like reason itself, is peculiar to human nature, and of which the explanations that have ever anew been attempted, are insufficient: I mean laughter” (Schopenhauer 94). Djuna Barnes sets her characters and her scene upon a quaking terrain of abstract life. Her characters cannot pretend to be rooted to anything other than their abject selves; instinctual, carnal, and free in a world which demands order and the restrictive containment of psychological freedom and sexual expression. Our Modernists are unabashedly willing to laugh, as “Humor enables modernists to abandon tradition...” (Crangle 108). Refashioning history, Barnes transports us towards the potential in the acceptance of the polymorphic content in our nature. *Nightwood* urges that reflection, cased in its frightening consequence by the bubbling possibility, the result of which is laughter.

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Under the Overpass: Coloniality and History-from-Below in Helena María Viramontes's *Their Dogs Came With Them*

Cera Smith

During the 1960s, the East Los Angeles Interchange's six freeway segments were built through Boyle Heights—a predominantly working-class neighborhood of L.A. where many people of color lived. Although dominant conceptions portrayed freeways as “symbol[s] of progress and modernity,” these structures did not prove to be “harbinger[s] of a better tomorrow” for the working-class people of color whose lands they intersected (Avila, “The Folklore of the Freeway” 16). To understand why, it is helpful to consider Walter D. Mignolo's explanation that “the hidden (and darker side) of modernity [is] coloniality”—that “there is no modernity without coloniality”—and that modernity requires human lives and property to “bec[o]me expendable [for] the benefit of [colonial powers],” as justified by the “naturalisation [sic] of the racial ranking of human beings” (39, 41). Therefore, if the freeways are symbols of modernity, they are also symbols of a racialized and classed neocolonial power structure that violently seeks to exploit and erase the injustices that it causes. As a narrative depiction of this phenomenon, Helena María Viramontes's novel *Their Dogs Came with Them* (2007) represents the extensive freeway construction

in Boyle Heights as a product of coloniality that violently impacts the region's predominantly working-class inhabitants of color. By providing a history-from-below that draws attention to the impact of neocolonial infrastructure expansion on the lives of Boyle Heights residents, Viramontes counters the erasure that enables racialized and classed spatial politics.

I. With the Freeway: Freeway Construction as Neocolonial Conquest

Viramontes's *Their Dogs Came with Them* describes the lives of four young Mexican Americans—Ermila, Turtle, Tranquilina, and Ana—and their families who live in Boyle Heights during the construction of the East L.A. Interchange. The book chronicles the direct and indirect experiences that the main characters and other working-class residents of color have with the new freeways, while also highlighting how reminiscent the neocolonial present is to the colonial past. At multiple points throughout the novel, Viramontes incorporates images of intimidating colonial ships and ravenous dogs to draw attention to the neocolonial policies represented by the freeways. By describing the bulldozers that paved the way for construction as “resembl[ing] great ships” and by describing the incomplete freeway overpass as “a concrete pier,” Viramontes likens the impact of infrastructure expansion to the devastation caused by colonial domination in the Americas (227, 231). Comparing the tools and structures of modernity (the bulldozers and the freeway overpass) to colonial modes of transportation suggests that Viramontes views their influence on working-class communities of color as a “second conquest” that is based upon the same racialized and classed exploitation of former colonial ventures (Muñoz 25). Viramontes's images highlight the “continuities between the loss of indigenous land to the Spanish, loss of Mexican land to the U.S. government, and the loss of barrio in Los Angeles' urban renewal projects” as all instances of coloniality that reveal the power dynamics that determine spatial layouts (Wald 73). Additionally, by describing the bulldozers like the dogs used by colonialists to terrorize and subjugate indigenous populations, Viramontes underscores the violent relationship between the

freeways and the people living beneath them. She explains that the bulldozers had “muzzles like sharpened metal teeth” (6) that cause Ermila’s working-class, Mexican American grandmother who lives in Boyle Heights to consider “how carnivorous life was, how indifferent machinery teeth could be” as they uprooted people from their homes (Viramontes 146). Here, Ermila’s grandmother recognizes what Viramontes wants her readers to recognize—that freeway expansion “communicate[s] [policy makers’] lack of concern for [their] residents,” many of whom are working-class people of color (Wyse 54). Much like former colonial powers, the freeway construction workers exhibit this disregard for Boyle Heights’s inhabitants by “[throwing] the skulls” that they find during demolition “into the wet cement” before proceeding with construction (Viramontes 157). Moreover, Turtle (a displaced and homeless genderqueer Chicana who is part of the McBride Boys gang) recognizes that neocolonial exploitation can continue because “over the [freeway] embankment, everything was forgotten”—“[n]onexistent”—because what happened on the ground was “[o]ut of sight [and] out of mind” for those traveling on the freeways (Viramontes 226). In this moment (as in others throughout the text), Viramontes insinuates that neocolonial freeway construction violently impacts the bodies of the region’s inhabitants at the same time that it conceals its violent impact on the local community.

II. From the Freeway: The Violent Consequences of Neocolonial Conquest

Beyond simply describing the violence of freeway construction as “a continuing consequence of settler colonialism,” Viramontes emphasizes how the violent impacts of neocolonial conquest “[reveal] the human costs of the construction of the modern city” (Wald 73). She goes beyond ideological parallels (as represented in the juxtaposition of colonial and neocolonial imagery) to expose the reality that the freeways “dislodg[ed] tens of thousands and isolate[ed] a growing concentration of racial poverty from the rest of the city” (Avila, “L.A.’s Invisible Freeway Revolt” 833). To expose the material consequences of the “interplay of space and race in postwar America,” Viramontes stresses how the freeways

were used to “contain or eradicate working-class, racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods” whose “low property values suited the cost-ratio projections” of policy makers and whose inhabitants’ statuses as “poor, immigrant, non-English-speaking peoples... minimize[ed] the possibility of organized opposition” to exploitation (Avila, “L.A.’s Invisible Freeway Revolt” 832, 833). In these ways, freeway construction “[erases] the sites of memory” and “enact[s] subtle, often powerful, institutional violence against [the region’s] inhabitants,” revealing the impacts of coloniality in the modern world (Pattinson 122).

On a narrative level, Viramontes uses the personification of the land and houses destroyed by the earthmovers to suggest that the people who occupied those spaces were likewise violently affected by infrastructure expansion. Depicting the freeways as “the cesarean scars of the earth” (325) and as “ugly bandage[s] of cement suturing together two boulevards,” Viramontes insinuates that the freeways slashed through the land and had a painful, tangible impact on human life (81). For Viramontes’s characters, the freeways stand as constant reminders of the government’s disregard for the inhabitants’ quality of life. For them, the cement structures symbolize violent domination by a government that values speedy transportation systems for the predominantly white and middle-class occupants of the suburbs over the homes of the working-class people of color living in the cities. Turtle is frustrated by the reminders of neocolonial domination as she tries to get into her old house. As Turtle attempts to enter, she is unable to “look up at the ghost houses and abandoned machinery” left by freeway construction workers because the bulldozer (“abandoned machinery”) trenches appear too much like “trenches being readied for a mass burial” (Viramontes 172). Referring to the abandoned buildings as “ghost houses” highlights the violence of forced eviction and displacement that left each house as empty and haunting as a ghost. Additionally, by describing the bulldozer’s trenches as “being readied for a mass burial,” Viramontes uses the violence inflicted on the houses (demolition) to metaphorically represent the violent impact of the freeway on the lives of the displaced (172). For Turtle, the houses were intimately connected to her family members—“Amá was part

of the house” and “Frank was part of the house”—so their eviction represents a sort of social death caused by the ambivalent freeway construction (Viramontes 161). By “[d]escribing [the] trials [of displaced Chicanos] rather than exploiting or romanticizing them,” Raelene Wyse claims that Viramontes “recreate[s] silenced histories” and provides a “space for communities to connect to forgotten pasts,” making it possible for them to recognize displacement and disorientation as resulting from neocolonial exploitation (49). *Their Dogs Came with Them* provides both an opportunity for readers unaware of these histories to become acquainted with them and for impacted individuals to communally process the violence they experienced. As someone who grew up in East Los Angeles during the 1960s, Viramontes’s writing provides a people’s history from her own experiences that gives space for processing a difficult past that continues into a difficult present.

In addition to describing the violence of displacement through personification and violent imagery, Viramontes also describes the violence of the freeways by highlighting their impact on the inhabitants’ health, mobility, and safety. Those living in the homes that were “spared” from freeway co-optation instead faced polluted living conditions. Both during and after construction, inhabitants were subjected to the “thick, choking stench of blackened diesel smoke [that] rose from the dump trucks” and to the “bulldozers [that] blew carbon exhaust into a haze,” polluting the air (Viramontes 27). Additionally, the “[s]irens, horns, [and] din of speeding cars” caused noise pollution (Viramontes 209). For the residents who lived underneath the freeways, “such a racket of steel and gas and industrial innovation and the ingenuity of imagination [were] all reduced to freeway traffic” that lowered their quality of life (Viramontes 209). Because they were so negatively impacted by freeway pollution, the residents did not see the freeways as commendable examples of “industrial innovation” or “the ingenuity of imagination” in the way that neocolonial policy makers did. Instead, they battled the “groan, thump and burr noise of the constant motors [as the noise] [wove] into the sound[s] of [their] breath whistling the blackened fumes of dust [before] crumbl[ing] in [their] nasal cavities” (Viramontes 168). These

environmental impacts reflect how little respect neocolonial policy makers had for the health and quality of life of the area's working-class inhabitants of color.

Similarly, the mobility of the inhabitants of Boyle Heights is severely impacted by freeway expansion. Although there were “[f]our freeways crossing and interchanging, looping and stacking in the Eastside,” Ermila knows that “if you didn’t own a car, you were fucked” in getting to work or to other important destinations (Viramontes 176). Despite the “[d]ivergence and convergence [of] six freeways in Ermila’s front yard” and the “velocity, and trucks, vans, motorbikes, speed blasts, trailers and more cars, right there,” Ermila explains that she “rarely had use for the delineated corridors” (Viramontes 313). Ermila’s reflections on the freeways reveal an important fact; the freeways do not serve the very communities through which they were built. Because they require the use of a car, many of the working-class residents who do not own vehicles are unable to use the structures that invade and pollute their neighborhoods. Although they were constructed to improve transportation, the freeways cut off the inhabitants of Boyle Heights from other parts of the city, impeding their mobility. At one point, Tranquilina’s Mama (a working-class, Mexican American woman who serves at a local church’s soup kitchen) navigates a “maze of unfamiliar streets” and finds that “the freeways amputated the streets into stumped dead ends” causing the “lives of the neighbors [to] [itch] like phantom limbs in Mama’s memory” as she connects her disorientation and her neighbors’ displacement to the freeways (Viramontes 33). Another example of mobility impairment is described when the “ubiquitous woman”—a homeless woman seen walking around the city—finds herself on the wrong bridge because “new construction altered the city into a beast alien to her” (Viramontes 82). While such a mistake might be inconsequential for privileged members of society, being on the wrong bridge poses problems for the woman’s survival because, for her, “the only thing more obnoxious than [hunger and thirst] was being lost at a time when her legs refused their function” (Viramontes 82). Furthermore, Turtle is described as “spott[ing] a column of lights surrounding a university parking lot across the great divide

of the 10 Interstate freeway,” where the lights and the university seemed “as distant to Turtle as the glare of the moon” (Viramontes 265). Here, Viramontes is highlighting how the freeways separate Turtle from accessing the university, symbolically separating her from a chance at education and potential social mobility. In each of these cases, freeway systems prevent the working-class characters of color from easily navigating their city, negatively impacting their survival, quality of life, and opportunities for social mobility.

Lastly, the freeways violently impact the lives of working-class inhabitants of Boyle Heights by making it possible for the freeway drivers to ignore them or regard them at an impersonal distance. While multiple characters in the novel suffer, the protected and privileged drivers are able to ignore the role they play in the inhabitants’ misfortune. Both Turtle and the ubiquitous woman—conceivably, two displaced individuals whose lives were radically changed by the construction of the freeways—are ignored by these drivers. As Turtle gets molested by a man at the freeway onramp, “[n]ot one driver from all those cars zooming on the new freeway bridge, not one driver driving the overpass of the 710 freeway construction, not one stopped to protest, to scream” at the attacker or help Turtle (Viramontes 24). Dale Pattinson explains that, because of the freeways’ rapid movement of isolated cars, they “move drivers over communities, rendering those communities and their inhabitants invisible” and making it possible for drivers to ignore the violence that the inhabitants experience in the same way that they ignore the displacement that the freeways cause (120). Ana’s brother Ben imagines a similar situation happening to the ubiquitous woman, where a middle-class driver passing by the woman on his way “home from the office after a crinkled day of work...might acknowledge [the woman’s] disorientation with a merciful sigh” before rushing home (Viramontes 124). Despite imagining that this driver sees the woman “[standing] on a pedestrian bridge overlooking the Hollywood 101 Freeway” and registers that the woman might be “entertain[ing] the idea of suicide,” Ben imagines that the driver would not stop and would only “maintain a diligent vigil from the rearview mirror” of his car (Viramontes 125). In both cases, the freeways allow privileged

individuals to ignore the danger that these characters experience in part, because of their relationship to the freeways. The violence that working-class characters of color experience near and because of the freeways reflects the neocolonial viewpoint that their lives (including their health, mobility, and safety) are less valuable than those of the suburbanites using the freeways.

III. Under the Freeway: History-from-Below as a Method from Engaging with Neocolonialism

In providing a historical narrative that is told from the perspective of Boyle Height's working-class inhabitants of color instead of from the perspective of policy makers, privileged suburbanites, or dominant society, Viramontes encourages readers to confront the violent repercussions of infrastructure expansion and to recognize freeway construction as a neocolonial undertaking. Because "culture, like war, is politics by another means," Avila posits that works like *Their Dogs Came with Them* "not only [preserve] local memories of spatial injustice... but also [inspire] new forms of local activism to prevent such memories from happening again" ("L.A.'s Invisible Freeway Revolt" 841). Although the lives and histories of her characters have been ignored or erased by policy makers, Viramontes's novel functions to retell those stories and to expose the reality of neocolonial spatial practices. While Viramontes cannot "change the course of the freeway," her work, as historical fiction, "change[s] the freeway's meaning" in the national imaginary (Avila, "The Folklore of the Freeway" 25). In effect, the "writing and rewriting of Chicana/o history [in L.A.] thus becomes an important subtext" of the novel, as Viramontes's work exposes the devastation that the freeways caused (Mendoza 17).

One major way that Viramontes writes and rewrites the history of neocolonial spatial practices is by privileging the descriptions of the people who live under the freeways, instead of spending the majority of the novel engaging with the freeways directly. By doing this, she prevents the freeways from blocking her readers' view of her characters' stories, as she initiates a critical conversation about the impacts of infrastructure expansion on human lives. For example, when Viramontes writes that "[a]cross the jackhammering blasts

and cacophony of earthmovers and over the sound of passing cars on First Street, [Chavela] dropped three lemon cubes in a cupful of water,” she is intentionally privileging the life of her working-class character of color over the commotion of cars and freeway construction (27). Privileging the stories of her characters over the descriptions of the freeways allows her novel to function as “valid historical evidence [that] enables a new way of conceptualizing the nature of power and its negotiations” by accounting for the erased stories of marginalized and exploited populations (Mendoza 19). Focusing on her human characters instead of on the cement structures that greatly impact all of their lives makes a political statement that values their lives as more important than the supposed “modern marvel” of a new transportation system.

In addition to writing her characters into existence, Viramontes has many of her characters write themselves and each other into existence. By writing reminder notes to herself while packing for her eviction, Chavela (Ermila’s elderly neighbor who is being evicted to make way for the freeways) recognizes the need to be historicized by stating that “[i]t’s important” for survivors like herself and for those who benefit from the freeways that caused her eviction to “remember [her] name, [her] address, where [she] put [her] cigarillo down” in order to understand the human toll of freeway expansion (Viramontes 7). By “searching out the freshly laid cement of the freeway bridges and sidewalks in order to record their names,” the McBride Boys (a gang from the area made up of displaced and disoriented working-class people of color) write themselves into existence, even as the freeways try to make their lives invisible (Viramontes 163). Ben’s imagined story of the ubiquitous woman writes the woman into existence and provides a “*metaphor to love her*” that allows him to confront her life and recognize how freeway culture isolates her (Viramontes 125). For Viramontes’s characters, writing becomes an opportunity for chronicling the resilience of working-class people of color who refuse to have their stories erased from the dominant narrative of infrastructure expansion in the region.

In modeling (both in content and in form) the way that Chicana/o individuals respond to the erasure of their stories by

rewriting their own, Viramontes's work captures what Raúl Homero Villa describes as the "dialectical production of barrio social space" where "[b]arrio residents [...] consciously and unconsciously [enact] resistive tactics [...] to secure and preserve the integrity of their cultural place-identity within and against [the] often hostile space regulation of dominant urbanism" (5). To counter the "barrioization" that silences the unjust histories of freeway expansion in Boyle Heights, Viramontes and her characters use their writing as forms of "barriology" to rearticulate the history of spatial practices in the area (Villa 4, 6). Viramontes references the importance of writing into existence the erased and overshadowed stories of working-class individuals of color by stating that "[t]he only things [her characters] cherished, their only private property, were the stories they continued to create and re-create in a world which only gave them one to tell" (61-62). In this statement, Viramontes acknowledges that, even though her characters may not have the power to change their circumstances (including how the freeways negatively affected them), writing about their experiences ensures that the injustices they faced are not ignored or forgotten. Her novel functions to "point to the blank spaces of erasure, the unrecorded topography where things happened, tears shed, injustices [took place]" in much the same way that Ray, a working-class Japanese American, is able to tell the stories of the "[t]hings [that happened] in the shaded areas [of the map that are] boxed in between the blue, brown and gray lines that only residents who had lived there all their lives would know" (Viramontes 259). As someone who grew up in East Los Angeles during the 1960s and who existed in the freeways' shadow, Viramontes is perhaps one of the most qualified people to write a history-from-below that prioritizes the perspectives of people displaced and disoriented by the freeways.

By encouraging her readers to notice the connection between colonial domination and neocolonial freeway construction, face the violent consequences that resulted from freeway development, and witness the resistance that continues underneath the freeways, Viramontes effectively writes a history-from-below that exposes the violent impacts of neocolonial practices on

working-class people of color. Most importantly, Viramontes provides an opportunity for readers to “recognize, remember, and reach for those bodies underneath the overpass” despite freeway proponents’ attempts to erase the reality of these inhabitants’ violent exploitation (Muñoz 36).

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Can the Traumatized Speak? Narrating Trauma in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Peter Smith

Recent scholarship reveals dissatisfaction with traditional trauma theory as a tool for understanding postcolonial literature. This dissatisfaction is a reaction to the traditional belief that trauma can be understood as “an unspeakable void” (Balaev 1), which effectively silences the experiences of the traumatized. Far from being unspeakable, Irene Visser argues that trauma “can draw people to others similarly marked, and in this way can serve as a source of community” (109). Tambu, the narrator of Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*, seems to recognize the restorative possibilities of trauma as she explains in the novel’s first paragraph: “my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion” (1). By privileging narratives of escape, entrapment, and rebellion, Tambu writes against the classic conception of trauma as unspeakable. More specifically, Tambu demonstrates the community-building potential of trauma through her relationship with Nyasha: although the nature of their relationship remains ambivalent, it depicts the communal possibilities that can stem from trauma. Moreover, Tambu casts the traditional precept that

trauma is “unspeakable” as a tool of colonialism whereby the experiences of those affected by colonization are ignored. This practice is exemplified by the two white psychiatrists who dismiss Nyasha’s trauma. Tambu’s story ultimately contradicts Western conceptions of postcolonial trauma and in so doing offers insight into the agency that colonized people possess.

Studies of *Nervous Conditions* often recognize the novel’s relationship between conflict and identity, or how struggle leads to self-discovery. For example, Lily G. N. Maruba writes that Zimbabwe’s landscape is “complicated by race, ethnicity, and class” (89) but that Dangarembga enables Tambu to discover her identity through her relationship with the land. Similarly, Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter argues Dangarembga writes against colonial efforts to marginalize women. Moreover, she explains that the Zimbabwean woman in the novel resist categorization as “other” or “victim,” and instead practice “autonomy and cooperation” amongst themselves (231), which signifies an attempt to explore the significance of an identity for African women. Frank Schulze-Engler studies *Nervous Conditions* within the context of modernity, which he describes as the practice of “differentiation, rationalization, and individualization” (23). More specifically, Schulze-Engler argues that the novel’s characters do not establish their identity in reaction to colonialism, but rather through a self-reflexive journey and reassessment of history and tradition. The aforementioned critics are generally hopeful in their treatment of the search for identity in *Nervous Conditions*, but David Aberbach is decidedly cynical. Aberbach argues Tambu illustrates “negative identity,” or the internalization of negative characteristics of one’s own culture that occurs when an oppressed minority is excluded from the dominant culture (214). This point of view is unfortunate in that it inscribes onto *Nervous Conditions* defeatism that inadvertently sides with colonialism by suggesting that colonized people cannot break free of the cycle forced upon them. Even if he is misguided, Aberbach’s assessment serves as a reminder of the inherent connection between conflict and identity in *Nervous Conditions*.

Despite the focus on adversity and the individual in *Nervous Conditions*, the novel has received no substantial treatment from a

trauma studies perspective. However, in her analysis of *The Book of Not*, the sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, Rosanne Kennedy addresses the earlier book. Kennedy argues that trauma comes into view in *The Book of Not* rather than *Nervous Conditions*, which was published eighteen years earlier, “not only from the temporal structure of trauma, but also from the difficulties of crafting a speaking position from which to bear witness to the political as well as psychological unspeakability of racism in post-colonial Zimbabwe” (88). In the study of trauma, time and memory conflict because, as Kennedy later explains, memory is outside of time while traumatic events are necessarily situated within time (104). Kennedy suggests that Tambu’s proximity to her trauma and her youth prevent her from understanding—or at least articulating—her experience. The difference between Tambu’s narration in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* rests in the increasing “contortion” of her “psychological condition,” which eventually grows to mirror that of Nyasha (88). According to Kennedy, the onset of these difficulties indicates an awareness of her trauma. While I certainly will not deny the remarkable clarity with which Tambu narrates *Nervous Conditions*, I disagree with Kennedy’s assessment that Tambu does not recognize her trauma in this novel. In fact, while Tambu might not fully understand her trauma yet in *Nervous Conditions*, I believe her clarity enables her articulation of traumatic events while they happen. Over the course of the novel Tambu combats the sources and manifestations of trauma by seeking companionship, specifically with Nyasha.

Trauma studies began in the works of Sigmund Freud, who explored trauma in his works *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*. Extending Freud’s observations into a literary theory, Cathy Caruth argues, “trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (4). For psychoanalysis, trauma necessarily involves the delay or obfuscation of the story. Although Caruth highlights the importance of “the crying wound” and suggests the “possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound” (8), she seems nonetheless

to view “the silence of [trauma’s] mute repetition of suffering” (9) as a more plausible outcome. Moreover, the importance she does place on voicing trauma seems to be primarily in the experience of the psychoanalyst rather than the patient. The very contextualization of trauma within the confines of psychoanalysis privileges Western intellectuals. Geoffrey H. Hartman confirms this bias in his important article, “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies.” Part of this article’s significance stems from its lengthy “Bibliographic Note,” which almost exclusively recommends either canonized Western thinkers—such as Freud, Lacan, Bloom, Benjamin, and Bataille—or works that address Western concerns.

Over the last decade or so, efforts have developed to establish a uniquely postcolonial trauma theory. These efforts are not altogether novel, but represent an ongoing struggle for recognition between traumatized groups. Michael Rothberg describes this struggle in the controversy that followed the United States government’s construction of the Holocaust Museum despite offering no such memorial of American slavery. Rothberg expresses his reservations about the practice of “competitive memory” (3), or the apparent belief that only one history of trauma can be appreciated. In this controversy, Rothberg identifies what he sees as attempts to value the trauma of one people over another. As an alternative, he proposes the concept of “multidirectional memory,” which describes a collective memory that is “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (3). Rothberg makes a compelling argument, but it falls short of its promise. Although he rejects the viewpoint that sees “only winners and losers in the struggle for collective articulation and recognition” (5), he fails to live up to his “commitment to uncovering historical relatedness” (29). On the contrary, *Multidirectional Memory* almost always compares the trauma of Africans or people of African descent to the trauma of white Europeans. With bitter irony, this attempt to diffuse competition between traumatic pasts arrives at the centrality of white trauma and the marginality of black trauma.

Such difficulties validate the struggle for a trauma theory that prioritizes postcolonial concerns. According to Michelle Balaev, the necessity of moving past the “traditional concept of trauma as

unspeakable” develops from this concept’s inability to “[concede] trauma’s variability in literature and society” (4). In theorizing a postcolonial trauma theory, Irene Visser argues, “a necessary advance in postcolonial trauma studies would be to make the theory more comprehensive, yet also to allow more specificity than the present dominant trauma theory” (107). Although Visser’s alternative theory might seem self-contradictory as it becomes more inclusive while calling for more specificity, any perceived contradiction is merely recognition that the experience of trauma is both widespread and personal. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, observes that the difficulty of theorizing a non-Western trauma lies in “find[ing] ways of analyzing these traumas that acknowledge the myriad modes of consolation, memorializing and reconciliation which are deployed by traumatized subjects” unfamiliar with “Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis and, indeed, ‘trauma theory’” (63-64). Visser identifies one of these modes when she writes of the role of orality, which can serve as a catalyst “in processes of mourning and grieving in the aftermath of traumatic events” (107). Rather than subtly channeling the inexpressible experience, postcolonial traumatic experience uncovers—or recovers—one’s own story. It is within this context of orality and recovery that I read Tsitsi Dangaremba’s *Nervous Conditions*.

Through her experiences with Nhamo and Babamukuru, Tambu presents trauma as a two-part process in which verbal violence precedes physical violence. When Tambu intervenes in a dispute between Nhamo and Jeremiah over Nhamo’s schooling, Nhamo lashes out at her: “So what! I don’t care what he says,’ he shrugged, shocking me with this disrespectful language that I had not heard before” (21). Shortly thereafter, Tambu reveals that Nhamo has been stealing her corncobs even before they ripen in an apparent act of malice (22-23). Moreover, her retaliation against Nhamo primarily causes her injury and inspires Mr. Matimba to threaten everyone with whippings (23). Later, when Babamukuru returns to Zimbabwe, Tambu remarks he “inspired confidence and obedience” (44). Her awe fades quickly. Babamukuru jars Tambu when he “reprimand[s]” Jeremiah by saying “We cannot afford to dream” (45). Tambu largely ceases her narration until Babamukuru

finishes his crowd pleasing speech when she finally comments, “Babamukuru belched magnanimously” (47). In this moment, Tambu offers her first expression of dissatisfaction with her uncle, but he henceforth becomes increasingly dictatorial. As familial relations gradually deteriorate, Tambu’s allegiance splits between Nyasha and Babamukuru. Tambu realizes that her admiration for her uncle “had stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism” and that “[i]t had happened insidiously” (167). Moreover, she describes her disappointment in violent terms, relating, “I let guilt, so many razor-sharp edges of it, slice away at me” (167). Although Tambu is not physically impacted by Babamukuru’s leadership—probably because of his obsession with appearances—Nyasha becomes ill at the novel’s climax. Tambu’s concern for her cousin becomes guilt that becomes nightmares until she pushes all such thoughts out of her consciousness and returns to school. Tambu establishes the trajectory of trauma: the traumatizer—despite the traumatized’s genuine care for them—first abuses with words, then with actions, and, upon their victim’s retaliation, abuses people close to the traumatized.

Tambu reveals a stark contrast between her relationship with her brother and her relationship with her uncle. While she relates her mistreatment at the hands of her brother over two pages, the downward spiral of her time with Babamukuru lasts the majority of the book. A first impulse might be to read her struggle with her uncle as more traumatizing than her struggle with her brother, but positioning one trauma as better or worse than another will not stand to reason. The difference between these two traumatic relationships has to do with Tambu’s shifting perception of her own trauma over time. Tambu herself admits to this increasing clarity when she writes, “I feel many things these days, much more than I was able to feel in the days when I was young and my brother died, and there are reasons for this more than the mere consequence of age” (1). Tambu seems to admit that the simplicity with which she viewed the world when she was thirteen years old—her age when her brother died—served as a sort of buffer to the experience of her trauma. However, through this admission she also suggests that the benefit of time helped her overcome the trauma she experienced

from her brother. Her age at the time of her narration is difficult to discern, but at the novel's close she reveals that before she could tell her story she had to undergo a "long and painful process.... whose events stretched over many years" (208). But the novel does not capture this process: rather, *Nervous Conditions* tells "how it all began" (208). That Tambu processes and moves past her brother's betrayal by thirteen while struggling to understand Babamukuru's transgressions against her and Nyasha into adulthood signifies the complex relationship of trauma and memory. However, to the extent that these relationships are not directly comparable, Tambu reveals her increasing ability to understand the causes and conditions of her trauma.

Even though the novel opens with Tambu warning the reader that her story privileges women—a claim she backs up with repeated reminders about the suspicion she holds for men—any challenge to her clan's patriarchy offends her. In fact, the souring in her relations with Nhamo and Babamukuru each originates with their lack of respect for her father. The enmity between Tambu and Nhamo begins when his "disrespectful language" that Tambu "had not heard before" shocks her (21). Tambu deems the language offensive not merely because of its insolence, but also because of its foreignness: she immediately recognizes the unfamiliarity of Nhamo's sentiments. Although Tambu certainly finds her brother's words obtrusive, at this moment her interest in Nhamo "died an unobtrusive death" (21). This concern with preserving culture reappears when Babamukuru dismisses Jeremiah's alleged desire for everyone in the village to earn a college degree as "not a useful contribution" (45). Both Nhamo and Babamukuru think less of Jeremiah because of his perceived lack of civility. For Nhamo, who wishes to "no longer be Jeremiah's son" (48), his father represents poverty. For Babamukuru, who confronts Jeremiah by saying, "so many years after our mother passed away, you are still living in sin" (149), his brother represents a spiritual ideology he deems backward and wicked. Nhamo and Babamukuru find the means to escape the conditions of their community of origin through institutions introduced to them by colonists. By adopting Western standards of civility—either education or religion—Tambu's

brother and uncle leave behind what they reject as purposeless, sinful, or dishonorable, as the case may be. Despite Tambu's own discontentment with her father's rule she nonetheless recognizes the causal relationship between the rejection of culture and the onset of trauma.

Because trauma begins with the dissolution of culture, Tambu attempts to contextualize her trauma within systemic cultural issues. After floundering to pinpoint the cause of her trauma, she claims it stems from the conflict between men and women. While considering the frequent conflicts at her aunt and uncle's house, she laments: "The victimisation, I saw, was universal. . . . Men took it everywhere with them" (118). Although she defines the male view of women as "Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness," Tambu admits an inability to move beyond this realization. She attributes this shortsightedness to personal immaturity: "If I had been more independent in my thinking then, I would have thought the matter through to a conclusion" (118). Near the novel's end, Tambu finds herself at a loss to write meaning into Nyasha's narrative: "I may have had no explanation, but my mother had. She was very definite. 'It's the Englishness,' she said" (207). While Tambu's attempts to understand trauma did not lead her to directly implicate colonial forces, this hypothesis must satisfy her—even if it also perturbs her—because she does not refute her mother's claim. Instead, the idea that colonialism induces her trauma overwhelms her and she hastily concludes her narrative by commenting that it would be years before she processed her trauma. Although this partial understanding may appear to validate psychoanalytic presuppositions of trauma's hiddenness or unspeakability, it in fact defies such assertions in that it depicts the process—rather than the result—of healing. In *Nervous Conditions* the reader witnesses Tambu coming to terms with her trauma: there exists no requirement of efficiency or neatness.

Just as trauma begins with the rejection of family, trauma fades with the reassertion of family. Through the awareness of her victimization Tambu identifies Nyasha as a kindred spirit. Reflecting on a fight between Babamukuru and Nyasha, Tambu recalls her uncle "condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of

her femaleness, just as I had felt victimised at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew my maize” (118). In this way, she emphasizes the importance of family relationships in combatting post-traumatic experiences. Her newfound camaraderie with Nyasha also enables Tambu to prioritize women in the narrative. Although she initially commits to telling the story of women, the transgressions of men distract her from her goal in the novel’s first half. Upon realizing her connection with Nyasha, Tambu realizes that she has “grown to love Nyasha” and that this love forces her to reevaluate her priorities (118). Nyasha reciprocates this love when she confides in Tambu by offering her story: “I was comfortable in England but now I’m a whore with dirty habits” (119). In addition to her friendship with Nyasha, Tambu also develops a respect for Maiguru. As she comes to view her aunt as another victim of male oppression in spite of her impressive education (102-03) and desire to leave Babamukuru (176-77), Tambu recognizes their kinship, although in this situation camaraderie does not develop into friendship due to the power dynamics. Even so, through her realization of female victimhood and her identification with the women she lives with she finds strength and comfort.

The most vivid depiction of trauma in *Nervous Conditions* is Nyasha’s mysterious illness that develops after Tambu’s departure for Sacred Heart. Because of the sheer volume of Tambu’s schoolwork, she allows her friendship with Tambu to wane. Nyasha’s subsequent changes are jarring: while Nyasha writes Tambu to tell her “she had embarked on a diet ‘to discipline my body and occupy my mind. When you come back you will find a svelte, sensuous me’” (201). On her first trip back to the mission Tambu deems Nyasha “too svelte” and “definitely thin” (201) and on her second trip she finds Nyasha “skeletal” (202). While her condition is never diagnosed, Nyasha probably suffers from bulimia since after dinner, “Nyasha excused herself immediately” and Tambu “could hear retching and gagging from the bathroom” (202). However, the exact nature of her condition holds secondary importance: Nyasha reveals that she harms herself as a form of rebellion when—while cutting her arms with broken glass and clay—she proclaims: “They’ve trapped us. But I won’t be trapped. I’m not a good girl. I won’t be trapped”

(205). Tambu suggests that she refuses to return to Sacred Heart because of Nyasha's "grotesquely unhealthy" condition (203), but it makes more sense that she stays as an act of solidarity. Her worries evidently extend beyond those she has for her cousin's health: "You know how it is when something that has been a cornerstone of your security begins to crumble. You start worrying about herself" (203). Tambu's comments may appear selfish, but they reveal her awareness of the close relation of her and her cousin's fates. By depicting Nyasha's illness as resulting from Tambu's departure, Tambu emphasizes the powerful impact of relationships in combating trauma.

When Nyasha receives medical attention in Harare, the doctors' treatments rely on the Freudian model of trauma's unspeakability. The first psychiatrist Nyasha visits informs the family "that Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described" (206). The second psychiatrist "was human" but prescribed hospitalization and Largactil, an anti-anxiety drug. Regardless of their comparative humanity, both psychiatrists reveal their lack of interest in actually hearing Nyasha's story, whether they deny its existence or silence it with medicine. Tambu expresses skepticism about Nyasha's treatment and recovery—still no diagnosis is offered—through constant reminders of her distance from her cousin. She relates the fulfillment of the doctor's orders, "Nyasha was put into a clinic, where she stayed for several weeks," and Nyasha's recovery, "my cousin's condition improved, but I did not stay to see her improvement" (206). Moreover, when she tries to get information from her mother, she finds her mother "wouldn't say much about Nyasha" on the grounds that Nyasha's situation "is speaking for itself" (207). Through her insistence that she does not have any firsthand information about Nyasha, Tambu implicitly questions the trauma narrative advanced by psychoanalysis. While traditional trauma theory declares that trauma cannot be spoken about, Tambu's narrative does not confirm these findings. Indeed, throughout the novel Tambu and Nyasha confide in one another, right up until Nyasha's "kamikazi behaviour," which is complete with a condemnation of her aggressors and proclamation of her rebellion (205). Nyasha's trauma, far from being silent, is instead

silenced. While doctors confine Nyasha to a hospital and feed her sedatives, Babamukuru returns Tambu to school where no one will give her any information about Nyasha. Because of this dearth of information, Tambu must finally retreat into her studies and ignore the fact that she knows nothing of her cousin's progress. In this way, Tambu suggests that the silence of trauma does not manifest from an internal condition, but rather from an external oppression.

The significance of the novel's title manifests in Nyasha's psychiatric treatment and problematizes the racial import of psychiatry in the novel. Although Tambu reasons that both of Nyasha's psychiatrists are white because "there were no black psychiatrists" (206), the novel's title is an obvious reference to *The Wretched of the Earth*, a treatise on colonialism written by Frantz Fanon, a black psychiatrist. To complicate matters, however, Fanon did not actually pen these words. Rather, they come from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface: "The status of 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people *with their consent*" (20). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon uses the word "nervous" ten times while Sartre only uses it in his preface once. Moreover, Fanon employs the term to convey meanings similar to Sartre's when referring to the "nervous excitement" (264), "nervous depressions" (281), and "nervous tension" (292) of Africans. Although Sartre suggests colonized people are tricked into participating in their own colonization, Fanon does not seem to agree when it comes to colonial psychiatry. In the section of his book entitled "Colonial War and Mental Disorders"—the section that includes all of Fanon's previously mentioned uses of the word "nervous"—he writes: "We cannot be held responsible that in this war psychiatric phenomena... have taken on importance where those who carry out the 'pacification' are concerned, or that these same disorders are notable among the 'pacified' population" (Fanon 249). In this way, Fanon contextualizes psychiatric disorders as an instrument of the colonizers to marginalize the colonized while clarifying that Africans shoulder none of the blame for such colonial tactics. Although Dangarembga's text reiterates Fanon's point of view, this black African writer nonetheless draws her book's title from the words of a white European. By utilizing Sartre's language,

Dangarembga signifies the problematic historical reality that white people—no matter how sympathetic—wield the power to diagnose the condition of black people.

The title of this essay—which is not merely a glib reference to Spivak’s famous article, although it is that too—poses a question: “Can the traumatized speak?” Through *Nervous Conditions* Tsitsi Dangarembga offers two answers to this question: no and yes. These answers do not contradict each other, but signify alternate theories of trauma. While a subject of colonization, which utilizes psychiatry as a means to silence protest and marginalize rebellion, the traumatized cannot speak because they are not permitted to speak. On the contrary, Tambu speaks of trauma for 208 pages. Not only does she narrate the traumas of several African woman—herself included—but she also narrates their responses to trauma: her “escape and Lucia’s,” “Nyasha’s rebellion” (1), as well as Maiguru’s departure and subsequent self-confidence (175, 184) and Ma’Shingayi’s unequivocal rejection of “Englishness” (207). Through the repeated vocalization of traumatic experiences, Tambu rejects psychoanalysis’s claims of trauma’s inherent unspeakability and demonstrates the necessity of a postcolonial trauma theory. Moreover, by interlocking the narratives of these women, Tambu suggests that while speaking of trauma is integral to recovery, such orality is only attainable through the establishment and maintenance of community.

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