Watermark

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Watermark is an annual, scholarly journal published by graduate students in the Department of English at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). We are dedicated to publishing original, critical essays concerned with theory, literature of all genres and periods, as well as essays representing current issues within the field of Rhetoric and Composition. As this journal is intended to provide a forum for emerging voices, only student work is published.

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A Note from Watermark's Executive Co-Editors

When we jointly assumed the role of Executive Co-Editors for *Watermark*, the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic was still prominent. California State University, Long Beach had just wrapped up its Fall 2021 semester, welcoming back students from a seemingly endless three semesters of mandatory online instruction in the English Department. Some students had not yet made a connection to the physical campus—as the entirety of their experience with the university had taken place online. For others, the return to campus was bittersweet. Sweet in that the return to campus had begun; bitter in that we had not been able to return to our campus sooner. As in-person learning resumes and the campus adjusts to a new normal, we hope that this journal can serve as a symbol of the new leaf the campus is in the process of turning over.

We would like to extend our heartfelt, full-throated thanks and appreciation to everyone who has made this edition of *Watermark* possible. From those who served on the journal's staff to individual contributors, your painstaking attention to detail and keen interest in literary studies will continue to inspire future staff members of *Watermark* to reach new heights. Your hard work and dedication has made this edition memorable for its quality despite the challenges of conducting this process entirely by online correspondence. While this year's edition of *Watermark* seeks to build on the strong foundation previous editions have left us, we have also sought to push the boundaries of this publication. This has been done by extending the length and rigor of the peer-review process by connecting with authors and discussing various claims made within their essays. None of this would be possible without the continued attention, support, and hard work of everyone who helped make this journal the best it could be. Previous editions might have prioritized the timeliness of publication over the accuracy of the journal—in accordance with the principle that "the perfect is the enemy of the good." Though this approach has made this year's publication later than others, we firmly believe that the journal is well worth the wait.

Noah East and Cara Vejsicky, Executive Co-Editors, 2022

Sites of Conflict: On the Ecogothic Mode in Hannah Crafts' *The Bondwoman's Narrative*

by Cara Vejsicky

Canonical conceptualizations of the gothic mode have consistently struggled, for various and complex reasons, to consider the ways in which race and racial identity inform gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls. The well-known and widely appropriated gothic trope of the heroine in distress has most typically been written or portrayed as a white woman, such as Isabella in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Lucy in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Given that most canonical gothic texts have been authored by prominent white writers since the eighteenth century, it is unsurprising, yet nonetheless disappointing, that there exists sparse gothic literature both produced by Black authors and that which also addresses the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality as they relate to anti-Blackness or white patriarchal hegemony. Hannah Crafts' *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, while not commonly recognized as being strictly gothic in genre, is a novel that conveys the horrors of chattel slavery, anti-Black racism, and sexual violence experienced across a multitude of oppressive landscapes in a pre-Civil War United States. Crafts' reimagining of the gothic mode is made evident in her appropriation of its most infamous tropes and motifs: dark and ominous figures are actualized in the bodies of white men and women like that of Mr. Trappe, or Sir Clifford De Vincent, who enslave, torture, and torment Black men, women, and children; oppressive and haunting landscapes are materialized in the form of plantations or auction blocks; fictional tales of vulnerable heroines escaping villainous tyrants are replaced by stories of white enslavers raping and impregnating Black women and girls. Crafts' novel complicates characteristically gothic tropes that erase or overlook the intersections of race and gender by presenting female characters like Hannah and her mistress as heroines in distress who navigate the pervasive realities of sexual violence, racial trauma, familial separation or ambiguity, patriarchal oppression, and loss of innocence simultaneously.

Believed to be written sometime during the mid-nineteenth century, *The Bondwoman's Narrative* is recognized as one of the earliest known novels authored by a Black woman in

United States history. Crafts' story narrates an autobiographically inspired account of the life of Hannah, the novel's protagonist (who shares her first name with the author). Throughout the novel, Crafts depicts ominous and alienating landscapes wherein she and others are enslaved. Descriptions of characteristically gothic environments help illustrate the connections between anti-Black racism, slavery, and ecological horror. Crafts' descriptions of the various oppressive environments she encounters or resides in evoke distinctly ecogothic imageries that emphasize the specific ecological horrors implicated in the institution of American chattel slavery. Crafts' appropriation of (eco)gothic literary conventions enables her to portray the dangerous unpredictability of natural and domestic environments that were especially insidious and isolating for enslaved peoples. Jericho Williams articulates the ecological violence inherent in systems of slavery when he writes, "because the outdoor environment more often functioned as a prison-like setting for long hours of grueling work, slave narratives…evoke feelings of fear or terror about nature similar to those found throughout gothic literature" (140). The gothic mode offers a space for Crafts to characterize both the systemic and interpersonal relationships that enable the socialization and institutionalization of anti-Blackness and chattel slavery, while it also allows her to depict the ways in which natural and domestic environments are involved in the evocation of "feelings of fear or terror about nature." While domestic spaces such as the Lindendale plantation or the Cosgrove family's residence represent environments characterized by inescapability and hostility, natural and rural environments symbolize conflicting sites of freedom, refuge, and dangerous vulnerability for people escaping enslavement.

More specifically, natural environments are depicted as being particularly dangerous for enslaved women and girls as they are presented as alienating landscapes that exist beyond and outside of the authority of the law. Fred Botting, a prominent gothic studies scholar, illustrates how gendered gothic tropes intersect with or are often accompanied by descriptions of perilous landscapes, writing that:

> The sense of power and persecution beyond reason or morality is played out in the two central figures of the narratives: a young female heroine and an older male villain…Her vulnerability and his violence play out the lawlessness and insecurity manifested in settings and landscapes. Their distance from social and familial bonds is simultaneously the locus of adventurous, romantic independence and physical danger: she may be active but is alone, with nowhere to turn, without protection and security. (4-5)

Botting offers an ecocritical reading of the female heroine and male villain archetype as he situates their unstable relationships with one another in proximity to the "settings and landscapes" in which they interact. Botting interconnects the "lawlessness and insecurity" of natural environments with the heroine's powerlessness and the villain's capacity to act outside of the law—a trope which is most evident in Crafts' descriptions of male characters such as Mr. Trappe or Mr. Cosgrove.

In *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, Mr. Trappe is a figure made doubly threatening by both his occupation as a corrupt lawyer and his inimical demeanor; his legal knowledge of "impure" genealogies and familial histories, especially that of Hannah's mistress, is central to the construction of his villainous character. Robert Levine notes that Crafts "ultimately presents [Trappe] as a figure of terror, as someone who threatens to reveal to

white culture that which it already knows about itself and strives to suppress" (264). However, Trappe is not simply villainous in his desire to expose "to white culture" the genealogical entanglements inherent in systems of slavery, rather, his wickedness is accentuated by the alienating settings or landscapes through which he hunts, stalks, and captures Hannah and her mistress. As Botting notes in his description of male villains and vulnerable heroines, lawless environments *enable* violence against enslaved women and girls as they are always already "without protection and security" (5). The gothic trope is further complicated by the fact that there exists no true sense of lawlessness within the context of chattel slavery; Mr. Trappe's power over the mistress is made especially terrifying in that he is *supported*, even encouraged, by law to persecute her. The mistress's vulnerability is made twofold as she is neither an independent heroine in temporary distress nor situated at a "distance from social and familial bonds" that would otherwise protect her. The mistress' Blackness makes her particularly vulnerable, while her gender and sexuality inform Mr. Trappe's obsessive legal pursuit of her.

The ecological horrors the mistress encounters occur during her attempted escape from Mr. Trappe. Her journey is not characterized by whimsical adventure or romance but rather by a distinct and unwavering sense of impending doom, one which arises from her recognition of the overlapping oppression of her racial and gender identity. This recognition inevitably influences the mistress's psychological distress, especially when Crafts notes: "After a time my mistress became decidedly insane, and her insanity partook the most painful character. She fancied herself pursued by an invisible being, who sought to devour her flesh and crush her bones" (69). The mistress's oscillation between rationality and "insanity" presents her as a characteristically gothic figure, while it also illustrates the unique psychological terror experienced by enslaved Black women because of their sexual vulnerability. The description of the mistress being haunted by an imaginative and "invisible being, who sought to devour her flesh" suggests that the mistress recognizes the inescapability of gendered sexual violence and patriarchal domination inherent in chattel slavery. White male enslavers reduce Black women to their "flesh" and "bones" as they sexually objectify and commodify their physical bodies through acts of rape, harassment, and forced impregnation.

Additionally, the landscape in which the mistress "became insane" is one that is especially disorienting and alienating and thus influences her "insensible" and "distempered" changes in character (69). The old cabin in which Hannah and her mistress hide is described as being "forlorn and desolate," with a "dark deep stain on the ground" that resembles blood and a "hatchet, with hair sticking to the heft" (68). Despite having to reside in a rotting cabin that has been "the theatre of fearful crime," Hannah admits that she is glad "at least [the women] should be free" while they spent their time there (67). The alienating environment, coupled with the ghastly imagery of blood and death, evoke an ominous tone that foreshadows the eventual capture of Hannah and her mistress. Gill Ballinger articulates the significance of Crafts' use of gothic literary conventions, especially as it relates to coinciding moments of isolation and psychological distress in the novel: "In addition to their shared preoccupation with darkness, eighteenth-century Gothic and the institution of slavery appear for Crafts to intersect in at least three other ways: the internalization of torture, the objectification of the

female body and the homelessness common to both the subjects of Gothic and the institution of slavery alike" (218). The mistress's feelings of anxiety and paranoia, then, connote her "internalization" of the "torture" she has either witnessed or assumes she will be subjected to as an enslaved woman. Her concern that the invisible man wants to "tear [her] flesh" and "drink [her] blood" also communicates an awareness of the ways in which her "female body" and perpetual "homelessness" combine to leave her particularly vulnerable, unprotected, and exposed (Crafts 69).

Similarly, instances of sexual violence perpetrated in private domestic environments, such as Mr. Cosgrove's mansion, occur in isolation from society. Crafts suggests that enslaved Black women and girls are always already "without protection and security" from sexual violence as both she and Lizzy, Crafts' friend, narrate stories of white enslavers raping and forcibly impregnating the women and girls whom they enslave. In this sense, Crafts implies that Black women and girls are unsafe *everywhere* within the context of chattel slavery. Even while Hannah's mistress is living outside of and at a distance from domesticity, she remains haunted by the fear of sexual violence and "invisible" men who wish to "devour" her. Lizzy shares a story later in the novel that depicts the intersections of gendered violence and anti-Blackness as she recalls how one enslaver, Mr. Cosgrove, targets and "collects" young and conventionally beautiful Black women and girls, known as his "favorites," to rape and forcibly impregnate within the privacy of his "large" mansion (178). Mr. Cosgrove's sexual violence, however inhumane and sadistic, is socially justified in the concealment of his crimes: the privacy of his home affords him a protected and secure environment wherein the law cannot surveil him. While Mr. Trappe manipulates the lawlessness of natural and rural landscapes to persecute the mistress, Mr. Cosgrove manipulates the intimacy of his home and the unquestioned authority he possesses to act within it. The description of Mr. Cosgrove's house, for instance, emphasizes its capacity to conceal or veil that which is socially unacceptable or taboo: "The mansion … was large and irregular in its dimensions, besides being built in a kind of rambling style, that precluded the occupant of one part from knowing anything of the other" (178). The mistress's fear of an "invisible" man is actualized in white enslavers like that of Mr. Cosgrove, whose sexual violence is made "invisible" to society and the law within the context of his home. Domestic space, then, also represents an environment of oppression and terror as enslaved Black women and girls are equally "alone, with nowhere to turn, without protection and security" within both public and private contexts (Botting 5).

The ecogothic mode allows Crafts to emphasize the pervasiveness of violence committed against Black women and girls through descriptions of various and contrasting environments like the home or the wilderness that are equally alienating and oppressive in nature. Kari Winter underscores the ways in which domestic space becomes especially horrifying within the context of institutionalized chattel slavery, writing that:

> The female author of Gothic novels and slave narratives described three primary sources of terror and horror in their lives. First, they emphasized the terrifying aspects of the patriarchal family and depicted patriarchs as parasites who prey on the sexual, emotional, reproductive, and economic resources of women. Second, they insisted that *all* of society … is corrupted by perverse power inequities. Third, they dramatized

> the means by which people in positions of power attempt to deprive subjugated peoples of the power to know. (55)

With this in mind, Crafts' appropriation of the ecogothic mode requires her to depict the implications of "patriarchal family" structures in the construction and maintenance of oppressive domestic space. Mr. Cosgrove's home, for example, is "irregular" not only in its architecture but also in its corrupting and disorienting influence on the people who reside within it, like Mrs. Cosgrove. The insecurity of domestic space, and Mr. Cosgrove's mansion, more specifically, is informed by its capacity to enable "people in positions of power" to "deprive" people from knowing the truth or reality of a situation. For example, Mr. Cosgrove's home affords him the privacy and protection to rape and impregnate countless Black women and girls with impunity; however, it is not until Mrs. Cosgrove discovers his "secret" that the environment then becomes insecure and unstable. The "perverse power inequities" within Mr. Cosgrove's home exist not only between him and the women and girls he enslaves and rapes, but it also exists between him and his wife; the misogynist, "patriarchal family" structure enables Mr. Cosgrove to simultaneously "prey" on the most vulnerable of women and "deprive" his own wife of her "power to know." Perhaps Crafts includes this perspective to demonstrate the ways in which patriarchal hegemony and chattel slavery also rely on the subjugation and corruption of white women, however unequal and incomparable to the oppression of enslaved Black women. Indeed, the domestic space is characterized as one which is particularly disorienting and alienating as it leaves enslaved Black women and girls completely subject to the will of those who enslave them. Descriptions of Black women and girls being kept in secret inside of Mr. Cosgrove's mansion exemplify the threatening and oppressive nature of domestic space. Mrs. Cosgrove's discovery of the "young and innocent" girl locked away in a private room to care for her newborn baby is a detail which parallels the imagery of Hannah and her mistress hiding alone in the old cabin—each woman is vulnerable, each environment dangerous (186).

Crafts' appropriation of gothic literary tropes helps to portray the dehumanizing horrors and haunting inescapability inherent in the institution of chattel slavery and, secondly, articulates the perverse and patriarchal power structures that enable and justify violence against enslaved Black women and girls. The ecogothic mode is central to Crafts' construction of her novel as she narrates the interconnectedness between perilous landscapes, racial violence, and the vulnerability of enslaved women and girls. Descriptions of oppressive domestic and natural space complicate canonical gothic conceptualizations of horrifying landscapes like swamps, forests, and dark alleyways to address the specifically ecological and environmental terror associated with histories of enslavement in the United States. Crafts uses ecogothic literary conventions to characterize private and public territories as equally alienating and disorienting in their capacities to conceal or make invisible that which society or the law would otherwise denounce. The home and the wilderness become sites of conflict in Crafts' novel as they represent spaces which offer contradictory freedoms—freedom from starvation and insanity in the home and freedom from rape and harassment in the forest. In neither circumstance are enslaved Black women and girls free from fear.

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Race Relations in the South: White Supremacy and Black Acquiescence in Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*

by Ambar Quintanilla

"There's time enough, but none to spare." When Charles W. Chesnutt penned this phrase, he was quite cognizant of the complex American race relations that existed during the postbellum period. Chesnutt recognized that time was of the essence if real social, moral, and political progress was to occur in the United States. In his novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt explores how and why race relations were constructed by shedding light on the anxieties of white Americans and struggles of Black Americans in a race-prejudiced South. As Chesnutt fictionalizes the North Carolina Wilmington massacre of 1898, he maintains his focus on the multifaceted experiences of Black Americans to stimulate white consciousness of the injustices committed against Black Americans. Though the novel was written with an optimistic ending over a century ago to awaken moral consciousness and ignite social change, Chesnutt's depiction of the "unjust spirit of caste which is so insidious as to pervade a whole nation, and so powerful as to subject a whole race and all connected with it to scorn and social ostracism" is still vitally relevant and continues to pervade a whole nation–a nation that democratically values liberty, equality, and justice (Harrell 35). Through psychological realism, Chesnutt's *Marrow* illustrates the perceived threat of Black domination that white supremacist ideologies concretized during the late nineteenth century, while simultaneously portrays the racial terror experienced by many Black Americans at the time. This mode of writing, as opposed to a strict historical account or romanticized version of United States tragedies, is effective in its depiction of characters' ambitions, actions, and motivations, and invites readers to consider individual experiences rather than fixate on a generalized account of universal atrocities. Thus, Chesnutt's novel complicates the sociopolitical origins of race relations in the Southern United States through representations of myriad and multidimensional Black experiences, lynching, race riots, and death at the hands of white supremacists. The psychological elements of Chesnutt's realism ultimately underscore the limited choices and lack of mainstream political agency Black Americans possessed during the postbellum period.

To understand the construction of complex race relations in the United States, I will begin by discussing the interminable psychological and sociopolitical effects of slavery and lynching for Black Americans during the Reconstruction period. Kidada E. Williams, a historian who studies the internal effects of racial violence against African Americans, proposes that to resolve the lynching fixation, it is important to study the lived experiences of both Black and white Americans who lived in the South after the abolition of slavery. She states that "the individual and collective memories and narratives of perpetrators, victims, witnesses, and their descendants" should be accounted for rather than generalizing the acts of lynching or moment in time itself (325). Generalizing lynching, slavery, or the Wilmington massacre fails to recognize also the private and interpersonal forms of violence that haunted Black Americans for generations. During the postbellum period, many white Americans in the South refused to abandon their ties to slavery despite emancipation laws. These laws, while not always honored, effectively upended the racial hierarchy between white and Black Americans, thus producing great anxiety among white Southerners. Williams discusses the nature of white Americans' anxiety by stating that, "[w]hites fearful of competing with cheaper black labor or interacting with black people without the buffer of slavery between them joined the former operators of slavery to resurrect the antebellum social order" (328). Reconstruction laws granted Black men and women the opportunity to obtain an education, property, political agency, and an opportunity to control their bodies and livelihood. White Americans felt threatened by this freedom and, unable to use the institution of slavery as a legal force to subjugate Black lives, they turned to organized social clubs and extralegal violence, such as lynching, segregation and physical and psychological aggressions, to disempower and terrorize Black Americans.

Characters like Captain McBane, Major Carteret, and General Belmont-otherwise known as "The Big Three" in Chesnutt's *Marrow*-embody the racial angst described by Williams through their establishment of a social club. In an effort to combat laws that allowed for the social advancement of Black Americans, the group of men devise a plan to reestablish white supremacy and order: "We are going to put the [n-word] down because we want to, and think we can; so why waste our time in mere pretense?" (Chesnutt 81). Their confidence in uttering such a blatantly racist statement exemplifies how the white antebellum mentality persisted regardless of emancipation laws and exposes the motivations behind white uprising. The southern, prejudiced notions that Black Americans were predisposed to be biologically and socially inferior, and that white power should dictate Black livelihood, are pervasive psychological ideologies that govern the minds of The Big Three and white supremacists alike. White supremacists did not want to accept a society where equality reigned, so they made it their duty "to escape from the domination of a weak and incompetent electorate and confine the negro to that inferior condition for which nature had evidently designed him" (Chesnutt 79). They formed social groups where they would privately discuss the racial imbalance and threat of Black domination they experienced, and resolved to restore white power and Black subservience.

While it is important to examine the internal anxieties of white Americans to resolve not only the lynching fixation, but also the fixation on white supremacy, it is perhaps even more important to consider the gruesome racial terror Black Americans experienced

throughout the postbellum period. As declared by McBane in the novel, the South was "a white man's country, and a white man's city, and no [n-word] has any business here when a white man wants him gone!" (Chesnutt 252). This discriminating statement remained at the heart of Southern tradition, despite the abolition of slavery. Black Americans living in the South, regardless of their social positionings, feared and had to undergo the violence this tradition engendered whether or not they adhered to this belief. Chesnutt's psychological realism captures a multiplicity of Black lived experiences that Williams aims to uncover in her article: the experiences of those who submit to white authority; those who passively critique white supremacy; and those who outwardly and unapologetically contest any form of white power. The single characteristic shared across these experiences, however, is that the lives of Black people were violently affected by the Southern race war.

Throughout his story, Chesnutt portrays the psychological effects of white supremacist terror against Black people during the postbellum period and, specifically, the Wilmington massacre of 1898. Through characters like Mammy Jane and Jerry, Chesnutt exhibits the experiences of those who have internalized the antebellum social order, or who would rather submit to white dominance than live in constant fear of death or violence. Both characters are socially situated under the white ruling class and are therefore influenced by conflicting interests. While discussing the social politics of the old and new generations of Black Americans with Major Carteret, Mammy Jane states, "I's fetch' my gran'son' Jerry up ter be 'umble, an' keep in 'is place. An' I tells dese other [n-word] dat ef dey'd do de same, an' not crowd de w'ite folks, dey'd git ernuff ter eat, an' live out deir days in peace an' comfo't. But dey don'min' me – dey don' min' me!" (Chesnutt 44). Mammy Jane's inner thoughts are two-fold: Willie J. Harrell, Jr. argues that Mammy Jane "represents the 'relic of antebellum time'," and characterized her death as a representation of Chesnutt's desire to rid the South of this vicious antebellum tradition (36-37). However, I argue that Mammy Jane's submissiveness, regardless of how representative it is of antebellum tradition, appears to be interconnected to her social well-being. By "keep in [her] place" and "not crowd[ing] de w'ite folks," she is able to live a comfortable life with a room to sleep in and food to eat. This analysis can also be extended to Jerry, who mutters to himself: "I'm gwine ter keep my mouf shet an' stan' in wid de Angry-Saxon race, – ez dey calls deyse'ves nowadays, – an' keep on de right side er my bread an' meat. W'at [n-word] ever give me twenty cents in all my bawn days" (Chesnutt 90). Chesnutt's psychological realism helps readers understand Jerry and Mammy Jane's confined place within the Southern racial caste system–a system that did not serve the interest of poor Black individuals or the indentured class. Accordingly, as a method of survival, a method to "git ernuff ter eat, an' live out deir days in peace an' comfo't," Jerry and Mammy Jane complied with the demands of their oppressors and succumbed to their dominance. Nonetheless, the subservience of Mammy Jane and Jerry is simply one of the many Black experiences that Chesnutt depicts in his novel.

Another prominent Black experience showcased in the novel is that of Dr. William Miller, whose inner thoughts reveal the conflicting forces preventing him from engaging in the eventual race war that transpires. It is imperative to examine the sociopolitical progression of Dr. Miller's character to understand why he assimilates to white culture, and equally important to observe how and why his identity shifts at the end of the novel. Dr.

Miller has overcome both systemic and educational barriers to earn respectability and an abundance of wealth. Unlike Jerry and Mammy Jane, he is able to procure his own "bread an' meat." Yet, despite his economic advancement, and because he lives in the prejudiced South, he cannot evade the everyday racism he experiences. For example, while he is riding on the train to the hospital to perform a surgery, Dr. Miller is forcefully relocated to the "colored section" of the train by the conductor. He adheres to policy and moves to the back of the traincar; likewise, when he is not allowed to assist in the subsequent surgery, he accepts the blatant discrimination and does not challenge white authority. The detachment, distance, and repression exhibited by Dr. Miller are complex behaviors, given that his economic prosperity and status remain dependent upon his relationships with and proximity to white Southerners. If he challenges the racism he experiences, he risks losing white respectability, thus dwindling his economic gain. Furthermore, it will justify the violence and prejudices already inflicted upon his race. Chesnutt's psychological realism reveals how challenging white supremacy is often ineffectual in the South: "while every such crime, committed by a colored man, would be imputed to the race, which was already staggering under a load of obloquy because, in the eyes of prejudiced and undiscriminating public, it must answer as a whole for the offenses of each separate individual" (Chesnutt 114). This psychological component provides access to Black characters' conflicting emotions, ultimately rendering the sympathy of Chesnutt's readers for individuals like Dr. Miller.

The trajectory of Chesnutt's psychological realism does not end with Dr. Miller's experience. Chesnutt also introduces Josh Green, a direct foil to Dr. Miller, to further explicate Dr. Miller's actions and offer a glimpse into another complex Black experience in the South. According to Jae H. Roe in his 1999 essay, Josh is introduced "as a stronger, blacker, and–above all–freer counterpoint to the meek and ideologically inscribed Miller" (236). Josh is an autonomous figure who refuses to submit to white supremacist authority. He tells Dr. Miller, "I ain' no w'ite folks [n-word], I ain'. I don' call no man 'marster'," to differentiate himself from Black folks who are accepted by white Southerners and who choose to accept a socially inferior position in the South (Chesnutt 114). Josh's actions and reactions are relatively distinct from the aforementioned Black characters because they are informed by his vengeance. It is described, for instance, that Josh witnesses his father die at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan when he is only ten years old, which evidently torments him throughout his adult life. Josh refuses to accept the injustices enacted against his family and the Black community in the South: he "swo' den, 'way down deep in [his] hea't, little ez [he] wuz, dat some dat er 'nother [he]'d kill dat man" (111). Contrary to Dr. Miller's perspective, the racial genocide and terrorism perpetrated by white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan are not "a page of history which most people are glad to forget" (111). Chesnutt's psychological realism, while not negating the collective, exposes the individual experiences affected by the violence of the Klan, the Wilmington massacre, and the Southern race war. Dr. Miller's racial consciousness is reignited by Josh's individual perspective, which Roe reasons to be Chesnutt's own "coming-to-consciousness, his awakening to the concrete realities of Southern blacks, and his identification with his people" (236). If this proves true, it is owed to the myriad and multidimensional Black experiences informed by generations of racial terror, suffering, and injustices across the United States. Nevertheless, during the postbellum

period, Black consciousness (as exemplified in Dr. Miller and Chesnutt) and Black autonomy (as seen in Josh) agitated white Americans into crafting a race war that woudl reestablish the social and political authority of white supremacist ideology.

Considering the effects of the antebellum period on race relations, I will now examine how the ascendency of white supremacist hegemony and ideology justified violence against Black Americans. The attempted lynching of Sandy Campbell, Mr. Delamere's Black servant who submits to white dominance, is a particularly significant representation of the physical consequences of white supremacist ideologies prevalent in the South. Despite his "faithful, docile, respectful, and self-respecting" qualities, Sandy is publicly condemned as a "brutal, lascivious, and murderous" man accused of assaulting and murdering Polly Ochiltree, a white woman (Chesnutt 181, 185). White supremacist men and women immediately strip Sandy of his humanity and convict him without a proper trial; no physical evidence or testimony are required to support their conviction.. Through this scene, Chesnutt depicts the sociopolitical climate of the South that left Black Americans vulnerable to the violence of white supremacist terrorism.

Chesnutt's realism captures the psychological torment experienced by many Black Americans during the Wilmington massacre of 1898 through his representation of Sandy's attempted lynching and the uprising of the race riots. In her article, Amy Louise Wood describes lynching acts as one of the most traumatizing and oppressive forms of terror and intimidation that Black Americans were subjected to because it served as a spectacle for white authority: lynching acts were "the 'primal narrative' that told the story of all the everyday humiliations and hostilities that [African Americans] endured under Jim Crow" (758). The psychological damage inflicted by the spectacle of lynching is irreparable in Chesnutt's fictionalized version of Wilmington. For example, when Mr. Delamere visits Sandy in his prison cell, Sandy is overcome with emotions and immediately begs for his release: "Oh, Mars John! Is you fell from hebben ter he'p me out er here? I prayed de Lawd ter sen' you, an' – here you is! Oh, Mars John, git me out er dis place!" (Chesnutt 202). Sandy fears one more night in prison because he knows that his Black body and life are in the hands of murderous white supremacists. Sandy's outcries echo throughout the pages of the novel and articulate the psychological torment of awaiting an inevitable and unjust death sentence.

Despite the news of Sandy's innocence, the unsettled race relations were still at an unprecedented height, which further agitated Black Americans' racial terror in the novel. The Black community, having heard of the murder of a white woman by a Black man, and very knowingly presumed that the white population will convict and lynch any Black person based on suspicion alone, feared for their lives and the lives of their community members. Chesnutt illustrates this haunting racial terror and criticizes the nation's betrayal when he describes the Black community's need to disappear from public view: "the American habit of lynching has so whetted the thirst for black blood that a negro suspected of crime had to face at least the possibility of a short shrift and a long rope" (Chesnutt 179). On several occasions during the race riots, Black characters in the novel seek refuge in the close quarters of houses and behind bushes. They understand their limited choices: submit to white dominance, seek refuge, or die. Racial prejudice was, and *still* is, an infectious disease: it is a social evil that

obstructs liberty, equality, justice, and humanity while endangering and tormenting the lives of an entire population of people.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive sociopolitical origins and psychological realism in Chesnutt's work, there exists opponents who disapprove of Chesnutt's representation of race relations and Black acquiescence. For instance, Ryan Jay Friedman critiques Chesnutt's dependence on miscegenation for Black survival in his 2007 essay. He asserts that Chesnutt contributes to the same notions of white supremacy characterized in his novel by de-historicizing Blackness and relies instead on Black absorption of physiological whiteness (53). This argument is supported by the desperate efforts of Jerry–the porter who works at Major Carteret's newspaper–to lighten his hair and skin. Friedman classifies Jerry's actions as Chesnutt's "cosmetic fantasies" that reinforce the degeneracy of the Black race (57). Similarly, another critic suggests that Chesnutt's characterization of pairs and doppelgängers in the novel, such as Janet and Olivia, Major Carteret and Dr. Miller, endorse the interdependence of Black and white Southerners in their fight for survival (Mueller 51). Though elements of miscegenation and interdependence can be observed throughout Chesnutt's *Marrow*, they do not undermine the novel's clear denunciation of white supremacy and the country's violent marginalization of Black Americans. Chesnutt does not propose miscegenation or interdependency as solutions to the race problem permeating the South; rather, he understands the pervasive, oppressive, and degrading spirit of race prejudice which causes individuals like Jerry and Mammy Jane to submit to white supremacist power or risk death. Chesnutt affirms that if any form of resistance is made to white supremacy, "[t]hey would kill us in the fight, or they would hang us afterward–one way or another, we should be doomed" (282). Chesnutt's accurate and humanizing portrayal of Black acquiescence in the postbellum South complexifies the experiences of Black Americans living in a country wherein their political and social agencies were consistently negated.

Despite Chesnutt's attempt to promote social change and elevate white consciousness to recognize Black American experiences against oppressive forces, it is unfortunate that the race relations depicted in the novel remain relevant over a decade after his novel's publication. In the last few years, the very nation Chesnutt criticizes in *The Marrow of Tradition* has been home to: a "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, spearheaded by Neo-Nazis; far-right riots at Capitol Hill promoting a racist agenda; numerous white supremacists' counterprotests to Black Lives Matter gatherings; and an overwhelming amount of racial discrimination and violence against Black Americans (*AP News*). The race relations that pervaded the American South over a decade ago–the unjust spirit of caste, the racial threat that fuels white supremacy, and the atrocious psychological torment experienced by Black Americans–are *still* a haunting sociopolitical force that pervades the United States today. Black acquiescence, whether it is submitting to white hegemonic authority or seeking refuge from it, is *still* a form of survival for many Black Americans. Take, for instance, the probability of a Black person being shot and killed by a police officer in the United States: *The Washington Post* reports, as of December 15, 2021, 1,557 Black Americans were killed by a police officer. Black Americans "account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, but are killed by police at more than twice the rate of White Americans" (*Washington Post*). The disproportionate number of deaths regurgitates the incessant violence inflicted upon Black

bodies and the racial terror experienced in return, even after decades of supposed liberty, equality, and justice in the U.S.

Chesnutt's longing to awaken white consciousness through his faithful, psychological representation of race relations in the South has been hindered by societal forces much greater than white supremacy. If white supremacist ideologies continue to occupy sociopolitical spaces as they currently are, the psychological racial terror experienced by Black Americans will persist. True liberty, equality, and justice cannot be actualized without the eradication of oppressive sociopolitical powers that perpetuate anti-blackness and white hegemony. If real social, moral, and political change regarding race relations between white supremacy and Black acquiescence does not occur now, one hundred and twenty more years will pass, and Chesnutt's realism will remain hauntingly relevant. "There is [*still*] time enough, but none to spare."

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Bridge-Building Between Afro-Latinx Cultures in the United States and the Caribbean in the Poetry of Nicolás Guillén

by Andrew A. Leung

Between the United States and nations of the Caribbean, Afro-Latinx pioneers in areas of art, music, and poetry negotiate between identities from each respective place, linking cultures. Nicolás Guillén, a Cuban poet, occupies a cross-cultural and interstitial positionality between African American cultures and Afro-Latinx cultures of the Caribbean. By collaborating with and drawing inspiration from prominent poet Langston Hughes, Guillén writes poetry that can be viewed in a hemispheric and diasporic context. Guillén's poetry discusses Afro-Cuban issues and draws on the *son*, a musical form of the African diaspora. Just as Hughes was inspired by jazz and blues music in his poems, Guillén's poems parallel the form and structures of the *son*, which has its roots in Yoruban musical culture. Guillén's poetry, such as "Tú No Sabe Inglé" ("Don't Know No English") and "Ayé Me Dijeron Negro" ("Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky"), translated by Hughes and Ben Frederic Carruthers into African American Vernacular English (AAVE), contributes to bridge-building between Latinx and African American cultures. These texts and translations illuminate the transnational implications of issues like colorism, white supremacy, and racial passing.

Defying national borders, anti-Blackness has deleterious effects on Latinx populations throughout the Americas. Guillén's poetry that interprets cultures in the United States and the Caribbean exposes these sordid realities. Moreover, his texts reveal a hemispheric Black culture. Literary scholar Roland E. Bush argues that Guillén's poetry is a response to "the inflexible hegemony of European cultural (and particularly aesthetic) values and a recognition of his marginality in relation to them" (5). Guillén's "Don't Know No English," an example of dialogical poetry, uses the language of a uniquely American pastime—baseball—in a Spanish poem for the purpose of dramatizing the transnational conflicts of culture and language between African American and Afro-Cuban cultures. In this poem, Guillén depicts Manuel's cultural and romantic difficulties through dialogue. It is salient to note that these conflicts are also emotional; the speaker, despite knowing much English, cannot even say

"yes" (line 4). This emotional conflict is transnational, linking language from the United States to Cuba. The unique dialect of Spanish used in the poem, known as *criollo* Spanish, underscores how translation can be both an art form and a mode of expression. When the speaker brings these features into English, this is not a mistake and resists the title of "Don't Know No English." Both Manuel and the speaker of the poem embrace this translation into the vernacular to express themselves linguistically.

Guillén's poetry discusses other issues such as racial passing that appear across the African diaspora. "Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky" features discussions and depictions of transnational phenomena that beset Black communities across the Americas, such as internalized racism and passing. This poem, among other poems by Guillén, creates links and bridges between cultures from the United States and the Caribbean that ultimately forge a hemispheric Black culture in the process. It offers a critique through the grandson's attempt to pass as a white. He also blames his grandmother for his Blackness—"I know who your grandma is"—a demonstration of the transnational phenomenon of colorism and internalized racism that affect Black people across national borders in both the Caribbean and the United States (line 6). Guillén's poem deals with gendered Blackness that is matrilineal. Blackness is portrayed as being passed down from female members of families, such as the grandmother. Due to his internalized racism, the grandson views Blackness as something that should be blamed on another person; his grandmother becomes the target of his frustrations. The dialogue depicted in the poem reveals this matrilineal Blackness as well as the class divide that has been racialized and gendered; this divide sets the characters in the poem apart from each other. In his article "The Cuban Poetry of Nicolás Guillén," scholar Angel Augier writes that people of African descent in the Americas were "despised if not persecuted because they arose from an oppressed social class" (30). The categories of race and class are intertwined, and Guillén's poetry embodies this issue.

"Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky" also features musical elements of the African diaspora that have their roots in Yoruban musical culture of West Africa. Guillén wrote poetry based on the *son* musical form, while his inspiration, Hughes, wrote poetry informed by his love of jazz and the blues. Guillén acknowledges this influence in his collection of poetry, aptly entitled "Motivos de Son." Inspired by what Hughes had done with AAVE, linking musical and poetic forms, Guillén's poetry is written in the Afro-Cuban vernacular known as *criollo*. These musical genres—the *son*, the blues, and jazz—include interactive elements between listener and performer in the form of devices such as antiphony. This call-and-response structure that is also evident in Guillén's poetry is interactive and functions like a dialogue. His use of antiphony demonstrates that internalized racism is a social and communal issue, such as when the community admonishes the grandson for his desire to pass as white in the poem.

The authenticity of writing in the Spanish *criollo* dialect is notable because it is a nonstandard dialect of the language. This parallels Hughes's and Carruthers's creative choice to translate Guillén's poetry into AAVE as opposed to Standard English. Since these poems utilize nonstandard varieties of language, there is a sense of reality that carries over into their depictions and discussions of issues surrounding gender, race, and class. This raises larger questions about the relative positions of these dialects in relation to their respective standard

varieties, since both AAVE and *criollo* Spanish are "marginalized dialects" (Kutzinski 147). Although bridge-building between cultures is fostered through the use of these unique and authentic language varieties, there are certainly limits to these connections as well. Difficulties in translation are inevitable, irrespective of which language is being translated. AAVE, used by Hughes and Carruthers, and *criollo* Spanish, used by Guillén, are not one and the same. These nonstandard dialects, as Vera Kutzinski notes in her 2012 book *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas*, are both "marginalized in relation to one or more ethnocenters" (147). These dialects, she argues, are not necessarily identical for the sole fact that they are both nonstandard. This gives rise to the limits in bridge-building that Guillén's poetry and their translations into AAVE can encounter, for controversies surrounding translation abound. Though it can be argued that translations of his poetry have the ability to perpetuate stereotypes of language such as those associated with minstrelsy, it can also be contended that the vernacular conveys authenticity, especially when writing about complex transnational issues. Nevertheless, Nicolás Guillén's poetry, along with its translations by Hughes and Carruthers, reveals a hemispheric Black culture, dealing with phenomena of race, gender, and class that transcend national boundaries throughout the Americas.

The internal conflict between African American and Afro-Caribbean cultures is also evident in Guillén's poetry. As literary scholar Belén Rodríguez-Mourelo asserts in her 1999 essay, in Guillén's time, "being Black in the United States meant to be part of the oppressed, the ones—the Other—with no rights, no respect, and no inclusion or participation in the nation's destiny" (41). The Otherness implicated in being Black in the United States leads to cultural conflicts between nations, and Guillén's poem "Don't Know No English" uses uniquely American activities to depict this struggle. When the "'Merican gal comes lookin' fo'" Manuel in the poem, he simply says "etrái guan, / de etrái guan y guan tu tri," mimicking striking out in baseball (5, 7-8). Employing the uniquely American metaphor of "striking out," but using the *criollo* dialect in orthography and pronunciation, lays bare the cultural conflict that Manuel faces. Rodríguez-Mourelo contends that this "separation from the white one" is an "evolution of the concept of 'double-consciousness'" that W.E.B. Du Bois originally introduced along with his metaphor of the Veil (41). African Americans must see themselves through the eyes of people of color as well as white Americans; Manuel carries into his pronunciation of English words *criollo* elements, such as the elision of the "s." He uses a uniquely Afro-Cuban language variety to describe an American sport. Though the speaker of the poem censures Manuel for his inability to pronounce the English word "yes" correctly, the deletion of the final consonant of the word to form "ye" is a feature carried over from *criollo*. The speaker's failure to acknowledge this linguistic complexity might be explained through Augier's point that "the slaveholders' mentality with its 'white supremacy' concepts kept the Negroes in a kind of second-class category," even after the ending of slavery (31). Even linguistically, white supremacy relegates other dialects to secondary statuses. The linguistic Otherization of Blackness reduces Spanish dialects to mere mistakes in speaking English. In fact, with the prescriptivist linguistic mentality the speaker holds, Manuel may even be accused of not knowing "proper" Spanish because of his nonstandard expressions, such as

elisions of the "s." Guillén, through this linguistic tension, reveals a cultural conflict that spans from linguistic expressions to cultural pastimes.

Manuel's own name is another linguistically salient aspect of "Don't Know No English" because of the nonstandard Spanish name, "Bito Manué." First, the *criollo* dialect includes liquid deletion as part of its phonological processes, eliding the "l" sound. It is plausible that Manuel's given name is Victor, considering the closeness in the sound of the <b> and <v> phonemes in Spanish. Guillén, as Kutzinski argues, "constructs a poetic expression within the particularities of" his language (41). The links between Afro-Cuban and American cultures are evident in this dialogical poem, as Guillén highlights the particularities of language and uses metaphors dealing with the uniquely American activity of baseball. The analogy relating Manuel's lack of romantic success to striking out in baseball resonates because of the cross-cultural connections between the United States and Cuba in particular.

A hemispheric and diasporic Black culture is also revealed in "Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky," with the use of nonstandard dialects to authentically portray issues of race and gender. Colorism and racial hierarchy within Afro-Cuban society is exposed in the lines: "Last night somebody called me darky / jes' to make me fight" (lines 1-2). Instead of using the original *criollo* dialect's "*negro*," Hughes and Carruthers translate the epithet to "darky." As with "Don't Know No English," the discussion of cultural issues is inseparable from language and the emotional connections of words. The word "darky" is a slur, while the direct English equivalent of "*negro*," does not possess the same negative connotation that "darky" does. Kutzinski writes that "*negro* does not equal Negro" and that it functions similarly to a false cognate word (147). William Scott, in his "Motivos of Translation: Nicolás Guillén and Langston Hughes," argues that lived experiences must be translated into words; however, these experiences "remain irreducible to words alone" (45). Difficulties in translation arise, as AAVE does not have the direct translation of "*negro*" from *criollo*. The experience of being called a *negro* and being made aware of one's own race is challenging to translate for readers of the English translations of Guillén's poetry. However, the grandson "is a darky, too, all right" (4). The speaker admonishes the grandson for his attempt to pass as white and hide his Black identity. Though the grandson initially remarks the social accusation of calling the speaker a loaded term, "darky," the speaker rebukes him for his deception. The critique of passing that emerges in this poem also brings attention to internalized racism—the grandson refuses to accept his own identity as Black. This transnational phenomenon also extends to Blackness portrayed as matrilineal: the grandson blames Mama Inez for his Blackness. Through the blame placed on only the grandmother, the poem makes apparent that racial identity is inherently gendered.

"Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky" parallels Hughes' poetry, which is inspired by music of the African diaspora. While Hughes' poetry is primarily inspired by jazz and blues music, Guillén's work is influenced by the *son*. In a poem entitled "Son número 6," Guillén writes, "Yoruba soy, / Cantando voy," inextricably connecting Yoruban identity to music (lines 1-2). According to Rodríguez-Mourelo, this conveys "the universality of African experience" (45). Similarly, Hughes, in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," recalls rivers of the past and the present that link people of the African diaspora. In "Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky," Guillén utilizes antiphony, which features prominently in music and has its roots in

Africa. In the *estribillo*, or refrain, of "Mama Iné," the call-and-response structure creates an interactive dialogue between the audience and speaker in the poem. This group repetition transforms these transnational problems of colorism and blaming women for Blackness from the personal to the communal. The group, as conveyed through the recurrence of the *estribillo*, refuses to allow the grandson to continue with his deception and criticizes his attempt to pass as white.

The *son*'s origins in West African musical traditions and its influence on Cuban nationality and identity have been noted by scholars. In their essay, Antonio Benítez-Rojo and James Maraniss argue that "the music that went toward the making of a modern nationality in Cuba was the black and the mulatto" (180). Forms such as the *son* rely on a "central, lyrical voice … called the *motivo* or *letra*," and Guillén draws on this music to express Afro-Cuban issues (Scott 44). In "Last Night Somebody Called Me Darky," the clear reference to the song "Ay Mamá Inez" plainly links Guillén's poems to this music of the African diaspora. This song that embodies the stratification of race and class also includes this interactive antiphony. The *son*, which was prominent for Afro-Cuban farm workers, aligns this musical form with issues of class. Outside of this particular context, however, the song becomes distant from its link to issues of the working class. Indeed, as Benítez-Rojo notes, "the *son* itself had been the object of discrimination, being set against … music more appropriate for whites," like the fox trot (180). Once again, racism and white supremacy manifest themselves, this time through the marginalization of the *son*. This musical form, which includes Yoruban musical elements such as drumming, is not free from the influence of racism and discrimination. Scott brings attention to Guillén's recognition of the drums used in *son* music as a way of articulating transnational issues (46). Yoruban musical culture, for instance, features drumming as an integral component of religious ceremonies. Additionally, antiphony is featured in these Yoruban religious rituals, connecting culture from West Africa to the Americas. Ultimately, Guillén's poetry builds a bridge between Afro-Latinx cultures in the Caribbean and African American cultures in the United States, both situated in the context of the African diaspora.

Nicolás Guillén's poetry discusses transnational phenomena such as colorism and racial hierarchies that beset Afro-Latinx communities in the Caribbean and African American communities in the United States. Taking inspiration from the musical form of the *son*, Guillén creates poetry informed by Hughes's jazz-inspired writings. Musical forms of the African diaspora have the unique ability to be applied to poetic forms to embody these transnational issues. Specifically, Yoruban musical and cultural elements, which influence the *son*, ultimately connect to Guillén's poetry and reveal a diasporic unity. In addition to the work of his translators, Hughes and Carruthers, Guillén and his poetry reveal the difficulties in translation; while similar, AAVE is not identical to *criollo* Spanish. Although these dialects represent marginalized language varieties in relation to standard English and standard Spanish, it is reductive to view them as direct equivalents. Thus, difficulties in translation accompany difficulties in bridge-building between these cultures. However, it is clear that Guillén's interstitial positionality between Caribbean and United States cultures allowed him to craft poetry that ultimately fosters a diasporic unity.

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The Death Drive of Edna Pontellier: A Woman's Second Mirror Stage

by Celina Cooper

First published in 1899, Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* details one woman's struggle to reconcile her individual identity with that of "wife." Edna Pontellier finds herself yearning for a break in the social symbolic chain which externally established her "ideal-*I*" as "wife" through a similar process to that of Jacques Lacan's "Mirror Stage." In his piece "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function" from Seminar II, Lacan defines the mirror stage as a process that occurs during the "infans stage [that] seems ... to manifest in an exemplary situation of the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other" (76). This process of identification results in a persistent death drive in which "the symbolic order is simultaneously non-being and insisting to be ... a symbolic order in travail, in the process of coming [and] insisting on being realized" (96). The death drive is then understood as a constant impellation back into the Symbolic, prior to the establishment of a social identity within the Real. However, in *The Awakening*, Edna struggles with returning to a very different Symbolic than that of the primordial-her drive is to return to her identity before it had been established in marriage as "wife," arguably exhibiting a second feminized mirror stage. Edna constantly reflects on her childhood and seeks out her own pleasure principle; she participates in acts of destruction and submerges herself into a state of *jouissance*, which reveals a death drive unique to the female experience. Edna is a paradigm who illustrates how the social institution of marriage serves as a second mirror stage for women during the nineteenth century, ultimately shifting their identity from that of the individual to that of wife and mother. Although this extension of "mother" is worthy of its own exploration in relation to female identity, since it is not imposing but rather imposed upon by her identity as "wife," it is not within the scope of this particular scholarship. Instead, this work will focus solely on the imposition of marriage upon female subjectivity and the empirical consequences it poses on the female experience.

In his *Beyond the Pleasure*, Sigmund Freud writes that life and death instincts simultaneously exist in the form of Eros and Thanatos (40). Eros, the life instinct, encapsulates the forces that serve to maintain life, while Thanatos, the death instinct, drives individuals towards death and destruction. Edna herself embodies both instincts within the actualization of her death drive, resulting in an internal psychological dilemma as a ramification of a secondary identity association. Eros impels Edna back to her identity before marriage as it proved more sustainable for the maintenance of life. In participating in destructive behavior, Thanatos thrusts her into an undertaking of self-destruction. However, both instincts position her within a symbolic gap wherein she can resist her "social-*I*" while seeking out her "ideal-*I*," exhibiting a death drive that is a unique consequence of the reconciliation of female identity as it is innately experienced and socially prescribed during a second mirror stage.

Edna Pontellier's awakening is initially sparked by her reflections on the past and it is through these reflections that she exhibits a death drive, influenced by an Eros impulse. Through this impulse, she seeks to return to her identity prior to its establishment in the second mirror stage, as this reconfigured her from "woman" into "wife." In doing so, she aims to break the symbolic order that externally defines her identity and establishes her societal boundaries. Freud's theory of the death drive is defined as the desire to "restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has abandoned. This 'earlier state of things' must then be an old state of things, an initial form … to which it is striving to return" (Malabou 78). While this definition refers to an "initial form" of being that takes place during the infans stage before a "social-*I*" is established, for Edna, the initial form she strives to return to is that which existed before she became a wife. Throughout Chopin's novel, Edna reflects on her childhood and the experiences of her youth in which she had not yet been defined by the imposition of a husband. While on vacation with her family in the Grand Isle, Edna seeks introspective refuge in nature by spending time near the ocean, a body which represents both reflection and freedom detached from the social deterministic factors imposed by the city she resides in. While spending time with Madame Ratignolle, she reflects on "a summer day in Kentucky, of a meadow that seemed as big as the ocean to the very little girl walking through the grass, which was higher than her waist. She threw out her arms as if swimming when she walked, beating the tall grass as one strikes out in the water" (Chopin 561). Edna's referral to herself in the third person suggests that the child she was then bears a mutually exclusive identity to the one she is defined by now. For Edna, this imagined submersion into the Kentucky meadow in which she spent her youth follows an association of contiguity as her perception of the sea is precipitated by her projection of the memories and experiences preceding her second mirror stage. The meadow as the sea and vice versa represent literal and figurative dives back into her initial state before her "ideal-*I*" was established through marriage.

In ruminating on her youth, Edna also thinks back on her earlier romantic experiences and relationships that evidently did not define or transform her individual identity. She ponders that "perhaps it was [as] she traversed the ocean of waving grass [when] she had been passionately enamored of a dignified and sad-eyed cavalry officer who visited her father in Kentucky" (Chopin 562). Her affection for the cavalry officer had never been fully actualized and therefore, never fully imposing. The lack of imposition upon her individual

identity results in her experience of this romance as an "acme of bliss," which "was not for her … in the world of reality, closing the portals forever behind her upon the realm of romance and dreams" (562). The portal, then, serves as the threshold upon which the process of her second mirror stage takes place, creating an imperceptible divide between how she experiences pleasure through affection as a "woman" and how she later experiences intimacy as a "wife." As a "woman," romance is defined by bliss and passion; as "wife," it is defined by "unaccountable satisfaction" and "dissolution" due to its imposition upon her identity and its actuation of a second mirror stage that defines Edna as Other (562). The "acme of bliss" that she is unable to return to following her second mirror stage no longer exists in the Real but in the Symbolic, which results in an inevitable drive back over the identification threshold in an effort to sustain her individual self.

As the Eros impulse pushes her back towards a more sustainable mode of being, Thanatos thrusts her towards destructive behavior as an active resistance to her secondary identity as wife. Death drive is most commonly misunderstood not as an impellation to a previous state preceding the mirror stage, but as the instinct towards death and self-destruction. However, in participating in self-destructive behaviors, individuals such as Edna are unconsciously treading a fatal line that has the potential to impel them back to the same Symbolic in which they existed in their previous state. Lacan further posits destructive and self-destructive instincts as an act of negation that serves to resist or negate the external identification process that establishes Edna as wife and places her within the oppressive borders of its prescription (76). During a moment of isolation, "she was seeking herself and finding herself in just such sweet, half-darkness which met her moods … [then,] taking off her wedding ring, Edna flung it upon the carpet. When she saw it lying there, she stamped her heel upon it, striving to crush it" (Chopin 532). Her attempt to destroy her wedding ring is symbolic of the larger destruction she causes within her marriage and positions further acts of destruction as an attempt to divide herself from the marriage's imposition on her identity. However, despite her attempt, the ring remains intact just as her identity as wife always will while existing in the social symbolic order that defines her as such. After realizing she had failed to break her ring, "in a sweeping passion she seized a glass vase from the table and flung it upon the tiles of the hearth. She wanted to destroy something. The crash and clatter were what she wanted to hear" (532). Rather explicitly, the narrator describes Edna's desire for destruction and characterizes it as a consequence of her inability to detach herself from her identity as wife. The breaking of the vase and the sensory sensitivity to the "crash and clatter" also satisfy her desire to discern destruction as an external process. This scene foreshadows the ultimate form of self-destruction as an internal process, both permanent and irreparable, which proves to be her fate at the conclusion of the novel.

Outside of her marriage, Edna engages in romantic relationships with men without spousal designation and imposition. While on vacation, Edna forms a unique relationship with a man named Robert Lebrun, during which she enacts an acute pursuance of the pleasure principle serving as an innate impulse definitive of the death drive. Freud establishes the pleasure principle's role in the persistence of the death drive by stating that: "we believe that any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a path that its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension, i.e. with

avoidance of pain or with production of pleasure" (4). The tension that Edna experiences in the reconciliation of her identity as wife with her estranged identity as woman is relieved by the pleasure she feels in her relationships with men outside of her marriage because she can detach herself from the role of wife. Robert's characterization presents a contrast to that of the other men in the narrative as he does not play an imposing role in the female experience but rather a supporting one. He is a young, unmarried man, who "each summer at Grand Isle [he] had constituted himself the devoted attendant of some fair dame or damsel. Sometimes it was a young girl, again a widow; but as often as not it was some interesting married woman" (Chopin 556). The lack of imposition Robert's male subjectivity poses over Edna evidently results in her attraction towards him. She spends every moment possible with him while on her vacation, despite never fully being able to abandon her identity as wife. One day, he asks her to accompany him down to the sea, and "wishing to go to the beach with Robert, she should in the first place have declined, and in the second place have followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which impelled her" (558). Edna's desire to go with Robert is a natural and consuming impulse that allows her to again experience the "acme of bliss" that she had only been able to experience before affection became imposing upon her identity through marriage.

However, since Robert serves as Edna's primary pleasure principle, this also means that their relationship can never be fully realized without risking the same tension of imposition which she uses him to relieve. According to Lacan, "the creation of the symbol of negation permitted an initial degree of independence from repression and its consequences and, thereby, also from the compulsion (Zwang) of the pleasure principle" (886). The pleasure principle, then, only exists as a compulsion and an act of negation. In establishing a relationship with Robert, Edna's romance would no longer serve as a negating act but rather an act that ratifies and embraces the spousal role she seeks to rid herself of. After their vacation concludes, Robert travels to Mexico for an extended stay during which his presence is substituted by other various forms of satisfaction. Upon his return, they rekindle their romance and once more is Robert reinstated in his role as Edna's impulsive pleasure principle. However, as their affection towards each other grows stronger, Robert discloses to Edna: "I forgot everything but a wild dream of your some way becoming my wife" (Chopin 632). It is in this moment that Robert reinstates the same tension Edna uses their relationship to mitigate. Literary critic Kim Kwangsoon defines this moment as one in which Robert disrupts his role as Edna's pleasure principle. She argues that, "in this situation, Robert no longer becomes the very person (signifier) Edna is looking for. For this reason, Edna is not able to project herself into Robert anymore, in spite of his desperate shouting, 'Don't go… stay with me'" (109). The signifier she seeks is one that signifies a source of pleasure and the disruption of the empirical, social, and imposing identification process that positions her as wife. In proposing, Robert's signified becomes marriage. Their relationship no longer serves to restore the identity established during her initial mirror stage; instead, it threatens to reinforce the imposition of wife as an identity she wishes to abandon, creating yet another barrier between her and the Symbolic.

Prior to Robert's proposal and during his absence, Edna seeks out other romantic engagements to fulfill her need for an active pleasure principle. She encounters Alcée Arobin,

a man who is described as seductive and deceitful, yet for whom she feels no love for. Since there is little emotional attachment in their relationship, Edna has a sense of control which she lacks in marriage. Alcée shares many nights with Edna, during which he holds an "attitude [of] good-humored subservience and tacit adoration. He is ready at all times to submit to her moods, which were as often kind as they were cold" (Chopin 522). Similar to her relationship with Robert, Edna's relationship with Alcée is predicated on sexual attraction and, thus, pleasurable satisfaction. However, the nature of their relationship is not as important to Edna's establishment of the death drive as much as the repetition and replacement of the pleasure principle. Freud defines repetition compulsion under the influence of a death drive in his statement that individuals are "obliged rather to repeat as a current experience what is repressed, instead of ... recollecting it as a fragment of the past" (14) The constant engagement with and replacement of pleasure principles serves as a repetition compulsion which allows Edna to experience the intimacy she has in marriage without bearing its consequences. In seeking out Robert and Alcée, she participates in a repressive cycle that entertains the threat of imposition on her identity she seeks to escape yet never fully actualizes.

During her last few days as Mr. Pontellier's wife, Edna hosts a dinner party referred to as the *coup d'état*, during which she engages in a state of *jouissance*. This *jouissance* represents her desire for satisfaction and destruction, and to break the social symbolic chain that establishes her as wife during the process of her second mirror stage. In Seminar VII, Lacan defines *jouissance* as "not purely and simply the satisfaction of a need but as the satisfaction of a drive," and this satisfaction of a drive is fulfilled by Edna's hosting of the *coup d'état* (273). The extravagance and subsequent satisfaction of the party are not for the sake of pleasure itself, but rather a preeminent break in the chain between signified and signifier as actualized by wife and body. Many of the individuals at the party are either in attendance without their spouses or are unmarried, leaving at the door all obligation and determination over their identity. At the *coup d'état*, they are surrounded by opulent decor, engaged in lively conversation, and consume drink and food while listening to music. This dinner not only serves to bring Edna satisfaction in the form of a newly established albeit fleeting pleasure principle, but to remove her from her identity as wife within the social Real as she and her guests abandon their socially prescribed identities for the evening.

Although the party provides Edna with both enjoyment and pleasure, it also serves to take her up and out of the Real. Lee Edelman describes in his essay the symbolic purpose of such an event: "One name for this unnameable remainder, as Lacan describes it, is jouissance, sometimes translated as "enjoyment": a movement beyond the pleasure principle, beyond the distinctions of pleasure and pain, a violent passage beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law." (25) The narrator describes Edna's new identity conjured by the state of *jouissance* as: "the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone" (Chopin 618). This identification removes her from the Real and into the Symbolic, and serves as a unique pleasure impulse that briefly detaches her from her identity as wife and impels her back over the threshold of her second mirror stage. Edelman likewise asserts that "jouissance evokes the death drive that always insists as the void in and of the subject, beyond its fantasy of self- realization, beyond the pleasure principle" (25). Thus, Edna's identification as a "regal woman" is not an establishment of a newly transformed identity. Rather, it is an indication

of her positionality within the symbolic gap–one which simultaneously exists outside of the Real and within her as a subject following her second mirror stage.

Through understanding that her experiences of pleasure and *jouissance* can never be fully actualized due to their irreconciliation with her identity as a wife, Edna seeks to finalize her death drive by committing suicide. For many literary critics, the elusive nature of Edna's suicide has been a point of both discussion and contention. At the end of the novel, Edna sneaks away and returns once more to the site of her original awakening described at the beginning of the novel. Diving into the ocean, finding herself once more in the Kentucky meadows, Edna's final moments suggest that her act of suicide is not the result of a drive towards death and destruction itself but rather a movement towards the Symbolic preceding her second mirror stage. She seeks to abandon her identity as wife as she returns to the Symbolic and breaks out of the symbolic chain which has socially established her signifer. Edelman similarly touches on the inescapability of the gap between signified and signifier within the Real by stating:

> the signifier, by means of which we always inhabit the order of the Other, the order of a social and linguistic reality articulated from somewhere else; the signifier, which calls us into meaning by seeming to call us to ourselves: this signifier only bestows a sort of promissory identity, one with which we can never succeed in fully coinciding because we, as subjects of the signifier, can only be signifiers ourselves, can only ever aspire to catch up to whatever it is we might signify by closing the gap that divides us. (12)

For Edna, this "promissory identity" establishes her "social-*I*" as wife, both inescapable and irreconcilable with the signified. Only through death is she able to return to the Imaginary before her identity as wife had been established in the social Real. By moving beyond the realm of Real, Edna is able to step back into the primary state that existed before her second mirror stage. While in the ocean, Edna "looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed up for an instant, then sank again. Edna heard her father's voice and her sister Margaret's" (Chopin 639). It is in this moment that Edna can finally return to the childlike state towards which her death drive impels her.

Through suicide, Edna not only removes herself from the social symbolic order that prescribes her an oppressive identity, but also from the ideological frameworks that serve to subjugate women through the prescription of gender roles. In her essay, Jennifer Gray purports that the feminine roles the women of the novel play are rooted in ideological frameworks that dictate their identity and experience; indeed, these oppressive frameworks are inescapable and therefore Edna can only be made free in death. Gray notes how, "in death, [Edna] symbolically enters the realm of nature as she wades into 'the sea,' and becomes enfolded in its vast space of innumerable waves. Heroically, Edna escapes oppressive ideology, but tragically, does so only in death" (72). Considering the social frameworks that externally impose upon individuals ubiquitous and reductive identities, it is impossible for Edna to exist outside of the gendered framework that defines her as wife. She realizes that the threat of "wife" as an externally established identity is a constant threat–the freedom she experiences following her divorce is both fragile and temporary. Therefore, she removes herself from the threat of the imposing framework by taking her own life.

This escape from the imposing framework also presents itself to the reader symbolically through Edna's undressing and in her passing as she detaches her signified from her body as a signifier. In abandoning physical possessions such as her clothing, she abandons social determinism over female subjectivity. Then, in passing and instituting a divide between body and soul, she enters the Symbolic in which her "ideal-*I*" can be actualized without any physical basis within the Real. In her 2015 essay, Kamelia Telebian Sedehi describes the interconnections between Edna's nakedness and individuality: "As she feels free, without all those imposed obligations and duties, she takes off her clothes and becomes naked … She wanted to define the borders of her subjectivity to reach her individuality" (16). This act of undressing serves to represent the shedding of her identity in passing, and her submersion into a body of water that takes the shape of the fields of her childhood represents a return to her previous state. In discussing what Lacan refers to as the split of subjectivity, Sedehi addresses the tension between signified and signifier by suggesting that Edna's body as a signifier is defined by an external signified which she seeks to detach herself from. In the final lines of the novel, while slipping away into the dark depths of the sea, Edna thinks "of Léonce and the children. They were a part of her life. But they need not have thought that they could possess her, body and soul," and it was this possession over her holistic being that she sought to free herself from (Chopin 638). Therefore, her death is not to be interpreted as an act of self-sacrifice but the opposite; her suicide does not sacrifice her individual and primary identity but only that of "wife," as it was only this label that had been tied to her body as a *physical* signifier.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, the social positioning and identity formation of women were constantly reconsidered and renegotiated. Understanding how women experience a second mirror stage in marriage contextualizes the external identification process as it is established by a patriarchal Other. Edna's death drive, which ultimately results in her suicide, illustrates how an external signification that takes place in marriage results in the destruction of individual identity and subjectivity. In her marriage, "woman" could never be; therefore, Edna becomes "wife" in order to maintain an existence within the Real. Edna's return back to the Symbolic that precedes her second mirror stage can be understood as an act of feminist resistance. In her refusal to exist within a social Real, Edna's fate articulates the ways in which nineteenth century conceptualizations of womanhood were always already imposed upon by male subjectivity.

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The Monster Who is Our Own: Heroism and Monstrosity in the Old English *Judith*

by Sydney Brazil

In *Monster Culture*, Jerome Cohen outlines seven theses about monster theory, making the claim that the creation of a particular kind of monster says more about the culture that created it than the monster itself. In his seventh thesis "The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference," Cohen outlines how cultures focus on Othering people different from them in order to justify their own deplorable actions: colonization, racism, sexism, etc. While Cohen's argument is completely valid, it does not leave room for a specific type of monstrosity, the monster that is our own. Cohen's theses focus heavily on the monster that is outside of a community, the one that we are fighting against, that he fails to include the monster that exists both within and outside of a community's borders. Throughout the Old English text *Judith*, the character of Judith encompasses both the heroic and the monstrous because she is chosen by God to bring about the redemption of her people. Although Holofernes appears to be the obvious "monster" of the text, Judith displays several characteristics and traits that clearly identify her as monstrous or Other. This divine monstrosity also extends to God and is justified by the text, creating a dichotomy between the good community of the Hebrews and the bad community of the Assyrians. Judith's ability to exist both outside and within this good community causes her to merge the monstrous with the divine so that her actions align closely with the heroic while her essence remains entwined with the monstrous.

Despite Judith's obvious beauty, she does not use her appearance to exert control in the narrative; instead, she leads her people with her mind and actions. The text spends time describing Judith as being "sage of spirit" and a "prudent young woman", indicating that these attributes are why God chose her as the "Savior's servant" (39, 124, 73). Holofernes obviously desires her sexually, yet Judith does not use any means of seduction in the text outside of being naturally beautiful. In "Poetic Exuberance in the Old English Judith," Howell Chickering notes that, despite Judith's remarkable beauty, she does not seduce Holofernes to get what she wants; she simply exists, and her beauty draws him to her. Although some would argue that Judith is simply used by God as a means of ensnaring and executing Holofernes,

Judith is completely aware of her actions and what consequences they would have for her soul. Before she murders Holofernes, Judith prays that God would give her strength, mercy, and deliverance for what she is about to do. She prays that God would bring vengeance through her actions, but this does not mean that she gives up her free will and allows God to take over her body; she is still cognitive of the act of violence she enacts but any fears she might have had are calmed by God's presence. As she finishes her prayer, the narrative says that "her spirits were then lifted, the confidence of the saintly one restored" because Judith is given an understanding that God approves of the violence that she is about to inflict on an incapacitated man (96-7).

Although Holofernes is viewed as evil and therefore worthy of judgment, it is interesting to note that he is often described as a lesser version of God; the only true distinguishing factor between God and Holofernes is Holofernes' display of excessive behavior. For example, when Holofernes takes Judith to his bed-chamber, she sees that his bed is surrounded by, "a net all of gold to keep out flies. . . so that the baleful captain of the fighters could look through it at every military man who came therein, and not a human being could look at him, unless that braggart commanded some one of those brave in iniquity to come nearer to him for a private communication" (46-53). This gold net that surrounds Holofernes every night ensures that he can see whoever approaches him, but they are unable to look upon him unless he permits it. This panopticon model allows an omniscience that likens Holofernes to a profane God who watches people from behind a veil, too lofty to care about the needs of his people. Although Holofernes desires the power and control that God holds, his actions show that he lacks the ability to make rational decisions that would be beneficial to his people. In the essay "Postural Representations of Holofernes in the Old English Judith: The Lord Who was Laid Low," Ciaran Aruthur argues that Holofernes' excessive drunkenness excludes him from being seen on the same rational level as Judith and God. Rather than Holofernes cautioning his soldiers to be alert and focused, he encourages them to drink more wine which positions him directly against the rationality of Judith, the true hero (Ciaran 874). It is this warped sense of superiority and glory that causes Holofernes to create something as ridiculous, insulting, and paranoid as an opaque golden net. Although this image at first alludes to the way in which we may perceive God observing us from heaven, the proceeding lines of the narrative in which Judith kills Holofernes in this panopticon bed shows that the true God exerts power and works with Judith in order to restore control and freedom for his people.

The role of judge that Judith plays in which Holofernes and the Assyrian army are seen as deserving of death reflects the tone of the poem that posits the Hebrew army in opposition to the Assyrian army. This opposition highlights the Hebrew people as good and righteous whereas the Assyrians are described only in terms of their impending doom. Like Holofernes, the Assyrians partake in excess of wine and food, drinking "until they lay unconscious . . . as if they were struck dead, drained of all good" (27-8). In this way, the Assyrians are obviously seen by Judith and the Hebrew people as cursed men who are already despised by God and it is only a matter of time before God will bring judgment upon them. This kind of thinking in absolutes is reflective of how the God of the Old Testament is described; a God who participated in genocide multiple times in order to bring about the deliverance of his people (Deuteronomy 7). This particular type of monstrosity in violent excess from God reveals how

Judith is perceived as the perfect hero for the Hebrew people because she exacts vengeance for the injustice shown to her community and for the evil she sees in Holofernes and his army. This clear line between a good community and a bad community makes Judith, and God, justified in killing Holofernes and the Assyrians. In this way, the text positions readers to view Judith and God as the obvious protagonists of the story and not as outwardly monstrous as their enemies, despite the many similarities in terms of violence between the Assyrians and the Hebrews.

At the forefront of Judith's heroism is her ability to value and protect her community. Towards the beginning of the narrative, Judith is described as having a "firm belief in the Almighty", which fuels her understanding that her Hebrew community comes before any individualistic desires (5-6). Although Holofernes is the commander of a great army, he does not understand or value his community. Instead, he spends most of the time before his death overindulging in wine and food and has every intention of reveling in sexual excess with Judith as well. The fact that Holofernes does not understand or value community is what leaves him open to attack, because if his sole purpose is to preserve his community, he would never have put himself in such a vulnerable position. Holofernes is called the "gold-friend" of the Assyrians as well as the "dispenser of riches" which means that he has a responsibility to his people to not only provide for them but to be their leader and protector (21-6). The position of "gold-friend" and protector for the Hebrew people is placed, uniquely, on a woman who acts in accordance with God's divine will. In "The Cross-Gendered Gift: Weaponry in the Old English Judith," Erin Mullally argues that Judith simultaneously holds stereotypically masculine and feminine traits, traits of both the peace-weaver and the warrior, and it is this cross-gendering that makes her Othered in the eyes of the Hebrew people (257). The authority that is given to Judith creates an interesting dynamic, because it reveals that Judith is holding a space that both exists inside and outside of her community. She obviously cares for and actively protects her community, yet she is Othered at the same time because she holds the unique position of being the chosen one of God based on her purity and her wisdom.

Although Judith does not appear to have a direct line to God in the same way that many saints have in other texts, she does possess a purity of spirit and mind that brings her close to God in a way that the rest of the Hebrew people do not understand. Judith's innate ability to know the mind of God and to act on it accordingly makes her a "blessed young woman, the handmaid of Providence" (259-60). She exists on the periphery but can come and go as she chooses, which is displayed in the narrative by her spatial relationship to her community. Although much of the narrative takes place in the Assyrian city, the Hebrew fortress is the true center of the story because the Hebrews are God's chosen community. After Judith decapitates Holofernes and brings his head back to the Hebrews, she calls over the wall to her people to tell them that she brings "redemption from the trials [they] have long endured" (156-7). As soon as they realize that it is Judith calling to them, they rush to open the gates, because the "heart of every person in that mead-fortress was gladdened as soon as they understood that Judith had come back to her homeland, and then unhesitatingly they reverently let her in" (164-7). This passage not only shows that they let her in with reverence because of her Otherness, but that they welcomed her back into the center of their community after she had been on the margins with the Assyrians. Unlike other types of monstrous

creatures, Judith is not banished to the periphery, but she must nonetheless go outside to the borders of her community to fight for them and bring about their deliverance.

The main way that Judith appears monstrous is in her clear link to the divine. In Debra Higgs Strickland's article entitled "Monsters and Christian Enemies," Strickland argues that although some of the worst forms of monstrosity involved the inability to convert to Christianity, there is a particular type of monstrosity in Medieval Christianity that involved descriptions of God and his saints. This observation, Strickland notes, shows that there is a positive form of monstrosity that is even "a way of signaling the entirely different form of God himself" (Strickland 51). Monstrosity, in this case, would involve instances or people that are so Othered and different that they can only induce pure awe. Judith does not appear awe-inspiring at first, with the only description of any supernatural quality is her beauty, however, the way in which she holds command over the Hebrew army and exacts such extreme violence on Holofernes makes her so outside of the realms of normalcy that she can only be marked in terms of profundity and awe (13). The severity of Judith's violence mixed with her ethereal beauty and wisdom should cause communities to be afraid of her; however, because the Hebrew community knows and takes comfort in the fact that she fights for God, they can rest in the knowledge that she may not be like other leaders, but she will still bring them victory as God's chosen hero.

One of the most significant moments in the narrative that highlights Judith's Otherness is how she is described as "ides aelf-scinu" or an "elf-shiny lady" (14). At first, this seems to be a strange way to describe the beauty of a woman, but it reveals more about her character than just a superficial facade. In C.S. Lewis' book *The Discarded Image,* he categorizes different beings in the Medieval world and their significance to their worldview; one of these categories is the Longaevi. According to Lewis, the Longaevi, or "long-livers", are creatures that display supernatural characteristics and who exist on the margins. Lewis calls these creatures fairies, but the Longaevi are not necessarily stereotypical versions of fairies that may come to mind. Dr. Kate Koppelman gives an interesting insight into the type of fairy that Lewis is describing in "Fearing My Neighbor: The Intimate Other in Beowulf and the Old English Judith." Koppelman states that the Old English word "aelf" has connotations that could mean "elf", "fairy", or "spirit," but that it could just as easily mean "goblin" or "incubus" (Koppelman 13). The ambiguity revolving around the translation of "aelf-scindu" only serves to add to the depth of Judith's character; whether or not Judith is being referred to as an elf of an incubus does not take away from the fact that the Old English word "aelf" carried many otherworldly meanings. Other scholars have argued that Judith's actions force the narrator to describe her in ways that would not relate her to other "normal" kinds of women. In "Feminine Heroism in in the Old English Judith," Thijs argues that the Old English phrase "ides aelf-scinu" is used because the act of a woman killing a man was so outside the bounds of femininity that ethereal, non-human attributes needed to be used so as not to conflict with her femininity (49-50). However, I argue that this phrase is used in order to align Judith with the divine, and therefore with the monstrous. This phrase shows that she is something outside of the bounds of her community, because she is bestowed with divine gifts from God that make her the only person capable of bringing about the salvation of her community.

The most shocking aspect of Judith's Otherness is her capacity for extreme violence. Although some may argue that Judith's excessive violence towards Holofernes is simply a robotic performance in which Judith is acting purely as God's instrument without any free will, Judith's prayer before she kills Holofernes indicates that she just needed encouragement from her temporary doubt. If Judith was only acting on God's behalf and had no say in the matter, then she would not have paused after she unsheathed her sword to ask for God's mercy and guidance. It is only after her spirits are restored that she pulls Holofernes' head back and strikes his neck with his sword. She is unable to kill him with the first blow but hits him a second time "so that his head rolled away unto the floor" (111). The narrative goes on to say that Holofernes' spirit then leaves his body and goes to hell where he will remain "ever and a day, time without end, in that dim realm, devoid of the comfort of hope" (120-1). The swift journey of Holofernes' soul into hell indicates God's blessing on Judith's actions and emphasizes the wickedness and apparent need for execution that Holofernes deserved. This execution leaves no room for misinterpretation: Holofernes had to be murdered because he was wholly evil and deserved his disgraceful death because of what he had done to the Hebrew people. Judith Kaup argues in her essay, "Wise Aggressors and Steadfast Victims: The Shift in Christian Feminine Ideals from Old to Middle English Religious Poetry" that the killing of Holofernes begins Judith's "heroic chain structure" where a hero's actions serves "to catalyze the heroic potential of his/her community" (68). It is evident that the death of Holofernes does propel Judith into a more active role, almost as if she gains confidence and inner inspiration from the divine. Yet, in "Bloody Signs: Circumcision and Pregnancy in the Old English Judith," Susan Kim argues that Holofernes' beheading is simply a symbol of castration. Because Holofernes was going to rape Judith, she not only kills him but chooses to behead him and take his head as her trophy, all of which may have sexual undertones. Although this is an interesting and compelling argument, I would argue that the emphasis on Judith's intellectual abilities would make her decision to decapitate Holofernes and take his head with her purely of a practical nature, rather than merely symbolic. There is no indication in any other part of the narrative to suggest Judith ever doing anything outside of what would be beneficial for her community and critical to their freedom from the Assyrians.

Although he does not explicitly speak or appear in the story, the character of God exhibits monstrous traits that are similar to Judith's monstrosity. The text positions us to see God and Judith as the protagonists of the narrative, however, an outside observer would note that there is certainly something monstrous in a God who inspires his hero to murder a man in his sleep and to incite an army to inflict violence on another army while they are sleeping, drunk, and have no one to lead them. The text reminds us that the Hebrew people had "long endured the insults of foreigners, the abuse of heathens", in which case there is no reason why they would not want to be freed from their oppressors (113-4). Rather than punishing his people for the almost complete annihilation of the Assyrians at the end of the narrative, the victory is welcomed and even rewarded by God. The Hebrew army, incited by Judith, attacks the Assyrians with such force,

> until the greatest part of the army lay devastated by war . . . slashed by swords, to the delight of wolves, and also for the enjoyment of blood-thirsty birds. Those who survived fled, a shield-troop of the despised. Behind them came a company of Hebrews blessed by

victory, magnified in glory; the Lord God, almighty ruler, had come graciously to their aid. (291-301)

This description of the battle's aftermath highlights the inversion of the Assyrians as the "bad" community that deserves to be brutally destroyed, in contrast with the goodness of God's community which needs to be preserved. The Hebrew army is therefore justified in killing the Assyrians since God approves and blesses his people for their violence. Although Judith does not join in the battle at the end, the Hebrew warriors give her credit for her leadership by saying that their victory is all "through the wise instruction of Judith, that brave young woman" (332-3). Because she has direct inspiration from God, Judith is the true leader of her people and therefore takes the symbolic place of God in order to protect and guide them once they are free.

The interplay of divinity and monstrosity in the Old English *Judith* reveals a complex and disturbing correlation between the heroic and the monstrous. Despite the problematic monstrosity that already occurs within religion itself, Judith reveals the thin line that exists between the excessiveness of the Assyrians and the equally excessive violence of God and Judith. The only redeeming qualities about God and Judith's violence lie in the fact that their actions revolve around aiding and helping their own community rather than in an individualistic desire. If Judith's violence had been more akin to Grendel, or even Beowulf, in which bloodlust and glory exist above the benefit of the community, then a woman such as Judith would easily be labeled a "monster" without any attribution to heroism. Instead, the supernatural qualities that make Judith God's chosen one only enhance her value in the Hebrews' eyes. In addition to her intentions, if Judith were to lead the Assyrians rather than the Hebrews, then those qualities would instantly turn her into an enemy dispersing fear and dread rather than admiration. However, the combination of God's guidance and blessing along with Judith's humility and sacrificial attitude towards her community make her the perfect hero for the Hebrew people: a monster that fights for them rather than against them.

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Philosophy to Fancy: Nature, Male Irregularity and the Female Imaginary in Margaret Cavendish's *Poems and Fancies*

by Sarah Moon

While it may be simple to separate our understanding of Margaret Cavendish as a philosopher from our understanding of Margaret Cavendish as a fiction writer, a coalesced approach to her work can offer important insight into how Cavendish's science and "fancy" influence one another. *Poems and Fancies* (1653), while published over a decade prior to her *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668), presents us with the early workings of Cavendish's theories of natural philosophy in an original application of the imaginative, or fancy, and scientific theory. Precisely, her theories on regularity and irregularity in pertinence to the balance of the natural world and human society are highly relevant to the themes explored in her early poetry. This paper will examine the apparent themes of nature versus man in several of her fictional writings from *Poems and Fancies* (with references to *Blazing World*), including "The Hunting of the Hare," "Of an Island," and "The Ruin of this Island," applying Cavendish's notions of regularity and irregularity from *Grounds* to draw connections between man's irregularity and an ensuing irregularity in nature. I assert that irregularity in nature *can* be governed by irregularity in man to highlight the important ecocritical implications of Cavendish's natural philosophy in her earlier works of fiction. Furthermore, her 17th century experiences as a woman, writer, Royalist, and survivor of the English Civil War offer a unique perspective we must consider as we critically process *how* she writes nature into her works. With this context, a closer examination of Cavendish's poetry reveals implicit parallels between nature and women—nature and *herself*. In application of her theories on regularity and irregularity to the relationship between man and nature, I will specifically explore male irregularity and the abuse of power and authority from which it correlates. From this, I contend that man's irregularity can inflict imbalance and chaos on the natural world, as well as within his own society, and in her critique of man's relationship with nature, Cavendish instills a female perspective based on that of her own as she assigns a female quality to the nature she poeticizes.

Cavendish's poetry on hunting serves as an excellent example of her critique of man's relationship with nature from within her space as a 17th century noblewoman. In "The Hunting of the Hare," Cavendish recounts a hare's deadly encounter with man during a hunt. Told from the perspective of the hare, Wat, Cavendish carefully details the hare's actions leading up to his fateful moment. While Cavendish's early fascination with science and observation is explored in *Poems and Fancies*, Cavendish reveals diligence in her descriptions of the hare which transcend mere scientific observation. The perspective she adopts contributes to the empathetic tone she establishes from the first lines. Important to note, according to Donna Landry, is that "hunting offered women opportunities for studying the natural world and exercising agency beyond the boundaries of domesticity" (469). Cavendish's status as an aristocratic woman meant familiarity with luxury recreations, like hunting, which puts Cavendish in a unique space as a 17th century woman and philosopher. Landry cites Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare" and "The Hunting of the Stag" as "perhaps the most extraordinary confluence of hunting and poetry in writing by a woman," praising Cavendish's "brilliant detail, invoking all five senses" (469-70). With this, we may question Cavendish's *purpose* in how she writes the hare. Published almost a decade later, Cavendish's *Orations of Divers Sorts Accommodated to Divers Places* (1662) reveals her defense for "harmless country recreations" such as "hunting, hawking, racing, and the like sports…" (66). She claims such "recreations are both healthfull and delightfull" and even supports women's involvement in hunting and similar sports (235). This contradictory shift in attitude towards hunting, however, does not negate Cavendish's curious awareness of the power dynamics between man and nature.

While it is easy to understand Cavendish's poem as a critique of hunting, Cavendish uses hunting as a *platform* to question man's relationship with nature, critiquing less the recreation itself and more the power dynamics involved in hunting. In her 1664 revision of "The Hunting of the Hare," Cavendish makes several subtle edits yet worth discussing. In line 73 of her original version, for instance, Cavendish writes "The horns kept time; *the Hunters* shout for joy," but in her 1664 edit, Cavendish replaces "Hunters" with "men." This revision underscores her criticism of *man's* relationship with nature and extends beyond a critique of the sport itself. As her poem progresses, she centers less on the hare, less on the recreation, and more on the righteous, self-centeredness of the men who partake:

For luxury, wish God would make more new,
As if God did make creatures for man's meat,
To give them life and sense, for man to eat,
Or else for sport or recreation's sake,
Destroy those lives that God saw good to make,
Making their stomachs graves, which full they fill
With murthered bodies, which in sport they kill.
Yet man doth think himself so gentle, mild,
When of all creatures he's most cruel, wild,
And is so proud, thinks only he shall live,
That God a godlike nature did him give,
And that all creatures for his sake alone

Were made, for him to tyrannize upon. (94-106)

Cavendish points to the hypocrisy of man in his tendency to think himself "gentle" and "mild" while his actions indicate otherwise. Furthermore, she reveals *pride* as a source of disregard for nature and therefore God. Man, with an inflated sense of power and pride, becomes the primary predator, not only in human society, but in nature. It is interesting, then, to consider Cavendish's empathy and how she distances herself from man in this poem. In several instances she adjusts "man" to "men" from her 1653 version to her 1664 version, a likely attempt on Cavendish to make her point more precise. The change from "man" to "men" suggests a possible shift from the ambiguous notion of mankind or human nature to refer more specifically to *male* beings.

Regardless of her intentions, the empathetic nature of the speaker in her poem separates her from the "cruel, wild" men who "tyrannize" upon all creatures they perceive lesser than themselves (102-6). Lisa Sarahsohn suggests that we might consider Cavendish's empathy through a 17th century context: "Whenever there is a choice, Cavendish chose the more organic and nurturing view of nature, not necessarily because these ideas are inherently attractive to women, but perhaps because the psychological presuppositions of the early seventeenth century associated the roles of women and nature" (295). Under this assumption, Cavendish's empathy towards nature is a subconscious attempt to fit the role of a 17th century woman. However, Landry views Cavendish's empathy as a product of her inferiority as a woman; she is empathetic *because* she can relate to the animal's subordination by the male sex. Landry notes that Cavendish "empathizes with the hare's fear and identifies with animal suffering" and argues for the role Cavendish's gender plays in activating this perspective: "Her sex aligns her with the 'shiftlesse' animal creation, subject to the superiority of masculine force" (476). While Cavendish's views on superiority or inferiority by gender across works is complex and at times contradictory, the purpose of this paper is not to discern Cavendish's true perspective on male and female roles, but rather to reveal the connections Cavendish makes between nature and women through a critique of the power *imbalances* that occur when men *abuse* their power, inherent or not. In the case of the hare, Cavendish forms implicit connections between *herself* and nature—between *woman* and nature—as she distances herself from the "tyrannic" tendencies of men and practices empathy based on the power differences between men and women. The hare, we can therefore consider, as a metaphor for women, and nature as the female space, to convey the imbalance that is inflicted by hypermasculine power.

Man's abuse of power, as explored in Cavendish's early poetry, highlights a crucial connection to her later philosophical work and her theory on irregularity. In her 1668 *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, Cavendish contends that nature and humans perform both "regular" and "irregular" actions:

> ...by reason Nature is as much Irregular, as Regular, Human Notions are also Irregular, as much as Regular; which causes great variety of Religions: and their Actions being also Irregular, is the cause that the practice of Human Creatures is Irregular, and that occasions Irregular Devotions, and is the cause of SIN. (190)

Cavendish asserts that within the scope of free will, which differs per creature ("...for, several kinds and sorts of Creatures, cannot possibly follow one and the same Prescription and

Rule"), regularity and irregularity occur depending on whether creatures "choose" to follow the "Natural Rules" prescribed to them by God (190-1). While Angus Fletcher argues that Cavendish's notion of irregularity is a "celebration of variety" on Cavendish's part, *Grounds* as well as her 1953 poetry on atomism suggest irregularity as the source of chaos and obstruction in the world (124). In her 1953 poem, "All Things are Governed by Atoms," we see the workings of her theory on irregularity as explored in *Grounds*, but in the context of atomism. Cavendish expresses that the harmonic participation of each type of atom influences wellbeing, peace, and good health through balance. At the same time, atomic incongruity is the source for war, illness, and misfortune: "Thus sickness, health, and peace and war / Are as the several atoms are" (9-10). While in *Grounds*, Cavendish cites the irregular actions of "nature's parts" as a means of imbalance and acknowledges that irregularity inflicts "pain" on nature: "... all Pain proceeds from Irregular and perturbed Motions" (123). To this, Cavendish explains that although Nature's Parts "move themselves" and are "self-knowing," they do *not* have "an infinite or uncontrollable Power," as is reserved for God. Furthermore, Cavendish notes that "some Parts may occasion other Parts to be irregular," which we may apply to our understanding of man's abuse of power in nature (117). If nature's parts may influence other parts in nature to be irregular, it seems only "natural" to assume that by this definition, man may *also* influence irregularity in nature.

Interestingly, Fletcher contends that "the widespread destruction of war is a necessary consequence of Nature's desire to keep herself entertained, for she finds any unchanging state of affairs, peace included, to be monotonous" (126). But, as highlighted by Cavendish's early poetry and later reevaluated in *Grounds*, balance may be considered nature's *intent*, and irregularity, while necessary, threatens that. Critics like Deborah Boyle agree that balance in nature was important to Cavendish. Boyle contends that for Cavendish, "the aim of Nature (and societies) is to preserve peace, order, and regularity; what counts as peace, order, and regularity is simply the state of things in Nature (or members of societies) behaving as God has decided that they should" (113). In *Grounds*, Cavendish asserts that man's capacity to sin functions as *irregular* action. Cavendish cites "Pride, Ambitions, Faction, Malice, Envy, Suspition, Jealousie, Spight, Anger, Covetousness," and "Hatred" as "Irregular Actions among the Rational Parts," which influence "Divisions, Warr, and Destruction" (207). Like nature, man has the "free will" to disobey natural law—God's law—through acts of sin, which may consequently disrupt the natural balance of nature. Therefore, we may perceive man's abuse of power as an irregular action which can disrupt nature. In addition to these theories, Cavendish's early poetry reveals flaws in Fletcher's argument and unveils how man's abuse of power can impose irregularity in nature, serving as a perpetual threat.

Like her hunting poetry, Cavendish's "Of an Island" and "The Ruin of this Island," which detail the rise and fall of a natural haven following the involvements of man, reflect parallels between nature and women which further suggest man's potential to inflict harm and imbalance through his own irregular actions. In "Of an Island," Cavendish describes a lush and fertile island that is "rich by Nature's grace; In all the world it was the sweetest place" (1-2). She assigns a female identity to the island and uses descriptors that contribute to a personified effect of both the island and her surrounding nature:

Surrounded with the seas, whose waves don't miss

To do her homage, and *her feet* do kiss.
Each wave did seem by turn to *bow down low*,
And proud to touch her as they overflow.
Armies of waves in troops high tides brought on,
Whose wat'ry *arms* did glister like the sun. (3-8)

Cavendish conveys a reverence for the island comparable to that of a queen or monarch. The sea is a loyal subject to the island, existing to serve her—to "kiss" her feet and with waves "bow down low" (4-5). Additionally, Cavendish invites martial imagery with "armies of waves" to "guard" the island and "to keep her safe" (7-12). The winds also "did serve her… blowing their trumpets loud on every side" (15-16). Cavendish sets the stage for this poem with the island, or nature, as an analogy to human society, and more specifically, to monarchy. In her gendering of the island, we can imagine the island representative of female authority. Cavendish's depiction of nature in this poem does align with Fletcher's view that "Nature is personified as a female sovereign" in Cavendish's works, more precisely, she argues, in *Blazing World* (125). But the motivations for this don't seem to align to suggest that "irregularity and authority are mutually reinforcing principles" (126). Rather, Cavendish assigns female authority to nature as a means of establishing peace and balance—to challenge the irregularity and imbalance that ensues from an abuse of male authority, both in nature and in patriarchy. While Cavendish introduces Apollo as a central male presence in the poem, his role is but to love and care for the island, a possible reference to Cavendish's own relationship with the Duke of Newcastle or additional commentary on the deserving reverence of nature by man.

Furthermore, Cavendish establishes the island as a metaphor for female authority as both a sovereign figure *and* a maternal figure: "Th'isle was their *mother*, they her children sweet…" (35). While Boyle contends that "Cavendish thought women were naturally inferior to men," she also acknowledges that "she was aware of the ways in which male power over women limited women's options" (529). Even if Boyle's conclusion is true—if Cavendish believed in an inherent superiority in the male sex—this does not bar Cavendish from creatively critiquing the ways in which men choose to exercise and at times abuse that power. Her critique of male power and authority is not an effort to prove women equal to or potentially more powerful or authoritative than men, but to create, assert, and defend women's own space in a society founded on patriarchal values, which Cavendish fundamentally and metaphorically projects in "Of an Island." Megan J. Fung comments that "the prominence of the repeated motif of the female ruler in *Poems and Fancies* is striking. By showcasing in each section ruling and productive women," she reasons, "Cavendish supplies a way for readers to interpret her labors, as that of a *domestic ruler* of her own poetic space" (36). As is apparent in her other works, "fancy" plays a critical role in her fictional endeavors, allowing Cavendish to explore imagined possibilities, one of which being the position of female authority in disregard to male power. Cavendish imagines a similar space for female authority in her later science-fiction work *Blazing World*. In response to the political unrest of patriarchal society, *Blazing World* presents us with an imagined sample of female authority, through which she establishes her "private self," according to Oddvar Holmesland. He observes that "what Cavendish seems to treasure above all is the privilege of a private artistic

space" (461). With the island, Cavendish uses her imagination to create a female space void of men's irregularity—a female haven for creativity and imagined authority that is the epitome of "regularity."

In her proceeding poem, "The Ruin of this Island," Cavendish continues her narrative of the island as it is disturbed by man's interference with nature, and consequently, God. As Cavendish cites in *Grounds*, "GOD is an Eternal Creator; Nature, his Eternal Creature. GOD, an Eternal Master: Nature, GOD's Eternal Servant" (188). God, she explains, is the source of nature, and therefore, the source of nature's rules. As such, nature not only *serves* God, but also relies on God for *balance*: "Nature, full of Irregularities. GOD knows exactly, or perfectly, Nature" (188). God, Cavendish argues, is the remedy for nature's irregularities, and "The Ruin of this Island" distinctly echoes this notion: "But those that keep the laws of God on high / Shall live in peace, in graves shall quiet lie / And ever after the gods shall be / Enjoy all pleasure, know no misery" (65-68). While the island has "lived in peace…so long as she unto the gods did pray," a shift occurs early in the poem, as the island "grew proud with plenty and with ease" (1-3). This upsets the gods, as the island becomes so overcome with pride, she disregards "their altars" and has "her own set up" in place of theirs for "divine worship" (4-6). In *Grounds*, Cavendish echoes the consequences of this, reminding us that nature cannot perform the divine acts of God; nature, although self-moving, self-knowing, and powerful, "her power be limited: for, she cannot move *beyond* her Nature" (71). The ability to create, destroy, or transfigure parts is impossible by nature, as only God is afforded such power. Still, the island attempts to take on the role of a goddess, a narrative detail reminiscent of the Emperesses' theatrical portrayal of a goddess in *Blazing World*. The Emperess, in attempt to save her native country, convinces her countrymen of her apparent divinity as she appears before them and *seems* to walk across water, alluding to biblical tales of Jesus. The countrymen are fooled into thinking the Emperess is indeed "some Celestial Creature…and they all had a desire to worship her" (242). Although the universe Cavendish creates in *Blazing World* is riddled with fictional inventions of fancy, she does not yet allow the Emperess to transcend the line that exists between divinity and nature. Instead, she must *perform* divinity. Likewise, the island's attempts at self-idolatry challenge divine power and go against the natural order the gods have established for nature. While this angers the gods, she is not capable of achieving divinity herself. It seems plausible, therefore, that the island's transition from a position of peaceful authority to one of defiance is a direct influence of *man*. As is evident in her hunting poetry, the immoral actions of men—their abuse of power over nature's creatures—can certainly support this notion. In the conclusion of "Of an Island" Cavendish warns of the potential threats of man to nature: "And in this pleasant island, peace did dwell; No noise of war or sad tale could it tell" (83-4). War, a consequence of human sin—of power motivated by pride, greed, and selfish authority—serves as the greatest threat to the otherwise peaceful and balanced nature of the island.

Following the introduction of "mortal men," Cavendish's island becomes corrupted by male irregularity. She details the war that occurs between men and the gods, who are "at great odds" with each other (12). Men, who possess "evil power" and in that power the ability to "oppose" the gods, incite anger in the gods for such disobedience:

The one pow'r cannot keep obedience long,
If disobedient power be as strong.
And, being ignorant how men will prove,
Know not how strong or long will last their love."
But may't not be the course of gods' decree
To love obedience whensoe'er it be?
They from the first a changing power create,
And for that work make destiny and fate.
It is the mind of man that's apt to range;
The minds of gods are not subject to change. (25-34)

Here, Cavendish introduces a different type of power abuse—the power of disobedience. Within man's free will, according to Cavendish, man may choose to disobey God, but in doing so, he is disobeying the natural order and provoking irregularity. In their decision to disobey the gods, the men have not only prompted war between themselves and the gods but have also exploited the island in the process, inciting chaos in a formerly peaceful haven: "Then did the Fates unto the planets go / And told them they malignity must throw / Into this island, for the gods would take / Revenge on them who did their laws forsake" (35-9). Critics like Boyle and Ellayne Fowler have pointed to the important context of war in Cavendish's fictional works, by which Fowler justifies Cavendish's preoccupation with utopian themes. "The seventeenth century witnessed a great deal of Utopian speculation in England," Fowler explains (42). Critics like Holmesland and Marina Leslie have also debated over the utopian implications of Cavendish's works, specifically *Blazing World*. Leslie notes that "all utopian thought constitutes an imaginative attempt to escape historical determinism as well as historical contingency" (21). Under this definition, we may certainly consider Cavendish's island in the "utopian" sense—that is, until the conflicts of man intervene. Cavendish's island thus presents us instead with an *unattainable* utopia, followed by the consequences of irregularity. While *Blazing World* is fictional in its projection of a seemingly utopian space which remains uninterrupted by man, the island projects allegorical reality by modeling itself after a pre- and post-war England.

The English Civil War, lasting nearly a decade from 1642 to 1651, followed by the execution of Charles I in 1649, serves as important contextual consideration for Cavendish's portrayal of man in her island poetry. Fowler notes that the political unrest of the Civil War "upset the established order and led to speculation on alternative political systems" (42). With this in mind, we may indeed consider Cavendish's poem, published only two years following the war, as an allegory for the English Civil War. The island may represent England, Cavendish's homeland, which falls victim to war and destruction, inflicted by man's irregular actions. In her earlier writings, Cavendish was stark in her criticism of war; in *Orations*, Cavendish criticizes the notion of civil war specifically:

> In truth, there is Nothing so Miserable, Hatefull, Cruel, and Irreligious as Civil Warr, for it is an Enemy against Law, Nature, and God, it Pulls down the Seats of Justice, Throws down the Altars of Religion, Diggs up the Urns of their Parents, Disperses the Dust and Bones of their Dead Ancestors, Spills the Blood of their Fathers, Sons, Brethren, Friends, and Country-men, and makes a Total Destruction and Dissolution,

> or at least their Country so Weak, as it becomes a Prey to Forein Enemies, and the Remainders of the Natives become Slaves. (255-6).

The masculinization of war, an exclusive battle between men, has obvious effects on the male population with the loss of "Fathers, Sons, Brethren, Friends, and Country-men" (255). But Cavendish also reminds us of the "total destruction and dissolution" of their country—of England. In "The Ruin of this Island" Cavendish highlights not only the battle that occurs between men and the gods but also the important consequences of their war on the island, which results in "her ruin and her fall" (64). We may understand the island's casualty as implicit evidence of Cavendish's claim that "some Parts may occasion other Parts to be irregular," but in this case, it is the "Parts" of man inducing irregularity in the "Parts" of nature (117). Perhaps Cavendish, in her empathetic views of nature, reveals a sense of environmental awareness, or perhaps she identifies the destruction of the island more closely with the "destruction" of England following the Civil War. Additionally important to consider, however, is Cavendish's use of the island to insert and enforce a female presence amid a war between men. Holmesland argues that, following the Civil War, Cavendish would "fall back on an imaginary state governed by her sovereign self" in her works, which is suggestive of her *own* presence in the island (459). Despite the war's direct effects on its male participants, Cavendish had to endure her own struggles in the wake of the war after being exiled and separated from her family in 1644, which she details in her 1656 autobiography *A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*. Even upon her return to England following the war, William Cavendish continued to live in exile in Antwerp until the Restoration and was deprived of most of his estates and fortune. The hardships Cavendish withstood due to the war provide valid support for Cavendish's female coding of the island. Thus, we may perceive the island as Cavendish *herself*, reminding her audience of the female anxieties and suffering that ensue in wars between men.

Cavendish's natural philosophy provides an important foundation for understanding not only the relationship between man and nature, and her criticism thereof, but also how she implicitly incorporates a female perspective into her writings of nature, both in science and in fiction. Her theories of regularity and irregularity allow us to explore how peace and chaos find to coexist in this world as well as analyze the extent of man's influence on nature and vice versa from a 17th century female perspective. While the debate over Cavendish as a *feminist* figure ensues, the question we should be asking ourselves as scholars of Cavendish isn't whether we might indeed consider her a feminist, but rather *how* her position as a *woman* has informed and molded her views of science and the imaginary. *Poems and Fancies* offers us a prospect into the mind of Cavendish as a female writer studying the relationship between natural science and humanity during a time wherein women as scientists, let alone women as writers, were a rarity and conspicuously attracted criticism from male contemporaries. While I don't classify Cavendish as a *feminist* in the modern sense of the term, she presents bold perspectives on the matter of men, not to criticize them *as men*, nor to criticize the notion of power itself, but to identify an *abuse* of the power that is naturally afforded to them in a patriarchal space and how that power can bring chaos unto the world in forms of subjugation over people *and* nature. Regardless of her debated opinions on the roles of women in society, it is important to remember Cavendish in the context of her time and find value in the

thought-provoking essence of her works in our considerations of environment and the female space. Cavendish's natural philosophy, studied in conjunction with her works of "fancy," conclusively enables us to critically examine how Cavendish conveys man's relationship with nature as she places *herself* within the nature of her fiction. With this, we can contextualize Cavendish's role as a woman to supplement our comprehension of environment and nature in 17th century literature.

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Towards the Spectral Plain: Trauma and Dark Ecology in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

by Allison Cuevas

Published in 1896, H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* presents a gothic-horror castaway narrative in which the protagonist, Edward Prendick, a biology student, comes face-to-face with the horrors of human progress in the shape of Dr. Moreau and his vivisection experiments that sought to turn animals into human beings. The novella opens with Prendick's nephew explaining that the narrative was found alongside his castaway uncle. The account consists of Prendick's firsthand narrative of his experiences in Noble's Isle. After being rescued by Montgomery and his strange companion M'ling, Prendick arrives at the island where he meets Dr. Moreau-a renowned scientist who had been shunned by society for performing vivisections. Prendick soon encounters a group of strange creatures: animal-human hybrids. The story ends with the creatures rebelling against their creator and killing all the humans on the island save for Dr. Moreau before returning to their animal forms. Upon returning to London, Prendick finds himself unable to cope with his experience and detaches from human society.

In her introduction to the novel, author Margaret Atwood presents the reader with ten common interpretations of *Dr. Moreau*. She recounts how the novella has been read as a commentary on the morality of scientific experimentation; a criticism of Victorian elitism; and a criticism of organized religion. The last decade has lent itself to eco-critical interpretations of the narrative, particularly focused on Wells' own scientific essays. Carrie Rohman reads *Dr. Moreau* as a breakdown of Enlightenment ideals seeking to maintain a separation between the human and animal. Jade Munslow Ong argues that the narrative reflects an anxiety over the effects of colonialism on beings and natural environments. Similarly, focused on Prendick's response upon his return to London, Shun Yin Kiang uses Timothy Morton's idea of *ecognosis* to analyze Prendick's experience as a gesture toward ecological coexistence. Expanding on these ideas and using Morton's concept of the Uncanny Valley, I argue that Prendick's narrative reflects a trauma response in which the narrator constantly battles to maintain the categories that separate humans from non-human beings.

In the opening of *Dark Ecology,* Morton describes dark ecology as "ecological awareness, dark-depressing … dark-uncanny. And strangely it is dark-sweet" (5). He goes on to write, "Ecological awareness is dark, insofar as its essence is unspeakable … It is dark, because it compels us to recognize the melancholic wounds that make us up—the shocks and traumas and cataclysms that have made oxygen for our lungs to breathe" (110). In this way, the darkness in dark ecology is the recognition that human beings are always already coexisting with other beings. This recognition comes with the realization that humanity is not at the center of the universe, which can be depressing and traumatic. One of these moments of recognition can further be described by Morton"s ecological reading of the Uncanny Valley. Morton situates the Uncanny Valley in a space between aesthetics and ethics (*Being Ecological* 144). Humans and those regarded as equals exist at the top of the hill on the left side of the valley. On the opposite side of the valley, at the top of the other hill, exists all the "nonthreatening," those who do not challenge "your sense of who you are" (146). Deep in the valley are the repressed and abject. "The theory runs," Morton explains, "that we are disturbed by them because they resemble us too closely" (147). In this context, Morton argues that the Uncanny Valley becomes an "artifact of anthropocentrism" in which the fear of the Other ("fear of what we have in common with the 'other'") plays out. This proximity to the Other is what causes the "uneasy, uncanny feeling." The steeper a person's Uncanny Valley, Morton argues, the more they have done to "banish the uncanny being to some nether region" (146-8).

Ecological awareness, then, is closely connected to the collapse of the Uncanny Valley. Morton refers to the collapsed valley as the Spectral Plain. And, like all other ecological awareness, it has a darkness to it. Morton argues that The Spectral Plain is:

> a region that seems totally flat, and it extends in all directions. And on this plane, I can't distinguish very easily between alive and not alive, between sentient and non-sentient, between conscious and non-conscious. All my categories, which excavated the valley, start to malfunction. And they malfunction deeply. (151)

It is precisely the representation of the Uncanny Valley and its ultimate collapse that Prendick experiences on Dr. Moreau's island. As he encounters the creatures, he cannot place them within the categories that separate the human from the non-human. His interactions with each of them result in tension, denial, and breakdown of language as he tries to maintain a hold in the steep valley. However, he is never able to fully maintain those categories. The moment he feels empathy towards the creatures, as a result of recognition, he gives way to the Spectral Plain and into a darkness that translates itself as trauma.

In order to understand how Prendick experiences the darkness of dark ecology, one must first acknowledge how he and the other humans in the novella operate in a closed and anthropocentric state of mind that denies recognition and empathy for other non-human beings. Rohman argues that Moreau is a figure of the Enlightenment as he represents the idealized notions of reason and rationalization. She argues that "Moreau's intense desire to make animals reasonable represents an excessive instantiation of Enlightenment rationalization in its drive to purify the human subject of all connection to the irrational, the bodily, the animal" (122). The "excessive instantiation" of rationality leads Moreau into a pursuit of knowledge devoid of empathy. He tells Prendick, "so long as visible or audible pain turns you sick, so long as your own pains drive you, so long as pain underlies your propositions

about sin, so long, I tell you, you are an animal, thinking a little less obscurely what an animal feels" (Wells 59). In this way, Moreau places pain and empathy as animalistic and inferior. Thus, his lack of empathy allows him to pursue his experiments. He describes empathy as a disease: "Sympathetic pain–all I know of it I remember as a thing I used to suffer from years ago. I wanted–it was the only thing I wanted–to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape" (56). By pathologizing empathy towards animals, Dr. Moreau further suggests that the idealized human is one who is completely detached from the animal/natural world.

Furthermore, while Prendick never explicitly prescribes himself to Moreau's philosophies, he is in a constant struggle between the disgust and empathy he feels towards the creatures. In her analysis, Braun sets empathy in opposition to reason. She writes, "reason and its corollary self-regulation are coded as human, and particularly English and masculine, but compassion is creaturely, circulating across social hierarchies and species barriers" (501). The moment the characters begin to feel empathy towards the creatures, they begin to experience the collapse of the Uncanny Valley. The tension that Prendick often experiences while interacting with the creatures is thus a form of anxiety. The moment he begins to feel any connection, he resorts to reason and reminds himself (and the reader) of the creature's inhumanity. However, as Braun clarifies, "empathy and anxiety both operate through boundary-crossing between the self and whatever being, people, or object is coded as Other" (503). This crossing can lead to the collapse of the Uncanny Valley into the Spectral Plain.

The tension between empathy and anxiety illustrates how various creatures shift across and ultimately collapse Prendick's Uncanny Valley. M'ling is the first of the creatures Prendick encounters and whom he describes as "the most human looking of all the Beast Folk" (Wells 63). It is not just M'ling's appearance that renders him less uncanny than the other creatures. Prendick explains that M'ling "was scarcely so intelligent as the Ape Man, but far more docile" (63). Once again, Prendick uses an anthropocentric interpretation of intelligence to distance himself from the creatures. On the surface, he uses the concept of intelligence in much the same way his contemporaries would have: as a marker to distinguish the human from the Other. However, Prendick also associates intelligence with threat; the less intelligent the creatures are, the less threatening they should be. Docility is what allows Prendick to recognize M'ling as more human than the other creatures.

This becomes even more apparent when Prendick encounters the sloth creature, during which he describes him as "a dim pinkish thing, looking more like a flayed child than anything else in the world" (Wells 42). The image of a flayed child becomes a means through which the reader can feel empathy towards the creature. Prendick, from this point forward, refers to him as the "little pink sloth creature," reminding the reader of this association. Later, this connection becomes even more amplified when we learn about the trauma the animals must endure to come to their abjected states. In an effort to maintain a close distinction between the human and animal, Prendick quickly follows his first description with: "The creature had exactly the mild but repulsive features of a sloth," ensuring that the creature remains under the threshold of the valley (42). He later expresses a similar sentiment when the creatures, upon Moreau's command, attempt to capture Prendick: "The little pink sloth creature dashed at me and I cut it over, gashed down its ugly face with the nail in my stick" (47). Here, its aesthetics and docility become close determinants of where the creature

falls within the valley. The sloth creature often shifts between the threshold and the opposite side of the valley. Prendick later describes how "the little pink sloth creature displayed an odd affection for me and took to following me about. The Ape Man bored me, however. He assumed, on the strength of his five digits, that he was my equal, and was forever jabbering at me, jabbering the most arrant nonsense" (95). Here, Prendick's description is devoid of negative physical descriptions. Lacking any direct reference to a child, the little pink sloth creature takes on the quality of a pet. At the same time, however, the creature shifts onto the opposite side of the valley as it is no longer a threat. Instead, the threat is now the Ape Man. Prendick utilizes intelligence to remind the reader of the distinction between man and animal, despite the Ape Man's realization that he and Prendick could potentially belong to the same genus. Nevertheless, by asserting the creature is less intelligent than himself, Prendick undermines the threat that he feels towards that Ape Man. While Prendick constantly tries to maintain the categories of human and animal within an anthropocentric frame, it is only when he is able to feel empathy towards the creatures that he enters the Spectral Plain.

It is also during these instances that the malfunction of categories becomes evident, a malfunction that later reflects itself as trauma in which Prendick is unable to regain a connection to his "fellow men" (102). The first of these instances occurs shortly after the protagonist arrives on the island and hears the cries of the vivisected puma: "It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice" (28). The line echoes Morton's Spectral Plain as it collapses all categories; within the cries of the Puma, Prendick hears all the pain of the world. The categories between human and animal are significantly blurred. At this point in the novel, Prendick is unaware of what the puma's cries entail. As far as he understands, the puma remains within an animal shape, yet he describes her cries as a voice, shifting her category to that of a human. Her cries indicate a collapse of anthropocentric language. She cannot form language and articulate her pain; nevertheless, her pain is understood. This echoes the deep malfunction of categories within the Spectral Plain. The malfunction is further reflected in the landscape. Prendick goes on to describe, "But in spite of the brilliant sunlight and the green fans of the trees waving in the soothing sea-breeze, the world was a confusion, blurred with drifting black and red phantasms, until I was out of earshot of the house in the stone wall" (28). The categories of human and animal that collapsed by the cries of the puma are carried onto the landscape, which is both "brilliant sunlight" and "drifting black." The trees and phantasms also contrast images of life and death. The deep troubling of categories is further emphasized by "confusion" and blurriness. The passage has an uncanny quality to it, as it begins describing what could be a pastoral scene with sunlight and waving trees and ends in the haunting cold image of the "house in the stone wall."

However, the most significant encounter is evidently the one with the Leopard Man. Prendick is able to define the Spectral Plain as a contradiction:

> It may seem a strange contradiction in me–I cannot explain the fact–but now, seeing the creature there in a perfectly animal attitude, with the light gleaming in its eyes, and its imperfectly human face distorted with terror, I realized again the fact of its humanity. In another moment others of its pursuers would see it, and it would be overpowered and captured, to experience once more the horrible tortures of the enclosure. (73)

The breaking of Prendick's narrative emphasizes the confusion of the categories between human and animal. The moment of reflection–"I cannot explain the fact"–is filled with confusion, but it also suggests an attempt to reestablish the boundaries of the Uncanny Valley, as if Prendick is trying to regain his thoughts. It represents another language breakdown and thus emphasizes how this moment of recognition is situated beyond the realm of anthropocentric language. Categories of human and non-human are also challenged by his description of the Leopard Man: "animal attitude" and "Imperfectly human." Prendick concludes his description by declaring "the fact of its humanity," while referring to the creature. He presents the creature's humanity as absolute truth, a "fact." Yet he places him within the category of a thing by his use of the word "its." However, unlike the previous instances, Prendick does not resort to the creature's misshapen features or their lack of intelligence as an attempt to reestablish the boundaries that separate humans from non-humans. It is interesting to note that Prendick points to the "gleam" in the Leopard Man's eyes as a moment of recognition. M'ling's eyes are the first indication Prendick receives that M'ling is not fully human: "I saw that the eyes that glanced at me shone with a pale-green light...The thing came to me as a stark inhumanity" (15). In his encounter with the Leopard Man, the light in the creature's eyes becomes an acknowledgment of his humanity. Nonetheless, it is not just recognizing the Leopard Man's humanity that pushes Prendick into the Spectral Plain. Prendick puts his psyche within the perspective of the Leopard Man and ponders the outcome, which leads to the vivisection room. The empathy he feels towards the Leopard Man, driven by the recognition of pain, ultimately leads Prendick to kill the Leopard Man despite Moreau's protests.

Within the literal realm, it is important to note the names given to the different creatures. Despite the initial sympathy Prendick feels towards the puma, Prendick never gives her a name outside of her animal form. Her identity remains that of an inferior animal. In this sense, the puma arguably remains on the opposite side of the Valley. The same is true for the little pink sloth creature and his pet-like status. While the Uncanny Valley collapses during his encounter with the Leopard Man, the creature maintains a blurred identity. M'ling, whom Prendick recognizes as being the most human-like, is the only creature who is given a proper name. However, the apostrophe within his name also indicates a breakage in his identity, which further reflects his non-humanness.

The island itself can further be defined as a space of blurred boundaries which further heightens the tension Prendick experiences. Moreau perceives the island as an "extended laboratory." Atwood and other critics examining the island conclude that the island is often coded as a place of societal breakdown (Karpouzou 85; Atwood xii). Atwood writes, "When the Beast Men start to lose their humanity and revert to their beast-natures, this locale becomes the site of a moral breakdown that is specifically sexual" (xii). Similarly, in his analysis of *fin de siècle* literary representations of jungle spaces, Ben Felderhof postulates that jungles "conjure[d] a fallen world" by emphasizing their "hellish darkness; predatory animals; dense, tangled vegetation, which not only impedes progress but actively encroaches on and disintegrates existing structures" (40). In this interpretation, "tangled vegetation" coincides with the antithesis of civilization and progress. John Glendening's analysis offers a similar interpretation: "In Wells' text, entanglement means disorder, not order or harmony:

it entails the commingling of objects, processes, and qualities that strike the human mind as incompatible or antagonistic" (573). Both of these critics are working within a Darwinian context of entanglement. Darwin, as Glendening references in his essay, foresaw the notion of entanglement as a source of anxiety and instead sought a definition that would undermine all connotations of chaos and disorder through the concept of the "entangled bank":

> It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. (573)

While Darwin's description of the entangled bank portrays an appreciation for the interconnectedness of the natural landscape, the words "clothed," "constructed," and "laws" ground the concept within an anthropocentric society. The entangled bank subordinates the intricateness of the natural world. By seeing the island through the negative connotation of entanglement, it is perhaps easy to understand how critics came to view the "green confusion" that Prendick refers to on two occasions and the many mentions of "tangles" of trees, creepers, bushes, ferns, palm-trees, and undergrowth, as symbolic of moral breakdown (Wells 28, 31-32, 39, 69, 72, 76). However, given that Prendick refers to the natural landscape as "confusion," I argue that the liminal space of the island represents Prendick's symbolic encounter with the Spectral Plain. At one point, Prendick narrates, "Montgomery interrupted my tangle of mystification and suspicion," which further exemplifies the role that entanglement plays in shifting him towards the Spectral Plain (26). Through an ecocritical lens, the entanglement of the island represents a liminal space of interconnectivity. Peggy Karpouzou identifies the complex representation of the island in her 2017 essay. She highlights the liminal positionality in which the island is situated between ocean and land, and describes them as an "erosion of a continent," therefore "fragments of a larger entity" (86). Adding to her ecological reading of the island, Karpouzou notes how islands are interconnected with everything around them: they are connected "through their relationship with other islands, the sea, the continent, and the living beings (humans, animals, plants, and microorganisms) that inhabit them, islands are continuously shaped" (87). The island space adds to the tension that Prendick feels even as he embodies some of its entanglement into his psyche.

Another way the novella attempts to maintain the animal/human entanglement is through its representation of language as a sign of rationality. Language is at the center of the animal/ human divide. As Braun points out, "Jacques Derrida observes that Western philosophy 'from Aristotle to Lacan' insists 'the animal is without language,'" thereby essentially different and lesser (504). This becomes apparent in Prendick's shock that the creatures can talk. Upon first encountering the creatures, the narrator is certain that they are humans vivisected into animals. He tells Moreau, "They talk, build houses, cook. They were men" (Wells 51). Prendick's certainty of the creatures' origins is predicated on their ability to reason (talk) and function within an anthropocentric society (establish a household). Just as much as speech places the creatures within the category of the human, it is also speech that throws them into the Uncanny Valley. Upon Moreau explaining to

Prendick that the creatures were once human, the protagonist exclaims in disbelief, "These things–these animals *talk*!" (55). The emphasis that Prendick places on the creature's ability to speak indicates that their uncanniness is informed by their ability to speak. The sentence also reveals one of the many instances of Prendick's breakage in speech and language. In this scene, the breakage in his speech underscores his desperation as he tries to make sense of the categories that separate humans from animals.

Language and narrative voice also become defining factors in their loss of humanity. When Prendick notes that the little pink sloth creature is no longer human, he first points out its loss of speech: "He had long since lost speech" (98). The collapse of anthropocentric language and narrative is represented from the introduction of the novella, which begins with Prendick's nephew framing the circumstances of the narrative. Charles Prendick explains, "He gave such a strange account of himself that he was supposed demented" (3). The framing of Prendick as an unreliable narrator goes beyond a narrative device. It represents his encounter with the Spectral Plain as he loses his ability to connect with the anthropocentric world. His "fellow men" deem him "demented," unable to comprehend the events he recounts. Yet, part of Prendick's unreliable narration is due to the narrative's struggle to maintain an anthropocentric distinction of human and non-human boundaries. This is often translated as a reluctance to exhibit empathy towards the creatures. One of the instances in which Prendick creates a gap in the narrative occurs when the Beast Folk begin to turn into animals. He narrates:

> But from that night until the end came there was but one thing happened to tell, save a series of innumerable small unpleasant details and the fretting of an incessant uneasiness … There is much that sticks in my memory that I could write, things that I would cheerfully give my right hand to forget. But they do not help the telling of the story. (94)

Kiang interprets this gap as "an act of intervention, one that attempts to restore the centrality of the human author and his preference for coherence and credulity" (221-2). The passage also reads like denial or shame of the connection Prendick experienced with the Beast Folk during his last months on the island. The "innumerable small details" become details that he would "cheerfully" give up his "right hand to forget." The language he uses is also rooted in similar contradictions that blur the lines of the Uncanny Valley. The words "innumerable" and "much" connote something much larger, but Prendick quickly undermines those details with the word "small." The protagonist's insistence on excluding this part of his story from the narrative echoes Morton's argument that the parts are greater than the whole (*Dark Ecology* 12). Prendick's description of the "unpleasant details" suggests that he could have spent those moments living alongside the creatures in an animalistic way and, by extension, could have illustrated the collapse of the Uncanny Valley into the Spectral Plain.

The tension between the acceptance and denial of his animality eventually becomes a source of trauma upon Prendick's return to London. Once in London, Prendick struggles to reconnect with the people around him. The lines that had previously distinguished humans and animals are no longer apparent as he is unable to differentiate between the two. He writes, "I was almost as queer to men as I had been to the Beast People. I may have caught something of the natural wildness of my companions" (Wells 101). Prendick acknowledges

his connection to the creatures as he refers to them as his "companions." And while the word companion does not bear a connotation of appreciation or fondness, he nonetheless appears closer to the creatures than to the people around him. Despite this, Prendick continues to push back against his feelings of connection to the creatures and instead defines his state of mind as a disease: he "caught something," as if the "natural wildness" were a cold (101). He later describes this alignment as a mental disorder when he states that, "And even it seemed that I, too, was not a reasonable creature, but only an animal tormented with some strange disorder in its brain, that sent it to wander alone like a sheep stricken with the gid" (102). Prendick is unable to use language to describe his disconnection from other humans and instead defines his trauma through the perspective of sheep with gid. His association of pain with that of an "[un]reasonable creature" suggests a form of empathy for animals and a drift from the anthropocentric views that Moreau upheld on his island.

Kiang interprets Prendick's inability to connect with the people of London as the beginning of ecological thinking. He interconnects the novel's last sentences with Morton's argument in *Dark Ecology* that "species as not as a thing we can point to, but as something like the aurora, a mysterious yet distinct, sparkling entity" (218). At the end of his narrative, Prendick writes, "My days I devote to reading and to experiments in chemistry, and I spend many of the clear nights in the study of astronomy. There is, though I do not know how there is or why there is, a sense of infinite peace and protection in the glittering hosts of heaven" (Wells 102). Kiang connects the aurora, or shimmer, to "glittering hosts" which offer Prendick peace. For Kiang, the "heavens" as an ecological space offer Prendick a place "untouched by men, an alternative space wherein lies the potential of another humanity" (Kiang 218). Though the end of the novel does present Prendick with the possibility of appreciating other entities (in this case, the shimmering stars), Kiang's interpretation does not seem to fully coincide with the fact that humans, *not* the animals of the island, are the source of Prendick's trauma. The critic's interpretation does not seem to correlate with Morton's shimmer; after all, it is Kiang who suggests that Prendick is in search for another humanity. Given this interpretation, Prendick would not be moving towards the Spectral Plain or towards a place wherein he can appreciate all beings. Rather, his search for "the potential of another humanity" would imply Prendick's longing for an anthropocentric world, a world in which he can peacefully exist on one side of the Uncanny Valley.

Trauma, in ecological terms, can take multiple directions; therefore, it is not only Prendick who experiences a traumatic effect but also the creatures. After all, the novel opens within the backdrop of imperialism. When Prendick inquires about the creatures, he asks Montgomery, "What are these beasts for? Merchandise, curios? Does the captain think he is going to sell them somewhere in the South Seas?" (Wells 10). At this point in the narrative, Prendick does not see the creatures as anything other than mere commodities. Furthermore, as Ong indicates, the creatures described throughout the novella symbolized common "exotic captives from colonial sub-Sahara Africa and South America" (194). He uses similar language to describe the puma in her cage when he describes how she "lay crouched together, watching us with shining eyes, a black heap in the corner of its cage" (Wells 13). By describing the puma as a "black heap," Prendick maintains her status as an object and a commodity.

The creatures experience a slow violence in the form of degeneration. Once they return to animals, they are coded as exotic and their bodies are commodified. Having had human reason, it can be presumed that they revert back to their animality. The creatures will be spared the same trauma that Prendick must endure; nevertheless, such a point of view is anthropocentric. As Ong explains, "the animals that are used to form the Beast People are themselves, slaves of empire, forcibly taken, tortured, and biologically transformed, in ecological terms, they are constructed as another colonizing species" (191-2). In this sense, ecological awareness reminds us that human intervention is often a form of violence. In the case of Dr. Moreau's experiments, this violence is represented in the trauma the creatures undergo, and simultaneously, the trauma Prendick endures. It is further reflected by the uncanniness of the creatures' bodies as they are flung into the depths of the Uncanny Valley.

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Ecopoetics of Intentionality: *The Dark Ecology of Good News for People Who Love Bad News*

By Noah East

After touring for eight years in the DIY punk venues of the Pacific Northwest, Modest Mouse's fourth studio album, *Good News for People Who Love Bad News* (2004), marked the band's breakthrough into mainstream success. While the band's earlier, eccentric sound often kept them at the fringes of the early "Emo" alternative rock scene, the *Good News* album marked a turning point in the band's trajectory. Some of their past albums like *The Lonesome Crowded West* (1997) were praised for their quintessential 90s heroin-chic angst coupled with eccentric melodic arrangements. Frontman Isaac Brock utilized heavy distortion and screaming vocals in much of the early work, which was polarizing to early fans of the band. Previously intense, performance driven albums verged on the metal side of punk rock music at the time. In stark contrast to their earlier work, singles off the album such as "Float On" and "Ocean Breathes Salty" dominated the airwaves upon release for their comparatively optimistic tone which still utilized the band's unique melodic arrangements. Because of this, the album was met with mixed reviews depending on the outlet: some bemoaned the band's more marketable sound as "selling out" while others praised the album as an entry point to the band's harder works. Alt-rock review site Tiny Mix Tapes described the album best, saying at the time that "[u]ltimately, what makes *Good News* so successful is that it retains the melancholy mood of past works, while at the same time adding depth and maturity" (Katiedid). Eerily similar to Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* controversy with Syd Barret, the band recently suffered the departure of drummer Jeremiah Green after months of unsuccessful recording and a subsequent nervous breakdown. Alongside the melancholy mood fans would expect of Modest Mouse, the album also retains the cyclical, absurd lyrics provided by Brock.

The lyrics vary from humanistic introspective reflections on time to representations of a very disturbed psyche tortured by a Cartesian paranoia. Man's place at the top of the reason ladder is consistently questioned. Anxieties about agency and identity formation suffuse the album through a stunningly poignant lens of reactionary anti-intellectualism. A

recurring pulse of mortality is central to the ecocritical aspects of the album. Nature remains a focal point, serving to interrogate man's relationship to the Earth by unsettling the man/animal distinction. While the deconstruction of this binary remains a throughline in the album, two music videos produced for it, "Float On" and "Ocean Breathes Salty" respectively, make the underlying ecocritical themes sing. Considered together, these videos will serve as a supplement to the interpretation of the album at large—unpacking the relationship to agrilogistic thinking and its fraught, overlapping relationship with a manufactured, demarcated "Nature" conceptualized by the album. The notion of man's dominion over nature is challenged through a dark contemplation of death and decay. Emerging from the unresolved tensions of these themes throughout the album, Timothy Morton's concept of ecognosis from his book *Dark Ecology* (DE) will be used to synthesize a thematic trajectory for the album. Morton's formulation of the conflict between agrilogistics and the archelithic (also from *DE*) will also provide a useful theoretical basis for the reading of the album. This close reading will establish *Good News* and its two music videos as a commentary of Anthropocene environmentalism, the nihilistic lamentations of progress, and the possible avenues out of this nihilism through a renewed connection between human and nonhuman life.

The music video for the single "Float On" provides an ecocritical argument that is within the wheelhouse of tired, worn-out environmentalist tropes. The opening scene depicts the band playing in the pit beneath the stage, as one would see in an opera or ballet. Each of the band members is controlled by magnets shown briefly beneath the stage during the intro alongside the gnashing of gears and metal frame electricity towers. As the camera moves past the band, the stage begins to depict a field with sheeps frolicking and playing among the roses—with the same electricity towers interspersed throughout the field. A vulture perched on one tower is electrocuted and falls to the floor. The vulture's corpse is then cannibalized by another vulture much to the horror of the now fleeing sheep. Here, even animals complicit in human, agricultural progress share our squeamishness of cannibalism. As one sheep is running away, the creature lifts into flight, only to land in the water floating with the other sheep for the chorus: "And we'll all float on okay, / And we'll all float on okay, / And we'll all float on okay / And we'll all float on anyway, well…" (0:58). During this chorus, the band dons some diving gear: frontman Brock puts on an antiquated pair of goggles with a singular lens and the others have old-school diving helmets placed over their cutouts. The water is littered with trash: an old bicycle, a television, a spool of copper wire.

Moving out of the chorus, the sheep return with the shepherd (a woman in white with a crook) to the fenced area of the barn. One sheep pauses before entering the fence as the next verse is sung, "Bad news comes, don't you worry even when it lands / Good news will work its way to all them plans / We both got fired on exactly the same day / Well, we'll float on, good news is on the way" (1:25). The focus turns to sheep lining up at the doors of the slaughterhouse, curiously peering in through the crack of the double doors. When the line about getting fired rings, empty meathooks at the end of chains are juxtaposed with the longing, curious faces of the sheep peeking through. The third chorus then begins, which is formally different from previous choruses by turning it into a vamp—where it starts with the band singing in unison with the drums, adding in more instruments to a climax: "Alright, already, we'll all float on / Okay, don't worry we'll all float on / Even if things get heavy, we'll

all float on" (2:44). Brock, serving as the frontman for the pit's orchestra, removes his hat and places it on his heart—in seeming solidarity with the sheep who themselves begin to sing along as they looked up to the moon. Again, the band drops out leaving only the voices chanting the chorus with Brock's vocals and a slight pulse from the hi-hat.

The song is a notable departure from the band's typically depressing *modus operandi*. The suggestion of an afterlife from the lyrics—where one can float to escape the heaviness of life—just didn't seem to fit the band's former ethos. Interviewing Brock for the outlet *AV Club*, Josh Modell asked if this shift in tone was intentional. Brock responded, "It was a completely conscious thing. I was just kind of fed up with how bad shit had been going, and how dark everything was, with bad news coming from everywhere. Our president [George W. Bush] is just a fucking daily dose of bad news! *Then you've got the well-intentioned scientists telling us that everything is fucked.* I just want to feel good for a day" (emphasis added). But how does this square with the content of the music video? For the treatment of nonhuman life, things remain too heavy and little change is yet to be achieved. Calamity, the status quo of the Anthropocene, remains. Because of this, Morton's concept of "the Ecological Chocolate" becomes useful in negotiating the messaging here. In *Dark Ecology*, Morton outlines an emotional nexus in which to combat the nihilism and defeatism found in the environmental movement. Guilt, Morton asserts, is only the first layer of a series of concentric circles—like those of a chocolate with many fillings and coatings. In Morton's schema the first "outer sugarcoating" of guilt is very tantalizing even "addictive"(132). This is because guilt is an important, initial step in reification, where individuals ascribe the qualities of social interactions to be a reflection of themselves. In the Anthropocene, the Guilt is a result of anthropogenic climate change and habitat destruction.

The Guilt is not, however, void of nuance. Morton recalls, "one fine day in September 2014 it was announced that 50 percent of animals had vanished in the last forty years. Because of us. I didn't even watch them go. I never personally signed on for this mission. Neither did you. As one of the animals, I never signed on" (117). This addresses a common criticism of the Anthropocene, that the universal *anthropos-* prefix does not represent the reality of the "we" which bears responsibility for the crisis. Though the origin point for this responsible party is not difficult to determine—the Anthropocene is a disaster set in motion particularly by White, Western societies—Morton argues that the Guilt often takes the form of "religiose environmentalism" which can ultimately damage the possibility of coexistence. Those who find pride and identity within White, Western cultures then become placed in direct opposition to environmentalism. He writes, "The media and experts often use guilt as a way to force us to be ecological. How's that working out so far? It's like making us guilty about sugar to force us not to eat it. Guilt is enjoyment upside down. Don't think of a pink elephant!" (Morton 132). This is the form taken on by the "Float On" music video—a trite, preachy message that reifies itself to the already-believers. Read from this context, the video's engagement with deconstructing the barrier between human and nonhuman life is rather unsatisfying. But only one kind of animal life is valued: animal life which is unknowingly complicit with the agrilogistic project. Sheep do not pose a predatory threat to humans—thus we can sympathize with them as creatures under our dominion. Consider the vultures that resort to cannibals in the beginning—their tragedy is ultimately used to humanize the

sheep. The pernicious questioning of Morton urges us to reconsider the value of what we might identify as the typical environmental-rhetorical approach. Morton argues that the sole problem in this nexus of emotions becomes the desire to run away from the Guilt, rather than reconciling with it. Morton suggests that one should "[f]ind the joy without pushing away the depression, for depression is accurate" (117). In this way, the Guilt becomes a necessary first step for a full realization of ecognosis. It is the recognition of a need for mourning the enormous cost to nonhuman life paid in service to the agriologistic project and mankind's unique role in generating that need.

While "Float On" adheres to tropic stereotypes which guilt the audience, the band's second music video utilizes grief and mortality to inspire a stronger emotional connection between human and nonhuman life. "Ocean Breathes Salty" begins with a child who is getting ready to spend the day exploring the sunflower fields around his home on his bike. The sunflower fields extend to the entirety of the screen—all of the flowers in beautiful, full bloom; a seemingly endless field harvesting beauty. He is stopped by his mother, who lovingly places a pair of glasses on over his eyes before sending him back on his way. As the boy explores the field, he encounters a scarecrow. He attaches a baseball glove to its hand, attempting to play catch with the inanimate, uncanny humanoid. Nearby he encounters the corpse of a crow, lying dead in the field, which he prods inquisitively with a stick. Though these values have not yet been put into direct conflict, the agrilogistic and arche-lithic are both represented. Agricultural logistics, which *Dark Ecology* dubs agrilogistics, "promises to eliminate fear, anxiety, and contradiction—social, physical, and ontological—by establishing thin rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and by reducing existence to sheer quantity" (Morton 43). This ontological framework seeks to suppress the arche-lithic: the inescapable reality that humans and nonhuman life are inalienably interconnected (63). The mother, as the agent charged with dominion over the sunflower field, holds the agrilogistic view that devalues crows and values sunflowers—artificially placing the human in opposition to crows despite the overwhelming plenty and notably fruitless product of the sunflower fields. The human harvested beauty is not, in fact, a food conflict but a cash conflict. The agrilogistic subject is obsessed, however, with quantity for the provision of selling the surplus for profit. Her attempts to influence his thoughts are paralleled by her stopping the boy to give him the corrective lenses (making sure he is raised with the "correct" perspective about which nonhuman lives are valued). To what extent this has succeeded, is questioned in the music video. As the agrilogistic subject, the mother is thus locked in a perpetual war between crop and crow—signified by the scare*crow* the boy tries to play catch with.

As the video continues, the boy roams on until he finds another injured bird, Isaac Brock (playfully unaltered in size) dressed as a crow. Despite the agrilogistic conflict between the crows and humans signified by the scarecrow, the boy brings the birdlike Brock into the shade. The lyrics of the chorus reflect the narrow perspective the mother tries to place on the child, "Well, that is that and this is this. / You tell me what you want and I tell you what you get / You get away from me" (1:45). The simple logic of the first line demonstrates the Easy Think Substance of the agrilogistic process. That *is* that; don't you dare question *that*. Morton describes Easy Think Substance as the ontology of agrilogistics spoon fed from the Easy Bake Oven, "[s]ome kind of brown featureless lump emerges, which one subsequently decorates

with sprinkles" (47). The boy uses a pharmaceutical dropper to drip water into Brock's mouth, places a splint over his broken wing, and places him in a bed made of an old shoebox with air holes cut-out of the lid. Here the second chorus plays, which only repeats the top line of the first chorus, "Well that is that… / Will you tell me what you saw and I'll tell you what you missed / When the ocean met the sky / You missed *when time and life shook hands and said goodbye* / When the earth folded in on itself " (2:05; emphasis added). In an almost mocking refrain, the falsetto cries of the arche-lithic come from a backup singer who taunts the listener in the same chorus "*You missed! You missed!*" To channel Morton: *What is happening here?* Agrilogistics fails, as it often does, to quantify the power of death and its upper bound of grief. The cheap agrilogistic algorithm—and its incessant concern with presence and quantity that ultimately results in commercialization—is unable to compute the unconditional, irrational compassion which the boy shares for the injured bird. Because the boy hasn't yet realized how society has attempted to separate him and the bird, the boy returns to his mother to show her the fruits of his labor.

The boy brings the box home to show his mother how dutifully he cared for the animal. A shot flashes of Brock waving nonchalantly from the inside of a comically oversized shoebox. His mother, immediately seeing the crow as a pest, scolds her son and gets into a tug-of-war over the box with the boy. During their scrap for the box only the drums, Brock's voice, and the mocking falsetto singing "*You missed!*" remain. Brock's lyrics verge on mocking laughter now too, singing "Good luck, for your sake I hope heaven and hell / Are really there, but I wouldn't hold my breath. / You wasted life, why wouldn't you waste death?" (2:25). The boy breaks free and runs into the field, where after escaping he lays down next to the weakening Brock. After the drum break ends with a short caesura, the two wake and the crow's wing is miraculously healed. The band returns with a drop into eight bars of the chorus as Brock extends his (now healed) arms to the boy. He is lifted onto Brock's shoulders and they run through the field. Brock pedals the boy's bike as the boy sits on the handlebars. With the spare mitt introduced from the scarecrow scene, Brock and the boy play catch as the sun sets in the distance. Alas, it is only a dream. The boy wakes to find Brock has died beside him; alone again, he hopelessly prods the corpse to life with his stick until he turns over stiffly. He buries Brock in the bed he once made for the bird—now a coffin. The camera pans over a collection of crudely-made crosses, markers from the other animals the boy has tried to heal. As the boy turns home, the band dressed as animals with slings and bandages are resurrected at their crosses. In a token of appreciation, the spirits of the animals play the final chorus to the boy—ending with the altered final line: "You wasted life, why wouldn't you waste the afterlife?" (3:45).

In the conflict setup by "The Ocean Breathes Salty " music video, the arche-lithic and the socially constructed agrilogistic ideologies converge to synthesize a defense of unconditional love. As Morton details in the section of his book titled "The Longing," love is described as an emotion that—from an evolutionary perspective—should not exist. He writes, "Need and desire definitely mean the same thing down here: 'I need you.' Why long for a polar bear or a forest or indeed a human? *There is no good reason.* Once you have enumerated good reasons to your satisfaction, the forest has burned down. The polar bear has drowned" (Morton 152; emphasis added). For the human, agrilogistic computer (the logocentric, rational mind) love

does not compute. This perspective can be best recognized in a novel by the science fiction author Philip K. Dick, *Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said* (1974). Ruth and Jason get into a typically-Dick philosophical conversation about whether love (and its darker undercurrent, grief) is worth it. The pessimistic, womanizer Jason is hardly convinced. Eventually, he becomes angry enough to just ask her why he should *want* to feel love and grief. Ruth replies, "Grief causes you to leave yourself. You step outside your narrow little pelt. And you can't feel grief unless you've had love before it—grief is the final outcome of love, because it's love lost" (Dick 120). The agrilogistic framework encourages the human subject to remain in its pelt—to retain the promises of the God of Abraham to Adam as the excluded middle between God and the animal world. Through this privileged position, the agrilogistic subject (the mother) of the music video places lines of stratification between the interconnected mesh of life that comprises what we call Nature. This dogma declares that crows are enemies to life—defined narrowly as the harvesting of sunflowers—rather than a functional piece of the ecosystem.

In contrast to "Float On," the music video for "Ocean Breathes Salty" overlooks trite and often used synchronizations of agrilogistic thought for the cause of environmentalism. Where "Float On" seeks to place a blanket statement of valuation onto nonhuman life, this only extends to the animals we already sympathize with—animals that are deemed valuable to the agrilogistic project. When these systems of valuation move away from herbivores (which pose no threat to us) toward scavengers (those who will pick apart our bones after we have passed) our desire for a unified body leaves us as antagonists to those nonhuman lifeforms we deem as pests. These systems of valuation are not inherent to our status on the earth but are socially constructed mechanisms to promote their extermination. In trying to synthesize a framework of coexistence, one will require an inquisitive, skeptical mind *and* a compassionate heart. Morton's vision of ecognosis, then, seeks to unify the passions and reason—two components of consciousness that are often described as enemies within oneself. As Morton writes, "Find the joy without pushing away the depression, for the depression is accurate" (117). Indeed, passions often run contrary to reason—but that is part of the point, isn't it? The strongest manifestations of love are those which *we cannot help but feel*. Environmentalism, too, must take this synthesis of reason and emotion to solve the issues of the Anthropocene. Otherwise, all we are left with is the Guilt— "How's that working out so far?" (132).

As a whole, the album *Good News* demonstrates a novel mode of nuanced, mature environmentalism most clearly evoked by the "Ocean Breathes Salty" music video—challenging the form of environmentalist rhetoric through music. Rather than engaging exclusively with "the Guilt" as described by Morton, the album utilizes Modest Mouse's eccentric sound as a means to propel the argument to a place where reflection upon the changes to our environment can be thought of more sincerely. Consider *Good News*'s initial track "Horn Intro": a nine-second discordant squeal from the horn section which is clearly meant to unsettle the listener. It leads pensively into the first substantial song "World at Large." This song is a reflection on the need to move "away to another planet" analyzed through the lens of moving to a new town for a change of pace (0:22). Once again, the Guilt is present but displayed through a lens of the need for change in order to better oneself—a line perhaps inspired by Jeremiah Green's aforementioned nervous breakdown and subsequent

break from the recording with the band. The tone of "World at Large" is rather somber, but also notably restrained. In comparison to Modest Mouse's earlier work, the song might be judged as tepid or lulling. Ultimately, it serves to set up the next two consecutive songs "Float On" and "Ocean Breathes Salty" which were previously analyzed at length in this paper.

Unlike anywhere in or between the music video versions of these songs, the album has a second interlude called "Dig Your Grave" which follows "Ocean Breathes Salty" on the tracklist. A banjo is picked and the string manipulated to add to the already twangy sound. Whispering in the background, Brock can be heard faintly: "I hope you're dead. I hope you're dead. I really do" (0:06). Then a short caesura occurs before the next track "Bury Me With It" plays which is perhaps the song most congruent with Modest Mouse's earlier sound. Distortion aplenty, it has a punchy tone and is a clear departure from the other "softer" tracks that open the album. The structure of the song follows a series of verses, each interrupted by a short chorus-like interlude containing the "Bury Me With It" title. From the second verse: "Well sure as planets come, I know that they end. / And if I'm here when that happens, will you promise me this my friend? / Please bury me with it! / I just don't need none of that Mad Max bullshit" (0:33). The allusion to Mad Max here is interesting in this context. The film series covers a future Australia entering a period of societal collapse inspired by the 1973 oil shortage. The relevant part, here, is that in all of the movies the titular character Mad Max serves as a singular agent policing the thin line between order and chaos. In the Modest Mouse song, the speaker uses this allusion to reject the singular responsibility placed upon the protagonist; this lens of personal duty is the default position taken by the Mortonian sense of Guilt—nevermind the corporations and state apparati that encourage and commit widespread carbon release and habitat destruction, *you* are solely responsible for reversing our damage to the Earth.

After rejecting this personal responsibility "bullshit," the lyrics transition out of the verses and into a bridge. In the context of the album so far, this breakdown/bridge section provides the cleanest expression of Modest Mouse's punk roots. The lyrics which accompany the return to form for the band also contain the album's title, "Good news for people who love bad news. / We've lost the plot and we just can't choose. / We are hummingbirds who are just not willing to move. / And there's good news for people who love bad news" (1:35). In the context of the Anthropocene, the hummingbird is a striking image to focus on. When a hummingbird is found hovering near a flower to collect nectar, is it moving? This question is strangely complicated in that the bird's movement precipitates its static position. If we, as a species, are trying to *move forward* from the Anthropocene and toward a brighter future, this imagery might suggest that climate action often manifests in a one-step-forward one-step-back fashion. Recalling the context of Brock's comments upon the Bush administration, Stacy Alaimo's insights on linguistic changes to the Environmental Protection Agency's website are poignant. Alaimo describes how the Bush administration "avoids the language of vulnerability, risk, danger, threat, crisis, or harm, preferring the bland innocuous term 'effects,' as it casually mentions how rising temperatures are 'already affecting the environment.' Perhaps these effects will be good perhaps they will be bad" (99). Like the hummingbird, the Bush administration virtue signals a policy on climate by being among the first reactionary administrations to mention climate change. This is undermined,

however, by a stunningly misinformed sense of neutrality toward the effects of climate change. In this statement, only *an illusion of movement* on the issue is achieved. Notably, the hummingbird is also featured on the album art. Though the hummingbird is small—making it very difficult to see in digital renderings—it drinks the bleeding nectar coming from wounded arrows which have pierced through a solid green wall.

"Bukowski" is the next track central to the album's ecological themes and deals heavily with the question of theodicy. Theodicy, sometimes referred to as the question of evil, is a philosophical conundrum which asks if God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and benevolent (all-loving) why does he permit evil to exist? The song leads with an upright bass line overlaid with a guitar manipulated by suspension. It is a down-tempo track with an inquisitive tone to appropriately reflect on the song's lyrics. In the verse, the speaker points to disparate perceptions of God's power: "If God takes life, he's an Indian giver. / So tell me now why, you'll tell me never. / Who would want to be? / Who would want to be such a control freak?" (1:04). The nonchalant tone of this message—that a God would be deemed "a control freak" for taking care of his creation—deconstructs the notion of God's benevolence assumed in theodicy. In the bridge, which the entire song seems to set up, the speed of Brock's vocals is a seeming outpour of not understanding this problem of evil. The lyrics read as follows:

If God controls the land and disease
Keeps a watchful eye on me
If he's really so damn mighty
My problem is I can't see
Well who would want to be?
Who would want to be such a control freak? (2:35)

The overlapping of this conundrum with the other environmentalist themes of the album beg the question of whether the resistance toward climate science is rooted in a theology. Why would God, our loving creator, allow anthropogenic climate change and habitat destruction to ravage the world? In part, this clarifies the religious right's insistence on fossil fuel usage and its obsession with petroculture Alaimo identifies in *Exposed* (96-7). In some ways, believing that the scientists are incorrect about such a conclusion is easier than dismantling the entire religious system that asserts God will take care of us. Disbelief in climate science over theology then becomes less of a logical issue and more of an interreligious, culture war issue.

After the song "Bukowski" wraps up, the cacophonous "Horn Intro" is reprised to open the next track titled "This Devil's Workday." This song manifests the album's most explicit treatment of the barrier between human and nonhuman life. After the horn section finishes its bombast, a banjo picks a short, terse melody that repeats throughout the entirety of the song. The horn section, supplied by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, improvises over the melodies and Brock's dark, raspy vocals. The creepy tone of the song is reciprocated in these distorted lyrics:

All those people that you know, [this line repeats three times]
Floatin' in the river are logs.
I could buy myself a reason
I could sell myself a job,
I could hang myself for treason
All the folks I know are gone." (0:20)

The cynical speaker represented in the song's lyrics demonstrates little regard for the integrity of truth. The value of reason, the speaker notes, is purely transactional. This cynicism is not unlike the lies spoonfed to the public by the American fossil fuel industry—hiring scientists to doctor findings in order to encourage further consumption and extraction. Similarly, this cynicism is combined with dehumanization and marginalization of the dead "[f]loatin' in the river." As the verses carry on, the improvisations of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band crescendo into a more harsh and eccentric sound. In the third verse, the speaker transitions from the de*human*ized to the in*human*e. Brock's vocals evolve from a raspy whisper into a guttural near-scream, "Gonna take this sack of puppies, / Gonna set it out to freeze, / Gonna climb around on all fours, / 'Till all the blood falls out my knees" (1:23). The notion of freezing puppies is inhumane, right? So, what kind of environmentalist message could possibly be gleaned from this? The intentionality in the act is the key issue here—this is what disturbs us in the speaker's treatment of the helpless puppies trapped in the sack. As members of a symbiotic relationship with domesticated dogs, we play a crucial, necessary role in their survival as a species. Consider the announcement Morton recalls in September of 2014 declaring that 50% of animal species have become extinct over the last fifty years. These are unintentional deaths due to human progress, but these are still deaths caused by humans. Intentional or not the blood remains on our hands.

A concern with intentionality intersects with the next track from the album "The View." This track previews a style which Modest Mouse returns to in later works, such as their hits "Dashboard" (2007), "Lampshades on Fire" (2015), and "The Ground Walks with Time in a Box" (2015). The style for "The View" is up-tempo with an almost dancy feel that highly utilizes the hi-hat. Returning to the interview with Modell by *The A.V. Club*, Brock describes the song as "a push-me, pull-me thing. Science finds a way to fuck things up, and then science finds a way to fix it… For every positive thing that we accomplish, something negative comes out of it, and vice versa." (Modell). Referenced in the interview, Brock points to the lyrics from "The View" which read "We are fixed, right where we stand" (1:33). This concern with our ability to reason our way out of problems that reason has created is of great concern to environmental theorists, including Morton. Morton's focus in *Dark Ecology* seems to drag us away from logic and toward an ecophilosophy of emotional interconnectedness. An earlier work of Morton however, *Hyperobjects*, describes this very conundrum:

> Doing nothing evidently won't do at all. Drive a Prius? Why not (I do)? But it won't solve the problem in the long run. Sit around criticizing Prius drivers? Won't help at all. Form a people's army and seize control of the state? Will the new society have the time and resources to tackle global warming? Solar panels? They take a lot of energy to make. Nuclear power? Fukushima and Chernobyl, anyone? Stop burning fossil fuels now? Are we ready for such a colossal transition? Every position is "wrong": every position, including and especially the know-it-all cynicism that thinks it knows better than anything else. (136)

In order to unfix ourselves from this position, we must be ready to embrace a willingness to change. As new information becomes available, we must embrace an intentionality which affords adaptation. Many look toward Tesla and entrepreneurs like Elon Musk as a futurist who will solve the problems of today by helping us to embrace our intentionality. This sense

of optimism to address the root of the problem suggests that many believe our next, fixed position will be a place where we can feel secure about the future. As an alternative, we should learn to anticipate and accept the challenges posed by the problems we will surely encounter in our future.

While the ecopoetics of Modest Mouse are rather implicit, theorists like Morton and Alaimo allow for the ecocritical aspects of the band's works to sing. *Good News for People Who Love Bad News* demonstrates that ecological works do not have to beat a dead horse in following the tropes of guilty environmental rhetoric. Through a renewed sense of interconnectedness between human and nonhuman life, the album displaces a post-Enlightenment logocentrism, substituting it for an archelithic, emotional framework instead. This manifests itself in more nuanced terms than sympathy for nonhuman life, utilizing mortality and its upper-bound of grief as an effective tool to expose the archelithic. Rather than solely chastising groups for adhering to the agrilogistic, American petroculture, the band seeks to engage itself within this culture as a whole—while not being afraid to place the jester's hat upon its own head. Through a sincere awareness of intentionality, the album reconfigures the Guilt and its subsequent blame in order to encourage a reconnection with the Earth in an emotionally centered, posthuman way. At the same time, this album does not seek to perpetuate the know-it-all attitude ascribed to most people's perception of environmental rhetoric. In lieu of this, the album seeks to renew a sense of interconnectedness between human and nonhuman life—not just for the betterment of the environment—but also for the creation of a moral nexus which is more congruent with our own understanding. Artists which push the boundaries of their genre, such as Modest Mouse, demonstrate the need for affective, ecocritical works which effectively renegotiate our relationship with the planet we share.

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