WATERMARK

Volume 17 2023

California State University, Long Beach

Watermark

Volume 17, 2023

Department of English
California State University, Long Beach

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.

All of the CSULB graduate students who have had a hand in forming and/or continuing *Watermark*'s tradition should feel proud. The contributing domestic and international graduate students should, moreover, also feel proud.

All submissions must include a 250 word abstract and cover page which consists of the writer's name, phone number, email address, essay title, and short biography (no more than 2 sentences). All essays should be no less than 6 pages, typed in current MLA format with standard 12-point font, and cannot contain the writer's name. As such, all submission materials must be sent as separate Word documents. Please direct all submission materials and/or questions to csulbwatermark@gmail.com

Department of English:
Watermark California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840

Watermark

Volume 17, 2023

Readers

Cassandra Amaya

Alexandria Costa

Robin Gaitan

Ray Paramo

Aachal Patel

Jake Perea

Michelle Rivera

Victoria Tran

Cover Artist

Alyssa Bardge

Layout Designer

Francisco N. Favela

Staff Advisor

Dennis López

Table of Contents

viii Award Winners

ix A Note from Watermark's Executive Co-Editors
By Ambar Quintanilla and Celina Cooper

1 Silenced Literacies and Surviving Languages: Print in Early 16th and 17th Century Philippines
By Shannen Escote

9 Saint Christopher and Redefining Masculinity
By Taylor Advincula-De Los Angeles

15 What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, and Global Warming?: Finding Comedy in the Ecological Thought
By Jim Gately

29 Sacred Supermarkets: Substituting God in Don DeLillo's White Noise
By Alexandria Costa

39 An Examination of Mary E. Wilkin's Freeman's Understudied Short Stories
By Ambar Quintanilla

49 Masculinity and the Trauma Narrative in Hector Tobar's The Tattooed Soldier
By Georgie Moy Arend

59 Demon Daughters: The Possessed Womb in King Lear
By Sarah Moon

69 Mores, Morality and Malory: Nicomachean Ethics and Futurity in Thomas Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur
By Celina Cooper

77 Decent Guys and Square Shooters: The Power of Queer Camaraderie in James T. Farrell's Young Lonigan
By Ray Paramo

83 Aemilia Lanyer's Reclamation of Female Agency with a "Chaste, Yet Loving Kiss"
By Cassandra Abigail Amaya

91 What Happens When Our Helmets Are Off: A Reading of Sir Tristram's Madness Through Thing Theory
By Sarrah Wolfe

99 Beastly Man and Manly Beasts: Adam, Eve, and Animals in Paradise Lost
By Kim Hu

109 The Fantasy of Persecution: Antisemitism and Martyrdom in "The Prioress's Tale"
By Sydney Brazil

121 "The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" as Anti-Clerical and Anti-Fraternal Satire
By Andrew A. Leung

129 Legacy of Empire: The Ladino vs. Indigene Dichotomy in Hector Tobar's The Tattooed Soldier
By Jesus Felix Jr.

141 Contributors' Biographies

Award Winners

OUTSTANDING CRITICAL ESSAY IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES
The Fantasy of Persecution: Antisemitism and Martyrdom in "The Prioress's Tale"
By Sydney Brazil

OUTSTANDING RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND ARCHIVAL STUDIES
Silenced Literacies and Surviving Languages: Print in Early 16th and 17th Century Philippines
By Shannen Escote

OUTSTANDING CRITICAL ESSAY ON 20TH-CENTURY LITERATURE
Sacred Supermarkets: Substituting God in Don DeLillo's White Noise
By Alexandria Costa

OUTSTANDING CRITICAL ESSAY IN ECO-CRITICISM
What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, and Global Warming?: Finding Comedy in the Ecological Thought
By Jim Gately

A Note from Watermark's Executive Co-Editors

When we jointly assumed the role of Executive Co-Editors for Watermark 17 at the end of the fall 2022 semester, we were excited and confident to embark on the journey together. However, we were immediately met with setbacks – Watermark's previous email address, which included all of Watermark's templates, lists, and files, was inaccessible to us. [Please note that previous executive editors were not at fault as this was out of their reach as well.] We did not let this hindrance deter our course; we quickly and cooperatively came up with a solution. We did realize, though, that we had a long, winded road ahead of us. Fast forward a couple of months later, we were fortunate to have such a large number of graduate students sign up to join our staff; their commitment to the journal eased our apprehensions and fears so much so that we began envisioning a more expansive, community-based journal experience for us all: a release party, awards/recognitions, and outreaching to CSULB's CLA departments to encourage diverse submissions. This journey, as it was new to the both of us, has been arduous but, without a doubt, rewarding. We are excited for this volume and thank everyone who has helped along the way.

We would like to wholeheartedly acknowledge everyone who has made Watermark 17 possible. Thank you to the authors for allowing us to share your work with our readers – your critical and professional research and writing skills are evident in these pages. Thank you to all who served on the journal's staff. The remarkable finished product reflects your meticulous, tireless hard work, knowledge, and expertise. We understand how painstakingly difficult it can be to balance graduate studies (essays, midterms, final papers, comps, thesis, etc.) and commitments such as these. We were fortunate to have worked with such an amazing, dedicated staff and hope you are proud of the fruits of your labor. We would like to extend our utmost gratitude to this year's managing editors: Kim, Shannen, Sarrah, and Taylor. Thank you for being reliable; we know this position requires some heavy lifting, quick turnarounds, and effectual communication; you all exceeded our expectations. Thank you to Alyssa Bardge, our Cover Artist, for creating such a powerful, vibrant, and exceptional art piece that truly conveys the journal's purpose – mutual exchange of knowledge. We appreciate your professionalism throughout the process and willingness to work with us for the first time. Thank you to our Layout Designer, Francisco N. Favela, and the CSULB Print Shop team for your attention to detail in preparing Watermark 17 for print. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to our Staff Advisor, Dr. Dennis López for your timely responses and advice. We recognize you have various responsibilities within CSULB's English department and beyond, so we thank you for working with us as we aspired to expand on previous editions. We simply could not have completed Watermark 17 without the support of you all.

Ambar Quintanilla and Celina Cooper, Executive Co-Editors, 2023

Silenced Literacies and Surviving Languages: Print in Early 16th and 17th Century Philippines

by Shannen Escote

In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Walter Ong argues that writing is a paradoxical process which requires both an interiorization and exteriorization of the self, a separation between "the knower from the known" which is made manifest onto the physical page (103). Ong's themes of nostalgia, temporal distance, the ironies and idiosyncrasies created by writing, and the construction of a language that has been removed from its "communal wisdom" become all too familiar for those who may read his work through a post-colonial lens. After all, the power dynamic described by Ong has been demonstrated in countless examples in which "the knower" has written ethnographic texts about their "native" subjects. *Orality and Literacy* thus raises several questions: how has the interiorization of writing fit into colonial enforced education and evangelization? How has imperial authority historically constructed "knowledge" through print and how has indigenous language become subsumed in the process? Lastly, what issues arise when indigenous oral culture is "translated" through the very same structures which seek to subjugate it, and how does one both reconstruct and continue to preserve pre-colonial writing? By using the example of the rise of print in the late 15th and early 16th century Philippines at the start of its colonial occupation, we can begin to grapple with the printing press's inextricable past as an imperial instrument, while also acknowledging how colonized people have engaged with—and achieved resistance through—the technologies of writing and print.

Ong argues that the survival of orality and oral tradition is an innate and crucial element for any culture's technology of writing, and this is especially true for pre-colonial Filipino writing. Historical evidence proving that early Filipinos were literate has been portrayed as somewhat of a revelation, perhaps due to the more dominant narrative of the Spanish "teaching" Filipinos how to write and read. In his article, "Filipino Education and Spanish Colonialism: Toward an Autonomous Perspective," Karl Schwartz attributes this to the way in which our modern histories tend to view the development of Philippine education solely from a "colonial perspective," while rendering literate Filipinos almost entirely absent

from their own story. Nevertheless, early Filipino writings in literature, music, and religion demonstrate a pre-existing proficiency pre-dating any Spanish intervention. Following Ong's definition, this writing was certainly *technological* due to the wide-spread use of a variety of tools and prepared paper-like writing surfaces (80). According to *Relación de las Islas Filipinas* (1604), one of the earliest written accounts of the Philippines, the Spanish Jesuit priest and historian Pedro Chirino recorded: "All these islanders are much given to reading and writing and there is hardly a man, and much less a woman, who does not read and write in the letters used in the island of Manilla" (Lee).

Bamboo was the most common writing material, but tree bark, palm leaves, and bamboo tubes were also used. After the outer bark wood had been stripped and smoothed, letters were carved into the surface with a *panulat* (Tagalog for "pen"). Much like the English Renaissance process of engraving, these markings would be inked with charcoal to make the characters darker and bold enough to read (Morrow). It is also important to note that even though modern paper would not be produced in the Philippines until Spanish colonial rule, the abacá plant—similar to the banana plant—was indigenous to the Philippine Islands and its hemp was often used by Filipinos to make rope and lightweight clothing. Foreshadowing the need for mass-produced paper during colonial rule, this versatile and biodegradable hemp would ultimately become the staple of the Philippines' paper industry, in contrast to the more fragile rice paper introduced by the Spanish which did not last long in the humid climate.

The use of such perishable materials did have drawbacks in terms of the preservation of early Filipino writings. However, one of the last remaining authentic artefacts is the Laguna Copperplate Inscription (900 CE) or "LCI," discovered in the Lumbang River and now housed at the National Museum of the Philippines. Carefully studied and transcribed by anthropologist Antoon Postma at Ateneo de Manila University, this copperplate is fully covered with inscriptions in Early Kawi Script, which was first used in Indonesia (750-925 A.D.) then spread to Southeast Asia and the Philippines (189). The hammered script used is "well-executed, in a regular style, and does not present great difficulties in reading," and even includes a correction where "a compound Sanskrit-derived word was accidentally omitted by the engraver of the copper-plate. When he afterwards noticed his mistake, he deftly inserted *tra...* under its intended position, and gave dotted indicators of his amended correction" (190). As the oldest calendar-dated Filipino document, the LCI exemplifies the way in which early Filipino writing was proficiently used as a mode of complex communication to record important figures and key topographical information. It also reveals a linguistic foundation for future language specifically used to describe the very process of writing. For example, Postma notices the repetition of the word *pam(a)gat*, an honorific for a leader or Chief. On the other hand, "those acquainted with the Tagalog language will recognize *pamagat* immediately... in rather common use, though at present mainly with the meaning of 'title of a book,' or 'heading of a chapter'" (191-2). Lastly, based on Postma's translation of the LCI, this written record acted as a type of receipt of debt, demonstrating how early Filipinos had a scribal system and kept documents of important transactions, using an autonomous writing technology to effectively communicate with the regions and peoples they traded with.

This "autonomous discourse" between an oral culture and writing is further seen in *baybayin*, Philippine's *surat* or writing system which functioned as an early shorthand for the

Tagalog language. Influenced by Hindu and Javanese writing, *baybayin* is an alpha-syllabic script in which some characters signify either one spoken consonant or vowel, whereas, other characters signify an entire syllable (Lopez, citing Barrows). So, for example, "A dot below (the consonant) could mean that either 'o' or 'u' should be pronounced with the consonant" (Woods 193). As we will see, however, the Spanish struggled to learn the conventions of *baybayin*, and it became clear that the fluctuation and the multiplicity of this writing system was viewed as problematic and antithetical to the colonial project of evangelizing islanders and establishing Castilian Spanish as the *langua franca* of the Philippines.

In "What Difference Does Colonialism Make?" historian Tony Ballantyne illustrates the way in which oral tradition became enmeshed within print culture for the purposes of expunging indigenous knowledge:

> Printed texts were the very basis of the day-to-day operation of colonial rule, but the processes by which they were created profoundly altered the knowledge they recorded, disembodying these traditions, wrenching them free of the traditional social contexts of knowledge transmission to revalue them as an aid to the operation of imperial authority. (345)

The "textualization" of indigenous cultures through printing has historically been a pivotal part of colonial rule to standardize and spread colonial knowledge, and this was especially enforced once the Spanish encountered already-literate Filipino cultures.

The start of the colonial crusade of Hispanization and religious conversion was marked by the arrival of the Augustinian friars with Miguel López in 1565. By order of King Philip II, the Philippines was to be "divid(ed)... for the said instruction and conversion among the religious of the orders, in such a manner that where Augustinians go there shall be no Franciscans, nor religious of the society where there are Dominicans. Thus...assigning each order to its provinces" (Woods 178). This tactic diverged from previous official Crown policy, which had discouraged any religious sect from having dominion over one "contiguous, ethnic-territorial area." Evidently, it was a deliberate response to the lack of a common language in the Philippines as well as the multiplicity of major languages and regional dialects. Thus, the Philippines was divided based on linguistic groups with each order establishing parishes in Manila's provinces.

In 1593, twenty-eight years after the Spaniards' arrival, Father Domingo de Nieva (assisted by Chinese printer Keng Yong) built the first xylographic printing press in the Philippines. This press utilized engraved woodblocks which were first inked then transferred to rice paper. It remained the primary mode of printing until it was replaced by movable lead type printing in 1606 (Ferndández). While each parish was able to own one of these presses, the material costs of printing were very expensive, so much so that by 1610, the religious orders were selling presses from one order to the other (Fernandez, citing Carreñ o). Despite the expenses incurred, the colonial printing boom resulted in the publication of twenty-four books between 1593 and 1648, primarily in Tagalog with fewer texts translated for the other regional dialects (Woods 178).

The *Doctrina Christiana En Lengua Española y Tagala* (1593) was the first book ever written and printed in the Philippines (Lopez). This text was primarily a collection of Catholic practices and Spanish prayers translated into Tagalog. For example, the Lord's Prayer can be found written in Spanish using the Latin alphabet, in Tagalog using a Roman script, and in Tagalog again but using the *baybayin* writing system. It is ironic that *baybayin* was included, considering the prejudice against the indigenous writing system as an "inferior" way to communicate to the masses compared to the Roman alphabet. Fray Cipriano Marcilla y Martín described the script as "any less than illegible… it presents great difficulties not for him who writes it but for him who reads it…Also it is absurd to say that with a few points and commas these characters can be made to signify everything that one might want to write as fully and as easily as our own Spanish alphabet" (Wood 195). Fray Francisco López went so far as to even attempt to "correct" *baybayin* by drawing small crosses to "cancel" out vowel placement and mark consonant-final syllables (194). Undoubtedly, this process of copying, re-printing, and "perfecting" Filipino script had a clear theological and colonial bias. However, if the missionaries' sought to eventually replace the use of *baybayin* with the Roman alphabet, then what drove their decision to continue to try to translate it? Was this "re-valuing" of the language done to facilitate a more widespread indoctrination to Christianity and/or to further codify colonial knowledge?

Ong writes, "the condition of words in a text is quite different from their condition in spoken discourse" and "in a text even the words that are there lack their full phonetic qualities" (99). Similarly, Spanish missionaries grappled with the dilemma of the phonetic "lack" they saw in *baybayin*. Some historians argue that the Spanish missionaries printed Tagalog writing out of convenience because it would have been easier to evangelize Filipinos if they could read and learn prayers in a recognizable script (Fernandez). However, after some difficulty in trying to translate Spanish into *baybayin*, missionaries resorted to the Romanization of the script—which is where intentions appear dubious. In his book *Contracting Colonialism*, Dr. Vicente Rafael argues that the way *baybayin* was translated and used by Spanish missionaries was evocative of a hierarchical relationship inscribed onto the language. Not only was the conversion of *baybayin* into phonetic writing an attempt to make the language more "readable," but this readability significantly "implied the control of the differing and deferring movement of writing by the 'persuasive and clear voices' of the missionaries who worked to ensure the passage of God's Word and the king's authority through the local idiom" (51). One might recall how Ong warns readers how "the writer's audience is always a fiction" (100). Likewise, Rafael argues that Spanish missionaries sought to supplant the perceived deficiency in Tagalog writing in pursuit of a "dream of a univocal speech and a transparent translation of Christianity into Tagalog," thus "fictionalizing" their colonized readers and constraining them to a dynamic that demanded and expected linguistic conformity.

This goal to domesticate early Filipinos' knowledge of language is further exemplified by the grammar books and dictionaries authored by the missionaries. The most notable and most comprehensive of these was *Artes y Reglas de la lengua tagala* (Art and Rules of the Tagalog Language), published in 1610 by the Dominican priest Francisco Blancas de San José. These grammar books and codices of the Tagalog language were written by the missionaries

in the hopes they might be better equipped to convey the authority of God and the king to the Filipinos (Rafael 25-6). Printed in the opening pages of the book is even a "prayer with which to ask our Lord God for help in order to obtain the language necessary for the dignified preaching of his doctrine." That the missionaries titled the book "the rules of the Tagalog Language" is its own irony, as Rafael argues that the *Artes* perpetuated a narrative in which the indigenous language was poorly structured and "untranslatable" while reinforcing the inherent superiority of Latin and Castilian Spanish in transmitting the holy word. Evidently, the thesis that *Artes* relies on is that Tagalog grammar simply did not exist at all, left to be relegated by the missionary "Knower" to the unknown.

Ong discusses the socially constructed nature of grammatical "rules," but this holds much more weight when applied to indigenous languages and pre-colonially literate cultures that have been *ruled over*. Rendering an entire system of writing grammar-less or unintelligible acts as a way of accelerating the production of a standardized and "legible native mind" that abides by both linguistic and religious doctrine (Ballantyne 343). This speaks to a larger problem, one that has emerged in conversations in historiography: the construction of colonial knowledge formation and colonial authority (343). Furthermore, as we shall see, the printing press becomes both the nexus of the subjugation of colonized language while paradoxically acting as the medium through which colonized communities have sought power to reject imperial regimes.

While Spanish missionaries strove to "reduce" Filipino languages in grammar books, the Filipino printer Tomás Pinpin saw a different opportunity. Pinpin assisted in the printing of the aforementioned *Artes y Reglas*, and in 1610 he became the author of the first published work written by a Filipino: the *Librong Pagaaralan*. He ultimately went on to publish various other important religious and linguistic texts of the early colonial period. Born in Abucay, Bataan, Pinpin was literate before Spanish colonial occupation, a noteworthy fact in that he "wrote to a public that could read and write—a fact he recognizes and assumes," in contrast to the patronizing tone used in missionary writings (Woods 177). The purpose of *Librong Pagaaralan* was to assist Filipinos in learning Castilian language in a bilingual format and to make Catholic doctrines accessible. Additionally, his book began with a song, and included six other original songs written in Tagalog (179). Some might view Pinpin in a less positive light, as simply a cog in the colonial printing machine and complicit in helping to indoctrinate his own people. However, Rafael acknowledges the value in the early printer's approach to translation:

> Pinpin stressed translation less as a linguistic transaction than as useful knowledge for engaging the Spaniards, less a transaction between inferior concretizations of God's universal language than as a 'serial displacement of one's first language by a second' and a leap back to the first, in order to alert and habituate the native Tagalogs to the interruptive effects of Castilian Spanish. In effect, Pinpin undermined the hierarchical relation between Spanish and Tagalog that the Spaniards had assumed in their claims to political and linguistic authority. (Howland, citing Rafael 52)

Rather than deride the natives for their "childish impressionability," Pinpin encouraged Filipinos to learn and understand Spanish, to hear the "value" of the words spoken during Catholic rituals so that they might develop their own understanding of the scripture before deciding to fully enter the faith (Rafael 86). This attention to the spoken

word was especially helpful, as most Catholic doctrine was delivered orally in the form of sermons and songs. This subverts the colonial narrative that rapid conversion was made possible because of the language barrier that supposed the converts simply could not comprehend the message of God without the missionaries' "gift" of translation. Moreover, such rationalizations served colonial authority by reaffirming "the privilege of speaking of and for the subordinate natives" with little consideration or vocalization given to the writings of their silenced colonial subjects (86). In contrast, this approach to print translation reconstructs a more accurate portrait of the early Filipino as an autonomous reader, fluent in both oral and written tradition, who was cognizant of how print was rapidly transforming their world. A broader conversation, then, could perhaps explore the ways historiography and postcolonial print studies can acknowledge the harmful impacts of colonial print and propaganda, while also accounting for colonized people such as Pinpin who embraced print as a mode of documenting and preserving oral tradition, of finding agency through the act of writing one's cultural history in their own voice.

The search for an authentic cultural identity through writing leads us back to one issue that has been present since the beginning: that most records of early Filipino writing have been lost either due to a lack of material preservation and natural decay or through the re-writings penned by the colonizer over the story of the colonized. Ong touches on this subject of the palimpsestic and innate temporality of writing technologies, comparing the separate-ness and "deadness" of the text to the dead organic materials that comprise the pages, and contemplating Plato's argument that writing "destroys memory" (80). However, modern efforts to revitalize *baybayin* are based on the notion that writing can resuscitate collective memory.

Although the use of *baybayin* declined during Spanish colonialism and the search for early colonial records has proven difficult, this has perhaps fueled projects which aim to revive *baybayin* as a cultural writing system. In 2018, the National Writing System Act was approved, which seeks to "promote, protect, preserve and conserve *baybayin*... using it as a tool for cultural and economic development to create a consciousness, respect, and pride for the legacies of Filipino history, heritage, and the country's authentic identity." One further area of research would be to explore the use of *baybayin* in modern printed documents and school materials. As seen in the video documentary "Baybayin" directed by Eli Rebellos, a new challenge presents itself in organizing the funds to reintroduce this writing technology to students and to recontextualize a precolonial language that has "already been mixed with the different teachings of our conquerors." Nevertheless, this resurgence of early Filipino writing speaks to the continuation of the process of reclaiming and decolonizing indigenous collective memory by bridging the temporal gap between a past where language was forgotten and the present that strives to remember. Ultimately, these preservation efforts continue a necessary conversation and interrogation of our conceptions of oral tradition, writing as technology, national language, national identity, identity formation, and the ever-present question of "who can speak for whom?" in the narrative of colonial history.

Works Cited

"Baybayin: Video Documentary about the Essence and Importance of the Baybayin Script." directed by Eli Rebollos and Joy Angcanan, 3 Jun. 2018, *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GjeNO-KB8s.

Ballantyne, Tony. "What Difference Does Colonialism Make?: Reassessing Print and Social Change in an Age of Global Imperialism." *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, ed. by Sabrina A. Baron et al., U of Massachusetts P, 2007, pp. 342–52, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vk8sv.23.

Barrows, David P. *A History of the Philippines*. World Book Company, Yonkers-On-Hudson, New York. 1914. pp. 88-107. *Artes De Las Filipinas Archives*, http://www.artesdelasfilipinas.com/archives/197/the-filipino-people-before-the-arrival-of-the-spaniards.

Carriage House Paper, and Philippines. *Premium Abaca Fiber from the Philippines (Manilla Hemp). JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/community.23106369.

Doctrina Christiana En Lengua Española y Tagala. Manila, 1593. PDF. *The Library of Congress: Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection*, www.loc.gov/item/48031307/.

Ferndández Rodríguez, Rebeca. 'Early writing and printing in the Philippines'. *History and Philosophy of the Language Sciences*. 2013. hiphilangsci.net/2013/07/10/early-writing-and-printing-in-the-philippines.

Francisco De San José, Fray, and Tomas Pinpin. *Arte Y Reglas De La Lengua Tagala*. Bataan, 1610, PDF. *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/item/12028342/.

"House Approves Baybayin as National Writing System." *House of Representatives*, Press and Public Affairs Bureau, 23 Apr. 2018, *Republic of the Philippines*, www.congress.gov.ph/press/details.php?pressid=10642.

Howland, Douglas. "The Predicament of Ideas in Culture: Translation and Historiography." *History and Theory*, vol. 42, no. 1, Wesleyan U, 2003, pp. 45–60, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3590802.

Lee, Gracie. "Early Printing in the Philippines." *Biblio Asia National Library*, vol. 17, no. 2, 7 July 2021. *Biblio Asia*, https://doi.org/https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-17/issue-2/jul-sep-2021/early-printing#fn:4.

Lopez, Erica. "Decolonising the Philippine language: The ebb and flow of Spanish influence on Filipino culture." *School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University*, 2021, https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/decolonisesml/tag/writing-systems/.

Morrow, Paul. "Baybayin, The Ancient Script of the Philippines." 2010, http://paulmorrow.ca/bayeng1.htm.

Ong, *Walter J. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002, pp. 77-103, *CSULB E-Reserves*, csulb.libguides.com/er.php?course_id=54743.

Postma, Antoon. "The Laguna Copper-Plate Inscription: Text and Commentary." *Philippine Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1992, pp. 183–203, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/42633308.

Rafael, Vicente L. Contracting Colonialism: *Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*. Kindle ed. Duke University Press, 1993.

Schwartz, Karl. "Filipino Education and Spanish Colonialism: Toward an Autonomous Perspective." *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, Colonialism and Education, U of Chicago P, pp. 202-218, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1186730.

"Translation and Memory: The Literary Worlds of the Spanish Philippines." Online Exhibit, University of Michigan Library, 2022, apps.lib.umich.edu/online- exhibits/exhibits/show/translation-memory.

"The History of the Abacá Plant and Manila Envelopes." University of Illinois Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Tumblr, 2019, https://tmblr.co/ZoojWm2dEPK0s.

Woods, Damon L. *Tomas Pinpin and Tagalog Survival in Early Spanish Philippines*. U of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2011.

Saint Christopher and Redefining Monstrosity

by Taylor Advincula-De Los Angeles

The Passion of Saint Christopher is a story that redefines typical understandings of monstrosity. Instead of limiting what a monster is to the physical body, the *cynocephalian* Saint Christopher shows that monstrosity has nothing to do with the body and everything to do with the soul. While monsters typically have a terrifying body, what finalizes their identity is their commitment, or lack thereof, to the Christian God. Despite Saint Christopher being a dog-headed man, the soldiers who are torturing him make it known that they view him not as a monster, but as "such a soldier of God" (*The Passion* 3). There is no mention of his physical form, only of his righteous soul. His devotion to this god remedies the monstrosity of his body, whereas Dagnus is portrayed in an antagonistic and monstrous way. He continuously tortures the saint and adamantly worships his pagan gods, displaying monstrosity through his tainted soul despite his human body. The definition of monstrosity has been warped within this story, fitting the anxieties and fears of the medieval Christian audience. Even if a saint is part of the human eating, dog-headed race of giants, he would still be considered less monstrous than a pagan human. Saint Christopher is a protagonist with the body of a monster, and his existence creates a different definition of what a monster is. He shows that monstrosity is limited to the state of one's "soul," and one's soul can only be non-monstrous through complete and total devotion to the Christian God.

Christopher's physical body is rarely mentioned in *The Passion of Saint Christopher.* Even though the text is missing its opening pages, it is noteworthy that a story that involves the torturing of Saint Christopher's body does not describe his physical form in depth. Perhaps the lack of any physical description of the saint is a reminder that the Christian reader should abstain from valuing their physical form over all else? In *Confessions* by Saint Augustine, it is advised that "if physical objects give you pleasure, praise God for them and return love to their Maker...if should please you, they are being loved in God; for they also are mutable and require stability by being established in him. Otherwise they go their way and perish" (62). He continues, letting readers know that "wherever the human soul turns itself, other

than to [God], it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you" (61). Augustine exalts the fact that the physical is temporary and unreliable, and the audience of *The Passion of Saint Christopher* would have certainly had exposure to his preachings. With a view of the priorities of the Christian believer, the lack of emphasis on Saint Christopher's body makes more sense. His monstrous container no longer exists, for he has abandoned his value of it in favor of valuing God above all else.

Saint Christopher is used to show that monstrosity is not physical, but is in fact the state in which a person's soul exists. In Andy Orchard's "The *Beowulf*-Manuscript," he claims that "*The Passion of Saint Christopher* introduces the further distinction to be made between the antagonistic world of monsters and men, and the merging and mingling to be observed between them" (18). The monster that is Dagnus and the saint that is Christopher are used as symbols that the line between monster and man is very thin. Christopher's ability to transcend beyond the physical limits that mark him as a monster creates a new understanding of monstrosity: it is not about the body so much as it is about the soul. Saint Christopher being the protagonist here is not coincidental, since "just as it is one of the monstrous *cynocephali*, traditionally associated with paganism, who is represented as the champion of Christianity. Likewise, Christopher is also called by Dagnus 'the worst of wild beasts', who stays calm and serene, while the king himself becomes progressively wilder and more enraged" (17). Christopher is used as a stark contrast to the inabilities of any other god outside of the Christian god. For if the Christian god were able to save him from the monstrous state of his body, then it is a god that is clearly superior to one that cannot make Dagnus appear more human than the "monster" he is torturing.

Christopher's existence as the protagonist highlights the weak boundary that separates humans and monsters. In "From Monster to Martyr: The Old English Legend of Saint Christopher," Joyce Tally Lionarons draws the conclusion that the *cynocephali* of the medieval orientalist narratives are horrifying because they are, in fact, human, but at the same time they fail to make certain fundamental distinctions and, by so doing, are doomed to remain speechless and cannibalistic. Dagnus is horrifying because, while he is capable of inflicting inhuman torture on innocent human beings, he is incapable of distinguishing between appearance and reality, saint and monster, pagan idols, and the true God (182).

Despite being a *cynocephali*, Christopher was able to remove his monstrous qualities through devotion and became more "human" than Dagnus—who, in contrast, could not remove his monstrous qualities that were on display. This weak boundary that separated monster and human is challenged, as "the legend of Saint Christopher opens for its readers the disturbing possibility that we too could fail to distinguish properly between categories, that we too could become monstrous" (182). If a monster is no longer recognizable by its physical body, then that means that monstrosity is no longer something that the "non-monstrous" are exempt from. This creates the question: what exactly makes the human closer to a monster, and a monster closer to a human? As is seen in the text, Christopher is worshiped despite being a *cynocephali*. Dagnus is unrelenting in torturing Christopher to ultimately further his own goals, distinct from the other humans who are not torturing the saint. It is no longer clear what a monster is, but readers are positioned to see Dagnus as the antagonist.

If this is the case, then readers are meant to empathize more with a Christian monster than a pagan human. This clarifies that what really makes something a monster is its position as devoted to the Christian God or not.

Interestingly, the text also deals with monstrosity outside of the body and soul. After Dagnus converts to Christianity, he proclaims:

> 'I shall send my orders throughout all my realm that no one who is subject to the jurisdiction of my rule do anything in opposition to the will of the heavenly God which Christopher served. Then if anyone is so deluded through the devil's wiles that he attempts that, in that same hour let him be punished with the sword, since I now know it for a truth that there is no earthly and no perishable authority at all, but his alone' (*The Passion* 11).

This declaration is not as ill-received as his previous devotion to converting everyone to his pagan gods. The passage continues with praising Christopher, and Daguns's proclamation is never refuted. As S.C. Thomson points out in "Grotesque, Fascinating, Transformative: The Power of a Strange Face in the Story of Saint Christopher," the newly Christian Dagnus "converts and aspires to enforce Christian worship as violently as he previously insisted on pagan sacrifice" (86). This switch lets the audience know that, in this world, monstrosity in the name of God is the only valid form of monstrosity. This violence he enacted upon Christopher was negative when it was in defense of his pagan gods, but it's acceptable now that it's in the name of the Christian God. The reader was positioned to view Dagnus's acts as monstrous, but they are now positioned to accept them since they are in the name of God. What was monstrous changed within the span of the story itself and, clearly, monstrosity is a mutable identity.

After the conversion of Dagnus and Christopher, the "monstrous" appears to go beyond Christianity and to a fear of any outside identity. In saying this, I am still positioning Christianity as the determining factor for a non-monstrous soul, but I am now also suggesting that the reason Christopher and Dagnus were both "monstrous" at one point is because they represented a fear of anything foreign to the medieval Christian audience. In her essay "Meditating on Men and Monsters: A Reconsideration of the Thematic Unity of the *Beowulf* Manuscript," Kathryn Powell notes that "foreignness seems able to function in two very different ways in the works which make up this manuscript; it could put distance between the English reader and the foreign and pagan characters described in the texts, but it could also elicit the reader's sympathy for or identification with characters or peoples who were depicted as suffering at the hands of foreigners" (7). While Christopher was the clear protagonist and Dagnus the clear antagonist, they were both similar in the way that they both needed to be converted to Christianity in order to be "saved" from their monstrosity. Christopher was part of a race that was not fully human, and Dagnus was a part of the humans that did not worship the Christian God. Both were considered foreign to what would have been a Christian reader, and both showed that the monstrosity of their existence could be rehabilitated through devotion.

It immediately stood out to me that Saint Christopher was a Christian saint while also being a monster from *The Wonders of the East*. Typically, the heroic saint who stood up to the

pagan king and died in the process is not a human-eating, dog-headed giant, so the fact that Saint Christopher exists brings into question what exactly determines if something is a monster or not. He upsets the line between monster and man, as a humane monster opposing a monstrous human. He is not bound by earthly desires, as he completely devoted himself to God and has effectively saved himself from his own origin. In speaking about God, Saint Augustine claims that:

> You purify us of evil habit, and you are merciful to the sins we confess. You hear... and release us from the chains we have made for ourselves, on condition that we do not erect against you the horns of a false liberty by avaricious desire to possess more and, at the risk of losing everything, through loving our private interest more than you, the good of all that is (48).

Even though Christopher is a *cynocephali*, there is no mention of him behaving as they do in *The Wonders of the East*. Despite his body, his desires and his soul are separated from its original state. He has been "purified" of the "evil habit" of his monstrous body, as Dagnus has of his monstrous soul. They redefine what monstrosity is, as it is a concept that exists beyond the limits of a monstrous body.

Works Cited

Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Lionarons, Joyce T. "From Monster to Martyr: The Old English Legend of Saint Christopher."

Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles : Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations, Medieval Institute Publications, 2002, pp. 167–82.

Orchard, Andy. "The Beowulf-Manuscript." *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*, University of Toronto Press, 1995, pp. 1–27. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt1287xc6.6.

Powell, Kathryn. "Meditating on Men and Monsters: A Reconsideration of the Thematic Unity of the Beowulf Manuscript." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. n.s., 57, no. 228, 2006, pp. 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgl019.

The Passion of Saint Christopher. The Beowulf Manuscript. Translated by R.D. Fulk, Harvard University Press, 2010, pp. 1-13.

Thomson, S. C. "Grotesque, Fascinating, Transformative: The Power of a Strange Face in the Story of Saint Christopher." *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2018, pp. 83–98, https://doi.org/10.1353/ems.2018.0007.

What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, and Global Warming?: Finding Comedy in the Ecological Thought

by Jim Gately

In the introduction to his 2018 book *Being Ecological*, eco-philosopher Timothy Morton provides his readers with some advice on how to approach his rather unconventional work of ecocriticism: don't worry about scientific facts and figures, embrace a "CARE LESS" attitude, and—most importantly—"watch any feelings of guilt that come up" (xxxiv, xlii). Guilt is what Morton seems focused on avoiding, particularly a "seductive rhetorical mode" of the ecological genre, "the guilt-inducing sermon" (*Being Ecological* xiv). Morton's rejection of guilt as a mode of ecological discourse functions as more than just a poststructural literary conceit; it also serves to call into question an environmental agenda that engages in the rhetoric of guilt, shame, and fear in order to effect change. Morton's dismissal of this language highlights the increasingly problematic styles of mainstream environmental literature, art, and activism: that of elegy and tragedy. The vast majority of environmental discourse is dominated by an earnestness and self-seriousness that, while reasonable and understandable in intent, often limits its audience and undermines its message. Environmental awareness has become synonymous with a type of patronizing self-righteousness that has turned the word 'environmentalist' into a negative stereotype for far too many. Existential environmental problems like global warming and mass extinction are undeniably depressing and tragic issues to contemplate and discuss; however, reading article after article filled with demoralizing facts about sea level rise, greenhouse gas emissions, and species extinction--combined with even more distressing articles about the lack of economic, social, and political willpower required to address such issues--has only exacerbated widespread feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Perhaps it is time for a change. Perhaps it is time to attune ourselves to a new mode of ecological thought. Perhaps it is time to laugh. In *Being Ecological*, Morton offers up a variety of alternative styles of being ecological--the immersive style, the religious style, the efficient style, etc.. Following this approach I would like to examine if a comic style of being ecological might be possible. Pursuing a poststructuralist methodology, this essay will be a

metacritical exploration of the potential possibilities and pitfalls of the role of comedy and humor in ecology. I will start with an examination of Morton's concept of ecognosis in his *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* and see how laughter, toys, and play can move us from depression to comedy. This will lead into an analysis of comedy and tragedy as genres, and the 'comedy of biology' in Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival*. Next, I will look at Stacy Alaimo's ideas of pleasure and exposure in *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Finally, I end with an exploration of irreverent ecocriticism and queer ecology in Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Throughout, it will be argued that humor, laughter, and comedy--far from being antithetical to environmental thought and activism--are, in fact, essential elements to thinking and acting ecologically, and that opening ourselves up to humor and comedy will enable us to provide new perspectives, inspire new insights, and discover new and more pleasurable ways of being ecological.

In order to reach the lightness of comedy, we must first begin in the dark. In *Dark Ecology*, Morton lays out his conception of what ecological awareness looks like in the Anthropocene age. He argues that "there are layers of attunement to ecological reality," which he calls "ecognosis" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 159). Ecognosis is the process in which we become ecologically aware of our inextricable coexistence with other species; when we realize "that nonhumans are installed at profound levels of the human" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 159). However, achieving ecological awareness is not an easy process and the "strange loop" of ecognosis that "bends around on itself" implies that "being and appearing are intertwined" and forces us to take a journey through some of our deepest, darkest emotions in order to get to the other side (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 98). Morton symbolically conceives of the journey to ecological awareness through his metaphor of the chocolate that consists of a series of concentric layers--guilt, shame, melancholy, sadness, joy--in which "each descending layer... is a more accurate attunement to the basic anxiety inherent in sentient attunement to things" (*Dark Ecology* 130).

What's surprising about Morton's ecognosis is discovering how much comedy and laughter lie at the heart of it. Each layer of his chocolate contains some form of laughter, and, in a way, it is laughter that both ends up being Morton's guide through ecognosis and one of dark ecology's most emblematic elements. Laughter progresses through the various layers of the chocolate, shifting to reflect the changing ontological moods of ecological awareness. What starts out as uneasy, guilty laughter morphs into a shameful laughter, which then turns into the horrific laughter of ridicule, before shifting into the bawdy laughter of kitsch, which morphs into the giddy laughter of sadness, finally becoming the hilarious laughter of joy. The ontological shifts that laughter takes in ecognosis track the pathway to joy that leads a person from depression to comedy. Laughter spans the gamut from an amusing chuckle to a nervous titter, a giddy laugh to a joyful exclamation. Comedy moves from irony to slapstick, from satire to surrealism, from parody to farce. Achieving true ecological awareness moves people from dark to light, from depression to happiness. Morton conceives of the path to coexistence as full of horror, abjection, and sadness, but also beauty, laughter, and joy. The journey begins serious and ends funny. As Morton states, "within the melancholia is an unconditional sadness. And within the sadness is beauty. And within the beauty is longing. And within

the longing is a plasma field of joy. Laughter inside tragedy. Comedy, the possibility space of which tragedy is a rare form. Comedy, the genre of coexistence" (*Dark Ecology* 119). For Morton comedy and laughter are the goal of ecological awareness itself, the ability to laugh with another species instead of fear it, the ability to play with nonhuman things, the ability to enjoy coexistence.

The concept of play is central within *Dark Ecology*'s strange loops. It first comes up in Morton's notion of the arche-lithic, his response to agrilogistics, the "specific logistics of agriculture" he blames for creating the Anthropocene and standing in the way of the possibility of future coexistence between the human and the nonhuman (*Dark Ecology* 42). Morton defines agrilogistics as promising "to eliminate fear, anxiety, and contradiction… by establishing thin rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and by reducing existence to sheer quantity" (*Dark Ecology* 43). Extending the Derridian concept of arche-writing, with its "shimmering quality" and "differential play," Morton conceives of the arche-lithic as an in-between space of possibility where agrilogistic boundaries can be broken down and overcome (*Dark Ecology* 80). The arche-lithic embraces contradiction, ambiguity, and paradox, and frustrates any agrilogistic attempt to contain it with its "implicit shimmer" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 82). The arche-lithic allows Morton to show how play is "structural to reality" and how all "[l]ifeforms play," allowing him to move from a "serious playfulness" to a "playful seriousness" (*Dark Ecology* 115-116). It is this playful seriousness that is required to travel from the depression of agrilogistics to the joy waiting on the other side of ecognosis. Play is what comedy is all about: jokes, wordplay, wit, physical humor. Like the arche-lithic, comedy shimmers because it exists in reality's gaps, the spaces of possibility that allow for incongruity, irreverence, and surprise. And Morton recognizes comedy's inherent shimmer as well: "[w]hen you are funny it means that you allow the irreducible gap between what you are and who you think you are to manifest without tampering with it. When you are successfully funny, it means you allow people to see you being that, living that gap" (*Dark Ecology* 153). Play can be fun on its own, but it's even more fun if you have toys, even if some of them might be broken.

Morton's toys are a peculiar breed, perhaps unsurprisingly more *and* less serious than most. He envisions toys as political and economic structures like neoliberalism, and connects them directly to his concept of hyperobjects in that they are both "physically massive" yet "*ontologically small*, always *less* than the sum of their parts," which refers to another of Morton's playful concepts: subscendence (*Dark Ecology* 114). Morton connects humans and nonhumans together within a layer of ecognosis he calls the Realm of Toys. Firmly placed between the region of the Horror and the region of the Ridiculous, the Realm of Toys exists as an area of "less violent future coexistence," what Morton calls "a blueprint for an ecological polity… that includes nonhumans as well as humans" (*Dark Ecology* 141). It is here that humans would be free to make toys with each other in interdisciplinary ways, in "meaningful collaborations between the arts, the humanities, and engineering" without dealing with any "mutual suspicion," as well as work together to imagine "*toy temporalities*" that would exist outside of "corporate needs" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 142-143). The Realm of Toys is also where humans can observe that since "[t]oys are suspended between being and appearing" the word "*Toy*" can be a "term for anything at all" (Morton, *Dark Ecology* 143). This knowledge frees

humans to see nonhumans as playful toys and accept their contradictory and ambiguous nature instead of being repelled by it. Morton believes that "an ecological future is toys at every scale without a top level that makes everything sensible, once and for all" (*Dark Ecology* 144). Morton's conception of toys is both playful and fun, serious and sincere. They contain the "playful seriousness" that he advocates for more of and connect to the ideas of pleasure and joy inherent in comedy. Morton's toys refuse to be bound by agrilogistic thinking and live in the possibility space of comedy making coexistence as fun and un-sensible as it can be.

If the beginnings of truly comic style of ecological thought can be found, somewhat paradoxically, in something called *Dark Ecology*, perhaps it would make sense to take a brief detour and examine some of the reasons why comedy and ecology have had such a hard time coexisting in the past. As in most cases regarding Western thought, it all begins in Ancient Greece. In *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* author John Morreall explains how both Plato and Aristotle had a negative view of humor, calling it "ethically suspect" and even dangerous when "uncontrolled" (3). They subscribed to what would be later called the Superiority Theory of humor in which laughter is seen as "scornful" and "derisive," and something to be "avoided" or "suppressed" (Morreall, *Philosophy* 10). To define humor's power only in terms of ridicule was obviously quite limited; however, this perspective on comedy was so influential that the Superiority Theory essentially held sway in philosophical circles for hundreds of years. Plato's view of comedy was particularly detrimental as he believed that amusement was "an emotion in which we tend to lose rational control of ourselves" (Morreall, *Philosophy* 10). Laughter, especially uncontrolled laughter, posed a moral threat to both individual and collective well-being and was therefore viewed with wariness and suspicion. Additionally, this fear of the irrational aspect of laughter goes a long way in explaining its lack of respect among Western thinkers who sought to keep humans separate from their natural environment and in hierarchical superiority to animals. While new theories on humor have been advanced over time with developments in cognitive science and psychology, the Ancient Greeks' low opinion of laughter and humor has remained a powerful influence on Western thought and art—and therefore much of environmental thought and art—to this day.

Another reason why comedy and ecology have made such poor bedfellows over the years can also be traced back to Ancient Greece and the invention of the pastoral. As a literary form that includes poetry, essays, and drama, the pastoral came to prominence in the first century B.C. with the Roman poet Virgil, was revived during the Renaissance, and has since, according Meeker, "been the model for countless literary works and a major influence upon modern attitudes toward both nature and human society" (51). Pastorals contrast the complicated and unfulfilling world of urban living and modern society with a romantic, idealized vision of nature and country life. The pastoral and its romanticized version of nature was—and continues to be—the default mode of much environmental literature.

In his essay "Are You Serious? A Modest Proposal For Environmental Humor," Michael P. Branch scrutinizes the legacy of the pastoral and criticizes the genre for its detrimental and lasting effect on environmental writing. In his analysis, he quotes two authors who have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the genre. In David Gessner's essay "Sick of Nature," he complains that reading most nature writing is "like going to Sunday School," at that he came to the realization that he "hated nature, or at least hated writing about it in a quiet and

reasonable way" (qtd. in Branch 380). Branch follows this with what has become a somewhat infamous quote from Joyce Carol Oates's essay "Against Nature" in which she states that her difficulty with nature is that "[I]t inspires a painfully limited set of responses in 'nature writers'--REVERENCE, AWE, PIETY, MYSTICAL ONENESS" (qtd. in Branch 380). Branch clarifies that what Oates really dislikes isn't nature itself, but nature writers and their limited emotional palette; however, he joins with both authors in criticizing a genre that has "left little room for humor" and "has evolved as a vehicle for the expression of piety and reverence" (Branch 380). Interestingly enough, Branch does hold up one author as a notable anomaly in the genre, believing him to be a writer of "wry humor… whose engagement with nature and culture is inseparable from his use of humor" even if most ecocritics have tended to ignore this aspect of his writing (382). It seems appropriately ironic that he was referring to perhaps the most famous nature writer, and his most famous work, in all of Western culture: Henry David Thoreau and *Walden*. As Aaron Sachs notes in his article "A Different Kind of Wildness: Environmental Humor and Cultural Resistance" in the Winter 2019 edition of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, "[i]sn't it striking that the comedic aspect of [Thoreau's] work has been so little appreciated or understood among general readers? Even environmentalists who adore [him] tend to do so because they see him as earnest, principled, abstemious, thrifty, *serious*" (1). Irony is a particularly trenchant form of humor.

Perhaps the biggest hindrance to finding comedy in ecology during the modern era can be addressed with one simple question: What's so funny about living in the Anthropocene? As Branch states, since "the global environmental crisis is real and urgent" and "requires a moral as well as strategic response," "it may be difficult to imagine what's funny about any of this" (380). Serious times call for serious people, and for most environmental writers, activists, and artists, a serious manner and mode of discourse is required in order to engage with these issues in thoughtful and consequential ways. However, seriousness has its downsides; it can be stressful and depressing; paralyzing and debilitating; boring and predictable. All work and no play make Jack a dull boy (and Jill a dull girl). Being taken seriously doesn't mean you always have to be serious. E. B. White writes, "[t]he world likes humor, but treats it patronizingly," feeling "that if a thing is funny it can be presumed to be something less than great, because if it were truly great it would be wholly serious" (qtd. in Branch 380). Branch, for one, rejects the idea that only "'wholly serious' forms of environmental writing and scholarship are more engaging and effective than a practice that includes the creativity, spontaneity, flexibility, playfulness, and enjoyment that humor brings" (380).

Still, there can be no denying that for some finding humor in tragic events is difficult, if not impossible. One reason can be found in comedy's inherent shimmer. Because of its playfulness, because it can't be agrilogistically contained, comedy is incredibly subjective. Context is vital, as are a range of factors that include an individual's age, race, gender, and cultural and educational background; this is to say nothing of the cognitive, physiological, and psychological processes involved. Plato and Aristotle may have undervalued the importance of humor to human beings with their Superiority Theory, but the comedy of ridicule can reinforce existing power structures and perpetuate negative stereotypes. Morreall examines the "negative ethics" of humor in *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*, acknowledging that "[a]s in play and in aesthetic experience, the practical and

cognitive disengagement in humor can have harmful effects… the disengagement can be irresponsible… it can block compassion… and it can promote prejudice" (102). Suggesting that "laughter evolved as a play signal" for human beings, Morreall asserts that the solution to avoid potential disengagement and misinterpretation in humor is through the use of these signals, or "conventional markers," things such as "words, facial expressions, and body language" that allow people to communicate to others when they are joking or fooling around (*Comic* 37). While he ultimately believes that humor's positive ethics far outweigh its negative ones, Morreall's analysis of the dangers of disengagement in humor show that its arche-lithic play can often shimmer in uncontrollable ways. And yet, all species play, and we are learning everyday that even more of them laugh, which should be another signal to us that despite its potential faults comedy is the genre of coexistence; the only genre that lets us all play together.

In 1974, Joseph Meeker published *The Comedy of Survival*, a materially slight, but philosophically hefty book that was one of the first works of ecocriticism to take comedy and humor seriously. The book has fallen in and out print over the years, and while it would be a wild overstatement to say that the book had much of an impact at the time of its initial release, there's no denying that Meeker's unique perspective has had an influence over the years, to the point where now almost all modern writers who touch on the topic of comedy in ecocriticism reference his work. Reading it yourself makes it easy to understand why as Meeker has laid out a defense for ecocritical comedy that still feels fresh today. In the book, he views comedy and ecology through a literary lens, examining what "influence" literature has had on both "human behavior and the natural environment," and what insight it may offer "into human relationships with other species and with the world around us" (Meeker 4). Meeker focuses heavily on comedy as a genre, contrasting it with tragedy, but viewing it also as a "mode of action" he sees "common to many animal species," a mode that connects us not just to each other as human beings, but "with other species through shared evolutionary history" (9, 11). In his analysis of comedy, Meeker makes similar observations as Morton does, both to its inherent playful nature, and as a mode--or style--of coexistence with the natural world. Meeker takes comedy as something playfully serious (or is it seriously playful?), ultimately arguing for it as a contributor to survival.

One of Meeker's main concepts in the book is his notion of the "comic way" or the "comic mode," defined as both "an attitude toward life and the self, and a strategy for dealing with problems and pain" (12). Meeker evolves the comic way out of literary comedy, contrasting it with tragedy--and the tragic way--and connecting it to nature through biology. He believes that the tragic way of looking and dealing with life is ill-suited to ecological thinking for a variety of reasons. As he states, "[b]oth tragedy and comedy arise from experiences of misfortune, but they respond to pain in different ways" (Meeker 14). Meeker sees the tragic way as both providing "a framework that elevates suffering and makes metaphysical a sense of misery," and a dualistic, "polarized idea of contrasts: good and evil, light and dark, God and the Devil, truth and falsehood, male and female, friend and enemy" (14). In contrast, the comic way "is the path of reconciliation," a "complex" vision that "sees many aspects simultaneously, and seeks for a strategy that will resolve problems with a minimum of pain and confrontation" (Meeker 14-15). He defends the comic way by explaining how "comedy grows from the biological circumstances of life," and how, unlike tragedy, comedy

is "universal" because it doesn't depend on "ideologies or metaphysical systems" (Meeker 15). Meeker subscribes to the comic way because he views comedy as "a celebration, a ritual renewal of biological welfare" whose "main concern is to affirm the human capacity for survival and to celebrate the continuity of life itself, despite all moralities" (16). In his vision of a biology of comedy Meeker taps into many of the key concerns of current ecocriticism, using notions of genre to elucidate how and why humans have separated themselves from their environment and the natural world. He concludes that we must change our ways of perceiving, feeling, thinking, and acting, and that comedy--and a comic perspective--is the most obvious and natural way to do so.

Meeker's dismantling of tragedy as both a literary genre, and as an attitude toward nature, is revelatory, both in the systemic ease in which he carries it out and in its overall impact. Of particular note is how he reveals its philosophies and ideologies to be completely driven by the same agrilogistic thought that has created the Anthropocene. His critiques are numerous and varied, but these three ideas underwrite his argument: "the assumption that nature exists for the benefit of humanity, the belief that human morality transcends natural limitations, and humanism's insistence upon the supreme importance of the individual personality" (Meeker 24). Meeker recognizes the detrimental impact living life in the tragic mode has had on both humanity and the world itself, and his vision of a comic corrective functions in much the same way as Morton's arche-lithic does.

Meeker and Morton share other philosophies as well. In his examination of comedy as a genre, Meeker compares and contrasts the pastoral and the picaresque as they "represent two important patterns of response to an unacceptable world" (50). Like comedy and tragedy, Meeker views the pastoral and picaresque as not just literary genres, but as "modes of human behavior and systems of human values" (50). He views the pastoral desire to find a natural alternative to society's troubles as similar to tragedy in that "[t]he pastoral impulse is utopian in its assumption that suffering and chaos are unnecessary and that strategies that will overcome such ills are possible, indeed natural" (Meeker 55). Meeker also sides with writers like Oates and Gessner in his dislike of the pastoral reverent tone and self-righteous earnestness. He condemns this vision of nature as being inherently false since "[p]astoral poetry expresses a longing for [an] early stage of civilization when agriculture had given people leisure and sufficiency, but before the development of elaborate social and political structures. What the pastoral tradition calls 'nature' is merely simplified civilization" (Meeker 57). Meeker recognizes the agrilogistic thought inherent in the pastoral and condemns it for glorifying "anthropocentric agriculture" and rejecting "the possibility that wild nature has any independent integrity" (58). Like Morton, Meeker acknowledges the detrimental effects of man's separation from nature and how the pastoral, like tragedy, has contributed to perpetuating agrilogistic thought.

Contrarily, Meeker sees the comic way of the picaresque as another version of the comedy of survival. Like the pastoral, the picaresque presumes there to be a "necessary relationship between human social and biological environments, but [they] differ in their assessment of that relationship" with the pastoral looking toward biological nature as "an alternative to society, while the picaresque sees society itself as a natural environment--a wilderness" (Meeker 51). Into this untamed and diverse wilderness, with its "complex

interdependencies that defy simplification," enters the hero of the picaresque, the picaro" (Meeker 59). Unlike the pastoral hero, the picaro "suffers from no conflict between society and nature simply because he sees society as one of the many forms of natural order" (Meeker 58). The picaro recognizes the complexities and dangers of his world and knows that "his survival or failure will depend upon his own inventiveness" (Meeker 59). He responds to the "chaotic complexity" of society not by seeking simplicity as the pastoral hero, but by "becoming more complex himself" (Meeker 60). Thus, the picaro is "an opportunist rather than an escapist, a person of wit rather than contemplation, a realist rather than an idealist" (Meeker 60-61). This aligns the picaro with a comic figure of folklore and myth, the trickster, as a character that uses their intelligence, craftiness, and wit to navigate through the world. Like the trickster, the picaro is seen as an outsider, or an "outlaw," who must often break or ignore "the laws and rules of society" in order to survive (Meeker 61). Meeker's analysis of the picaresque and the picaro point to the value of a comic perspective on the environment and to the comic way as a valuable mode of survival, for at the end of picaresque narratives "[t]he world's problems are never solved, no enemies are defeated, no new truth is realized, no peace is attained," but the picaro has "gained [a] greater competence at survival, acceptance of responsibility for his own life, and a clearer understanding of the many threats surrounding him" (65). Unlike the pastoral hero, who's anthropomorphic escape into fantasy is destined to fail, the picaro survives through the comedy of resilience and lives to fight, or *play*, another day.

Play is a central notion in *The Comedy of Survival* and Meeker's enthusiasm for it parallels Morton's. He views play as the lifeblood of the comic way, both as "the enactment of the comic spirit" and "comedy in action" (Meeker 10). The picaresque life consists of "infinite play," and it is the picaro's "endless enthusiasm for keeping… play alive" that allows them to survive and persevere (Meeker 73). Like Morton, Meeker views play as central to life on earth—for humans and nonhumans alike—a universal language "present in all cultures and periods" that connects all humans, as well as animals, together (82). Sounding conspicuously Mortonian, he states: "[t]he most endearing thing about play is its uselessness. Play exists for its own sake, and seeks no goals or objectives beyond itself" (Meeker 18). As Morton notes, "[l]ifeforms play" not for any particularly *useful* reason, but "because play is structural to reality" (*Dark Ecology* 115). While their notions of play are strikingly similar, Morton might be wary of Meeker's suggestion of creating a "play ethic," seeing it as more "seriously playful" rather than "playfully serious." Meeker does take play very seriously, but his desire for an ethics of play springs from his ardent belief in its intrinsic value to humanity. He also acknowledges that "comedy and play are always defined by the particular contexts in which they occur, not by rules or laws" and sees a play ethic as "necessarily… loose, negotiable, and subject to daily revision" (Meeker 116-117). And even Morton can't deny that Meeker's theoretical creation of a "Playbill of Rights" is nothing if not playful and amusing. For both critics, the importance of play cannot be underestimated in their work; Morton's arche-lithic notions of toys, laughter, and shimmer all revolve around the concept of play; and for Meeker play is at the very heart of his comic way. Play is the best representation of both of their comedic, irreverent ecocritical perspectives.

The Comedy of Survival is a key text in exploring ideas of comedy and humor in ecology and environmental thought. In many ways Meeker laid the foundation for contemporary

ecocritics, like Morton and Seymour, to build their conceptual funhouses on. His application of a literary ecology finds the connections between human literature and human ideologies of the world, showing just how much the literature—and genre—of tragedy is responsible for reinforcing the agrilogistic thinking that has led to the Anthropocene. Meeker's critique and rejection of the tragic way of humankind, and his celebration and embrace of the comic way of the natural world, illuminates the myriad ways in which comedy and humor allow us to better think ecologically. His comedy is one of perspective, attitude, and play; but, perhaps most saliently for those of us living during the sixth mass extinction, it is a comedy of resilience and hope. As Meeker notes, "Comedy illustrates that survival depends upon our ability to change ourselves rather than our environment, and upon our ability to accept limitations rather than to curse fate for limiting us" (21).

The more one looks for the comic way in ecocriticism, the more they may be surprised to find it. No matter how serious and un-fun ecocritics try to be, comedy—like evolution—finds a way, sprouting up in the unlikeliest of places. Stacy Alaimo's *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* uses an interdisciplinary approach in order to examine the environmental ethics and politics of various modes of new materialism and posthumanism. Through a feminist and queer lens, Alaimo focuses on how, "[n]ew materialisms, [by] insisting on the agency and significance of matter, maintain that even in the anthropocene, or, especially in the anthropocene, the substance of what was once called 'nature,' acts, interacts, and even intra-acts within, through, and around human bodies and practices" (1). While none of that sounds particularly amusing, *Exposed*, by virtue of its poststructuralist DNA, makes space for humor and the comic way in both its philosophy and its practice, finding it to be enmeshed and entangled with new materialism in a variety of ways.

One of Alaimo's major areas of focus is on pleasure, specifically, in examining the ways in which humans can find, take, and create pleasure in both their environmental ethics and politics, as well as in their physical material surroundings. For Alaimo, pleasure is inextricably tied to her focus on the corporeal aspects of ecology, and she rejects agrilogistic thought and the tragic mode, focusing instead "on how the materiality of human bodies provoke modes of posthumanist pleasure, environmental protest, and a sense of immersion within the strange agencies that constitute the world" (13). She views pleasure in much the same way Morton and Meeker view play, both as intrinsic to human nature, and one of the ways in which we can connect more strongly to the natural world. This can be seen most clearly in her notion of "trans-corporeality," which she defines as the way "in which human bodies are not only imbricated with one another but also enmeshed with nonhuman creatures and landscapes" (Alaimo 67). Alaimo looks for pleasure in the enmeshment between the human and nonhuman; for her, pleasure is play, is the arche-lithic, is the comic style, is the comedy of coexistence.

Alaimo finds pleasure not just in "modes of environmentally oriented habitation" and the "trans-corporeal connections between people and places," but in forms of environmental activism and protest as well. In her chapter titled "The Naked Word: Spelling, Stripping, Lusting as Environmental Protest," Alaimo examines the different ways women practice trans-corporeality in their politics. In looking at examples of "naked protest," she locates forms of humor in the performance of the activist known as La Tigresa, a young woman who

combines elements of "pro-sex feminism and a goddess-worshipping strain of ecofeminism" with "environmental monkey-wrenching and pornography" (Alaimo 68). Alaimo notes how La Tigresa utilizes elements of camp and parody in order to achieve her political message, and, in her play, makes "pleasure political and the political pleasurable" (84).

Similarly, she celebrates the connection between humor and pleasure in the environmental organization Fuck for Forest, who create porn videos of people having sex in nature, donating the proceeds they make to saving the rainforest. For Alaimo, Fuck for Forest connects "sexual freedom and pleasure to environmentalism," arguing that "sex not only feels good but [it] can also heal the planet" (83). Alaimo celebrates these unconventional forms of protest as irreverent celebrations of environmental pleasure. She bemoans the lack of pleasure in environmental discourse and quotes Catriona Sandilands who explains that it "is not only that abundant pleasure is virtually absent in (most) ecological discourse, but that it is often understood as downright opposed to ecological principles; frugality and simplicity appear to act as antithetical principles to enjoyment or generosity" (qtd. in Alaimo 84). The fact that one could easily replace "pleasure" with "comedy" in Sandilands' statement is a testament both to their intrinsic similarities, and to the low opinion which they are held in the majority of environmental discourse.

One of Alaimo's central conceits in the book is her idea of "exposure," arguing "that a material sense of exposure and pleasure fosters ontologies, epistemologies, ethics, and politics that interconnect the human with the nonhuman" (12). She believes that it is only when humans allow themselves to expose themselves to the nonhuman world that they can truly experience the pleasures and comedy of coexistence. She specifically focuses on the idea of "dwelling in the dissolve," something she calls a "dangerous pleasure," and defines as "a paradoxical ecodelic expansion and dissolution of the human, an aesthetic incitement to extend and connect with the inhuman" (Alaimo 168). In the dissolve "boundaries have... come undone" and dwelling there "can be a form of ethical engagement that emanates from both feminist and environmentalist practices" (Alaimo 2). These ideas of exposure, crossing boundaries, and entanglement with nonhuman things, connect strikingly with comedy. The environment, and the characters' interaction with it, is a major focus of many comic stories. Very often the narrative begins with a character being forced out of their comfort zone and into strange and challenging spaces that require them to interact with the world in different ways. These characters become exposed in these new environments and vulnerable to the elements. Often lacking in control and authority, they must rely on others to help them on their journey, requiring them to make new connections and get entangled with strange new agencies. Along the way, they overcome obstacles, achieve their objective, and, in the end, are changed by their experience for the better. Comic characters are perfect examples of Alaimo's trans-corporeal creatures who discover the pleasures of being enmeshed with the nonhuman world. By exposing themselves to the elements they develop a material sense of the pleasures of coexistence, and through their interconnection with others they discover the dangerous, but seductive, pleasures of dwelling in the dissolve. Alaimo's concepts, like her trans-corporeal creatures, are inextricably enmeshed in a comic way of existence, showing how—once again—comedy is everywhere in the nonhuman world if you just know how to look for it.

Pushing further into the dissolve, we find even stranger, more seductive, and more irreverent sensibilities of environmental comedy and humor. Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* functions as a metacritical corrective to the self-serious, dour, and pessimistic traditional ecocritical discourse by championing "contemporary Western works that both identify and respond to" the "absurdities and ironies" of living in the Anthropocene, "often through absurdity and irony, as well as related affects and sensibilities such as irreverence, ambivalence, camp, frivolity, indecorum, awkwardness, sardonicism, perversity, playfulness, and glee" (4). Seymour uses a queer ecological approach to critique mainstream environmentalist thought and make space for what she calls bad environmentalism, "environmental thought that employs dissident, often-denigrated affects and sensibilities to reflect critically on both our current moment and mainstream environmental art, activism, and discourse" (6). Seymour states that "[i]n simpler terms, I think of it as doing environmentalism with the 'wrong' attitude--without reverence of seriousness--and while also having a sense of humor about oneself" (12).

Of all the works examined in this essay, there is little doubt that *Bad Environmentalism* is the most fun (and the funniest to read) thanks to its queer, poststructuralist sensibilities that look for elements of playfulness, irreverence, irony, and perversity in the context of environmental problems. Seymour is a natural contrarian who excels and delights in playing the role of trickster, tipping over the moralistic, didactic, self-serious apple carts of mainstream environmentalism, exposing its faults and questioning the effectiveness of its rigid discourse. Affect is an important concept for Seymour as she analyzes and interrogates both conventional modes of environmentalism and its affect, while also advocating for alternative depictions of environmentalism that employ the "wrong" affect and attitude. By choosing texts that are diverse in both form and in affect, Seymour calls into question the idea of there being a "right" and a "wrong" attitude when practicing environmentalism. In fact, she seems to revel in the perverse affect of these unconventional works, enjoying the ironies of finding ecological awareness in things like the MTV reality show *Wildboyz,* which delights in the immature, the low-brow, and the obscene. By finding value in texts that others have dismissed or ignored, Seymour makes a convincing case that a queer-influenced, irreverent perspective is sorely missing from mainstream environmental works. Her hope being that through its "non-normative, self-reflexive, and noninstrumentalist" approach to criticism "*Bad Environmentalism* seeks to both diversify the archive of environmental art and reassess how that archive is constituted in the first place" (Seymour 7).

Seymour's playful and irreverent approach to environmentalism proves that the applications of humor and a comic perspective can open up new and exciting areas of ecological thought to explore. *Bad Environmentalism* broadens the definition of what it can mean to *be* environmental by toying with ideas of irony, taste, identity, and representation. Its queer, poststructural, deconstructionist slant questions the boundaries between high and low culture, good and bad taste, comedy and drama, and makes room for traditionally marginalized perspectives: racially-diverse, queer, indigenous, working-class, etc. By playing with accepted ideologies, dichotomies, and power structures, Seymour uses humor as a weapon, carving out new spaces of ecological thought, giving power to the powerless, and turning the master's tools against him. Seymour's success points the comic way for others to

follow, and when she inquires, "[h]ow might reclaiming gaiety and other contrarian modes enable us to create new modes of resistance, new forms of community, and new opportunities for inquiry into environmental crisis?" she poses a challenge to us all (24).

Taking the ecological road less traveled has illuminated new and exciting avenues in which it might be possible to think, live, and be ecological. However, finding humor and laughter in environmental thinking and eco-critical discourse will likely remain difficult. The ghost of Plato and the agrilogistics of tragedy will continue to try to control the laughter and keep us separated from nature. Living in the Anthropocene is no laughing matter, full stop. However, as we have discovered, humor takes many forms, and it laughs at those who can't laugh at themselves. Tapping into the inherent play of comedy allows us to be a little less self-righteous, a little less strident, and a little more attuned to the seductive pleasures of the nonhuman world. The comic way may be the road less traveled, but it's a heck of a lot more fun than the road we've been stuck on. It is up those of us who find pleasure in coexistence, joy in irreverence, and humor everywhere to lead the way. As Michael Branch asks, "[i]f humor is vitally important to our happiness and mental health, our friendships and social relations, our professional collaborations and teaching, if it is energizing and restorative and pleasurable, how then can we rationalize its banishment from our most important work?" (381). A comic style of being ecological is possible if we want it. All things play, so grab a toy and let's expose ourselves to the irreverent pleasures and joys of coexistence.

Works Cited

Alaimo, Stacy. Exposed: *Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Branch, Michael P.. "Are You Serious? A Modest Proposal For Environmental Humor," *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, edited by Greg Garrard, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 377-390.

Meeker, Joseph. *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and a Play Ethic*. Third Edition. The University of Arizona Press, 1997.

Morreall, John. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

---. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, edited by John Morreall, State University of New York Press, 1987.

Morton, Timothy. *Being Ecological*. The MIT Press, 2018.

---. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

Sachs, Aaron. "A Different Kind of Wildness: Environmental Humor and Cultural Resilience," The Thoreau Society Bulletin, no. 34, Winter 2019, pp. 1-6.

Seymour, Nicole. Bad Environmentalism: *Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Sacred Supermarkets: Substituting God in Don DeLillo's White Noise

by Alexandria Costa

In 1993, Adam Begley of *The Paris Review* asked Don DeLillo to respond to the writer's dubbed title as "the chief shaman of the paranoid school of American fiction" (Begley). DeLillo, although skeptical to accept the honorary label, offered to divulge the mechanisms of paranoia and mysticism in his works. The writer revealed, "The important thing about the paranoia in my characters is that it operates as a form of religious awe. It's something old, a leftover from some forgotten part of the soul...They represent old mysteries and fascinations, ineffable things...They're like churches that hold the final secrets" (Begley). DeLillo's postmodern version of paranoia is something more than just feeling. It's religiously bound, a mystical manifestation of "something old" and sacred. In reading these moments of religious experience, paired with the inherent mundane backdrop of postmodernism, DeLillo's paranoia leaves his readers equally as perplexed as his characters.

DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) follows a group of characters that experience the writer's quintessential paranoia as they go about their daily suburban lives, this feeling creeping up on them in even the most commonplace supermarket trips and workdays. Jack Gladney, the novel's protagonist, experiences this paranoia at its highest form as he desperately tries to give reason and purpose to his life, despite the clamor of "white noise" always seeping through his narration. For Jack, his paranoia manifests in an intense fear of death, a constant feeling that follows him, and subsequently, sends him on a very dramatic descent of mishaps. Paranoia is, in all its strange metaphysical ways, the driving force of *White Noise*'s suburban catastrophe. By exposing these experiences of paranoia in the novel, DeLillo's narrative ultimately reveals a postmodern world in which the communication of our fears has been given a technological pretext and traditional religious experience has taken the routine form of American consumerism.

To understand the world of *White Noise* and the mysterious experiences of its characters, it is important to first understand the postmodern experience. In his reading of DeLillo's novel, Erick Sierra attributes the "postmodern mysticism" of the narrative to

another postmodern framework called postsecularism. Sierra explains, "If an important part of what makes such novels as *White Noise* postmodern is that they undermine the hegemony of reason, what makes them postsecular is their reinstatement of the transcendent by way of mystical knowledge" (17). Essentially, Sierra describes a postmodern practice of applying "mystical knowledge" to a "transcendent" experience, despite living in a consumerist secular society. This gives reason to the term "postsecular," as it invokes the idea of returning to a world that was once spiritual or religious. Postmodern society is searching for religious experience again, but in a world that has been deemed secular by technological advancement.

And for those in search of such an experience, this can be a complex, perhaps impossible, task to achieve. Sierra exposes the problem with postsecularism further by explaining, "This [postsecularism] involves a weakening of knowledge: a movement from militant self-certainty—be it Enlightenment Reason, religious dogmatism, or totalizing political ideology—to such supple cognitive modes as subjective spiritual experience" (16-7). As Sierra notes, this "weakening of knowledge" comes from the social movement away from established religious frameworks. Traditional religious experience is replaced by "subjective spiritual experience" in which the subject, although searching for the same religious awe of traditional religion, is given no framework for such a feeling in the postmodern world. Instead, spirituality and belief in both energy and practice take the form of consumerism: a new kind of faith. In *White Noise*, this frameless spiritual energy is found all around, invoking countless experiences of religious awe and awakening for its characters. And this energy, of course, is what the novel calls white noise.

Sierra's idea of the postsecular describes the flaws of these subjective, unenclosed spiritual experiences as it leaves those in the postmodern world without an explanation for their religious awe; however, understanding its link to consumerism contextualizes DeLillo's version of paranoia in *White Noise*. This lack of knowledge creates paranoia, and in a world full of white noise, of constant instances of awe and dread, there is no direction given to deal with such experiences. For Jack, this paranoia manifests as a fear of death. But this fear is experienced by every character, as the novel, explained by Laura Barrett, did not create this fear on its own, but rather, gave a postmodern framework to "humanity's preoccupation with death" (Barrett 99). This "preoccupation with death" of course, relates again to the postsecular experience and the postmodern society's attempt to give religious awe and comfort to humanity's constant fear of dying. As Barrett states, "We invent myths in part to make sense of the end," and in *White Noise*, Jack Gladney is doing just that in his narrative.

The novel begins on the first day of a new semester at Jack's university. This chapter details the professor overlooking a scene of cars dropping off students and their belongings, with parents saying their farewells and students rekindling their friendships. Jack describes the scene in detail, calling it a "spectacle" and a "brilliant event" despite admitting to having watched it for "twenty-one years" (DeLillo 3). Barrett notes the religious context of this moment, writing, "A line of station wagons delivers parents and their children to 'College-on-the Hill,' a setting which echoes John Winthrop's lay sermon aboard the *Arbella* in which he predicted that the incipient Puritan colony would be a 'city on a hill,'...whose constituents, like the adolescents in Blacksmith's college, have emigrated to form a new community," (99). Jack describes the university setting as a new form of religious exodus, comparing the experience

of move-in day to the Puritans finding refuge in a new sacred community. Jack even goes on to call this community, "a collection of the like-minded and spiritually akin, a people, a nation" (DeLillo 4). This scene evokes a religious-like experience for the reader, despite describing a scene with no real religious context. Barnett concludes that, "DeLillo has taken the nexus of economics and spiritual salvation to form an elect in which quasi-spiritual fulfillment is irrevocably linked to wealth" (99). Jack's life, filled with reasoning only understood through class privilege and consumerism, is given deeper spiritual meaning through comparing this mundane experience to religious fulfillment. And he does this, as readers go on to learn, because of his inherent fear of death. Jack desperately tries to create religious awe in his life to make sense of the white noise around him. If he can find spiritual salvation in the most basic of human experiences, then perhaps he can be saved from the paranoia.

This religious awe is experienced again in the novel's first of many moments in the local supermarket. In this first scene, in which Jack and his family bump into his coworker Murray, Murray is practically stunned by what he sees around him. He tells Jack and his family, "Supermarkets this large and clean and modern are a revelation to me" (DeLillo 38). Barrett notes again connections to traditional religious experience. She writes, "While Murray is too farcical to be taken completely seriously as a spokesperson for spiritual fulfillment, the supermarket's importance—as a site of competing languages, of guides to the occult, and of mystery—cannot be entirely dismissed" (101). The supermarket works as a temple of worship for the characters, a place signifying comfort and routine for the family throughout the narrative. Communities come together at the supermarket to marvel at its interior and grand selection and above all else, to spend their money. Barrett even finds a connection between Murray's description of the supermarket as a "revelation" and the "Eastern and Western guides to death" (101). In this context, the supermarket works as a church, or perhaps even a religious text, helping guide its followers to their eventual deaths. For Jack, the supermarket is a source of comfort for him, a routine in his life that gives meaning to the white noise around him. In his paranoia, he can find religious awe in the everyday consumerist experience.

Cornell Bonca discusses the narrative's use of what he labels "epiphanic revelations" in his reading of the novel. Bonca defines "epiphanic revelations" as the novel's "recognition that white noise communicates the death-fear" (34). Essentially, Bonca describes the white noise of the novel, the constant communication of energy and static in a postmodern world, as being able to create moments of revelation for its characters, or most notably, for Jack. Bonca continues though, that "[i]t is not the kind of epiphany which changes his character; Jack enters, each time, into a strange relation with the sound, which is seemingly timeless, and has no after-effects in the temporal realm" (34). These revelations, like all of Jack's experiences with religious awe, do not ultimately create a breakthrough within the white noise. These spiritual experiences, Bonca explains, give temporary relief from the paranoia, in the form of fabricated religious comfort and reason. It is a momentary break from Jack's "death-fear" (Bonca 34).

Another moment of religious experience, one in which Bonca notes as the first "epiphanic revelation" in the narrative, happens soon after the supermarket scene, and right before the novel's airborne toxic event. This moment occurs when Wilder, Jack's infant son, mysteriously falls into a fit of crying that lasts almost an entire day. There is no

explanation given for the strange event, nor does Jack try to find a reason for the crying. In one crucial moment towards the end of the chapter, Jack finds himself alone with his son. Jack describes, "He was crying out, saying nameless things in a way that touched me with its depth and richness. This was an ancient dirge all the more impressive for its resolute monotony" (DeLillo 78). Jack strangely finds comfort in the crying as he interprets it in this moment as an "ancient dirge," describing his son as simply communicating in words so sacredly ancient that he simply doesn't have the capacity to understand. Bonca attempts to make sense of Jack's religious awe, or "epiphanic revelation," by arguing that Jack "has hit upon the secret we all share without knowing it. In his hysterical terror, Wilder is expressing (however unconsciously) his death fear, and in a primal way is trying to 'bridge the lonely distances'" (35). Bonca here explains that Jack's revelation is his knowledge of his son experiencing the death-fear and therefore, finding comfort in the fear being experienced by one another. Jack finds temporary solidarity in his son's own paranoia. In this moment, Wilder is creating his own version of white noise, and by doing so, he coincidently distracts his father from his own fear of death.

At the close of the scene, Wilder's cries come to an end just as abruptly as they had started. After his crying, the family responds to Wilder with a type of religious awe. Jack describes, "It was as though he'd just returned from a period of wandering in some remote and holy place…a place where things are said, sights are seen, distances reached which we in our ordinary toil can only regard with the mingled reverence and wonder we hold in reserve for fears of the most sublime and difficult dimensions" (DeLillo 79). Wilder is treated in this moment as a prophet-like figure, one who has experience and has returned from a world his family cannot reach. Bonca makes his own assertions by writing that this place Wilder has traveled to is "where death is confronted without the benefit of the protections the ego establishes against it" (35). Wilder, an infant who has not fully succumbed yet to the white noise of the postmodern world, has overcome his fear of death. As a child, he can reach a meaning in his postmodern world that the other characters cannot.

Soon after Wilder's crying fit and Jack's first "epiphanic revelation," the community of Blacksmith experience the airborne toxic event. After a train crash leaves a toxic chemical in the air, the community is forced to evacuate, including Jack's family. In the clamor of evacuation, Jack watches the scene around him, describing families together trying to escape the black mass in the sky. DeLillo writes, "Out in the open, keeping their children near, carrying what they could, they seemed to be part of some ancient destiny, connected in doom and ruin to a whole history of people trekking across wasted landscapes" (119). Here, Jack alludes to historical and religious exoduses, similar to his narration of moving day at his university but evoking a very different religious awe. In the panic and paranoia of the event, Jack attempts to make sense of his fears by using religious context. Annjeanette Wiese further explains Jack's storytelling by arguing that "the way Jack perceives [the characters'] relation to the story evinces his belief that crafting the narrative of an event allows control and hence escape; and perhaps even a sense of mastery over the event" (9). This idea of control directly relates to Jack's fear of death, as in this very moment in the narrative, he has come closest to genuinely experiencing it. But Jack has trouble clearly understanding this event through the white noise, so he desperately tries to make sense of it by evoking religious awe as

a way of escaping the reality of the situation. That reality is that his life is actually in danger. He has never felt closer to his fear of death.

There are few instances in the novel where Jack interacts with established religious ideology. The first time is in the community shelter after the airborne toxic event. Jack and his family meet a family of Jehovah's Witnesses at the refuge where Jack is pulled into a conversation with the father about the events that have just occurred. In their conversation, the Jehovah's Witness feels no panic or fear from the airborne toxic event, as it has been predicted in his religious teachings. Jack is confused, and perhaps a little stunned by the man's certainty of the events. Jack ponders: "I wondered about his eerie self-assurance, his freedom from doubt. Is this the point of Armageddon? No ambiguity, no more doubt. He was ready to run into the next world" (DeLillo 132). Sierra also discusses this scene and Jack's wonder at the man's "ability to envisage this death with confidence" (18). He writes, "The religious fundamentalist is armed with a certitude to name the world and what lies beyond its material veil, but Jack finds himself mired in paralyzing incertitude" (18). Jack cannot understand the Jehovah's Witness's religious awe because Jack doesn't have the actual religious reasoning to accompany it. Jack simply cannot make sense of the dramatic events that have just occurred like this religious man has. The Jehovah's Witness does not share Jack's fear of death because, unlike Jack, he feels the comfort of certainty, of knowing exactly what will happen after he dies.

After this conversation with the Jehovah's Witness, Jack is still left with his same feelings of paranoia and dread over what has just occurred. But soon after this scene, another instance of religious awe comes to him, another moment of what Bonca calls "epiphanic revelation." This moment occurs in this same community shelter as Jack's family goes to bed. Jack takes a moment to watch his children sleep, an activity he has mentioned before as being closest to a religious experience for him. He observes his daughter, Steffie, while she sleeps, and when it becomes clear the girl is sleep-talking, he listens to her utter the words, "*Toyota Celica*" (DeLillo 148). Jack is stunned at first, but once the realization hits him of what she has just said—the name for the model of a car—he is "only amazed" more (DeLillo 149). Jack describes, "The utterance was beautiful and mysterious, gold-shot with looming wonder. It was like the name of the ancient power, in the sky, tablet-carved in cuneiform" (DeLillo 149). Jack describes Steffie's words as being almost proselytizing, like the young girl evoked a type of spiritual energy with her ancient words. Bonca attempts to make sense of this scene by arguing, "[I]f we see Steffie's outburst as an example of the death-fear speaking through consumer jargon, then Jack's wonderous awe will strike us, strange as it may seem, as absolutely appropriate" (36). Bonca's reasoning notes that Steffie, a young girl going through a very frightening experience, could very well be experiencing her own fear of death at that very moment; her unconscious sleep talking could be her attempt to find comfort and reason in that fear. Instead of Steffie reciting her prayers, she recites car models. Similar to Wilder's crying situation, Jack finds a moment of comfort from the white noise in his children's attempts to sooth their own death-fear.

In the aftermath of the airborne toxic event, the community of Blacksmith attempts to go back to their normal mundane lives. But of course, the event has altered the community in strange ways, causing a new wave of paranoia and death-fear for Jack and his family. This springs a new form of religious awe as well for them, in the creation of chemical sunsets. In one

specific moment, Jack overlooks this sunset with his coworker, Winnie. Both stop to watch, seemingly transfixed by the beautiful spectacle in front of them. Jack reflects, "Another postmodern sunset, rich in romantic imagery. Why try to describe it?" (DeLillo 216). Jack explicitly calls the sunset "postmodern" and plainly interprets it as "romantic imagery." This moment, perhaps not directly relating to religious experience, still communicates religious awe in Jack's profound connection with it, as well as his lack of reasoning to describe it. Just as religious awe is evoked from no real source, he is treating the postmodern sunset's origin in the same way. Wiese explains of religious awe, "Thus unable to cope with the inexplicability of his impending death, (whether it be unpredictable or augured by medical computers), Jack finds solace in the narrative symbolism of the humanly-altered natural phenomenon before him (20). Like Wiese's previous mention of DeLillo's storytelling, she connects this scene again to Jack's attempt to make sense of his death-fear by attempting to control his narrative. By connecting religious awe to a chemical sunset, he can find comfort rather than paranoia through it. But of course, like the nature of Jack's religious awe, the experience only lasts for a moment. And thus, no true solace comes to Jack's continuing fear of his death. As Sierra notes, "The sublime sunset under which townspeople gather is as sacred as it is sinister" (18). Because, as Jack himself notes, there is no true understanding given to the postmodern occurrence in their postmodern narrative. In DeLillo's world, the paranoia is never-ending despite the beauty of its distractions.

In this same scene, Jack and Winnie also discuss Dylar, the mysterious drug that Jack's wife, Babette, takes. Winnie explains through her research that the drug, "encourages the brain to produce fear-of-death inhibitors" (DeLillo 217). This is startling news to Jack, as it has never occurred to him that his seemingly happy-go-lucky wife also suffers from the same fear of death that he does. And not only does she suffer from it, she has also gone to drastic lengths to stop it. It is a strange, postmodern turn of events in which a character has decided to use modern technological and scientific advancement to cure themselves of humanity's greatest fear. The use of Dylar evokes a world in which humans can substitute out human experience. Bonca describes in his own interpretation of the drug that "Dylar is a kind of pharmaceutical reification of white noise: a pill to evade the death-fear" (38). With this reasoning, the drug works as a form of constant communication of energies that circulates postmodern society. Dylar is another postmodern distraction and energy source in relieving the authentic human experience. And for the characters in the novel, this experience is the death-fear.

This relation to postmodern advancement and human experience is also discussed in a scene later shared between Jack and Murray. The two debate the death-fear topic, and at one point, Jack asks Murray how he is meant to escape the fear. Murray tells Jack, "You could put your faith in technology. It got you here, it can get you out. This is the whole point of technology. It creates an appetite for immortality on the one hand. It threatens universal extinction on the other" (DeLillo 272). Here, Murray makes a direct connection not only between technology and the fear of death, but also between technology and religion. Instead of telling Jack to find faith in a spiritual outlook, he says to find it in technology. Technology, in his words, provides the experience of "immortality" in a way that contradicts religious teachings. And it's a difference that even Murray notes when he suggests "universal extinction." Technology provides a new framework for making sense of the world and a

solution for escaping the death-fear. But, by doing so, it will ultimately cause the extinction of humanity as we know it, because our fear of death is what inherently makes us human.

Jack is unable to make sense of Murray's logic, and this subsequently leads to his fear of death taking the form of a murder plot. Trying to make sense of his impending death, Jack convinces himself that he could escape it through the act of killing someone else. It is a strange assertion, but it ultimately makes sense in the novel's constant state of unreasonable paranoia. As Sierra explains, "The act of hunting down Willy Mink is an attempt to exert a form of power that he [Jack] lacks within this condition, seizing 'control over death' and the world" (20). Again, Jack attempts to make sense of his world and control his fear, but this is ultimately impossible in his world of white noise. He will never be able to understand the endless stream of unconnected communications and meanings.

This notion is further explained in the lead up to the murder, in which Jack describes himself as "advance in consciousness" (DeLillo 296). In his description of the scene in which he meets Mink, the man having sex with Babette and providing her with Dylar, inside a motel room, Jack's state of consciousness is vividly portrayed. In the motel room, Jack observes that "the intensity of the noise in the room was the same at all frequencies" and that the room itself was white with a "white buzz" (297). And when Jack fires his gun at last, he describes that the sound "snowballed in the white room, adding on reflected waves" (DeLillo 297). All of these descriptions enhance the visions and sounds of the white noise encompassing Jack at this very moment. He is enthralled by it, motivated by it, and finds his power in it. It could be argued that this description has notes of religious awe, as though Jack is experiencing a version of spiritual transcendence in the haze of the white noise. But as we understand, white noise has no true source, it is merely a makeup of all the static of communication produced by a postmodern world. This error of reasoning ultimately causes Jack to fail completely.

Jack's unsuccessful murder attempt ends with both men confused and with bullet wounds. Jack's mistake, as Sierra describes, leaves him "jolted out of what he now understands to be an illusory penetration into the sublime" and back into the reality of the disastrous situation in front of him. Jack's physical pain in this moment forces him to recognize Mink's pain, the pain he himself has caused. This break in Jack's consciousness leads him to quickly take Mink to a nearby hospital for treatment. To his amazement, the clinic is run by nuns, and this chapter leads to what Bonca identifies as the final moment of "epiphanic revelation" for Jack. In this scene, Jack attempts to converse with a nun about heaven. The nun, puzzled and perhaps a bit irritated, rejects Jack's religious conversation completely. When the nun says she doesn't believe in heaven, Jack questions her reasoning, as her answer leaves him shocked and confused. The nun explains, "Our pretense is a dedication. Someone must appear to believe. Our lives are no less serious than if we professed real faith, real belief. As belief shrinks from the world, people find it more necessary than ever that someone believes" (DeLillo 304). Jack cannot make sense of what the nun is revealing to him because, as Sierra explains, "If there is anyone who can be trusted to believe in a secure ideological framework in Jack's insecure postmodern world, it would be a veiled nun" (21). This "epiphanic revelation" that the death-fear is present even in the nun startles Jack but causes the same effect as before. Like the Jehovah's Witness, the nun's consolation is her religion. Bonca explains, "What she tells Jack, in effect, is that priests and nuns of the Catholic church just speak another kind

of white noise" (37). And they use this white noise in an effort to help others evade their own fears of death. Essentially, Jack's momentary revelation with the nun, as with his other revelations, comes from the understanding that the meaning of white noise is its inherent lack of meaning. In a postmodern world, there is no sacred and substantial framework to make sense of the reality around them. There is only white noise and our desperate, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to quiet it.

The novel ends soon after this, Jack's interaction with the nun serving as one of the narrative's final attempts to make sense of the postmodern world it has created. But, rather unsurprisingly, the novel concludes on a similar tone as it had started on, relating to a postmodern environment in which no deeper meaning can possibly be made in a constant state of white noise. Jack evades death in his murder plot, but he is left in the paranoid backdrop of the chemical sunset. He does not come closer to understanding his death despite his interactions with both religious and technological belief. This conclusion is intentional in meaning according to Barrett who argues that "DeLillo suggests that subscribing to a faith in mystery and refraining from seeking solutions might be a replacement for the religious faith which is impossible and the technological faith which is unthinkable" (111). Barrett explains that in a postmodern world the search for faith is universal, just as is the fear of death. DeLillo's narrative suggests that in postmodernism this search for meaning only takes on a new form in the technological. But the white noise, the constant communication of meanings and distractions, is ever present for the consumer. In a postsecular world, the search for God remains the same. It is only the form of God that changes. What were once churches and temples become supermarkets and shopping malls. And what were once prayers and blessings become advertisements and ATMs. This is because no matter how far society progresses in technological advancement, our primal fears remain the same. It's only our search for salvation that will take on shiny new forms.

Works Cited

Barrett, Laura. "How the Dead Speak to the Living: Intertextuality and the Postmodern Sublime in *White Noise*." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2001, pp. 97–113, https://doi.org/10.2979/JML.2001.25.2.97.

Begley, Adam. "Don DeLillo, The Art of Fiction No. 135." *The Paris Review*, issue 128, 1993.

Bonca, Cornel. "Don DeLillo's White Noise: The Natural Language of the Species." *College Literature*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1996, pp. 25–44.

DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. 1984. Penguin, 2009.

Sierra, Erick. "'Threshold of Revelation': Don DeLillo, Tony Kushner, and the Epistemics of the Encounter." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2016, pp. 16-28.

Wiese, Annjeanette. "Rethinking Postmodern Narrativity: Narrative Construction and Identity Formation in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*." *College Literature*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2012, pp. 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2012.0034.

An Examination of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's Understudied Short Stories: Did the (G)old Cease to be Gold?

by Ambar Quintanilla

The scholarship available on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's fiction is significant for two distinct reasons: (1) it declares her as one of the most prolific writers of nineteenth-century American literature and (2) it is disproportionately concerned with two of her short stories – "The Revolt of Mother" and "A New England Nun." Three of Freeman's short stories, "A Poetess," "An Honest Soul," and "A Church Mouse," remain critically understudied, despite being perhaps some of the most vivid portrayals of the New England women she commonly explores in her fiction (generally older, unmarried, and without children). These stories reveal the difficulties of solitary life over married life and the complexities of establishing women's space in a patriarchal society. Freeman's idiosyncratic female protagonists attempt to subvert certain domestic roles traditionally assigned to women in Victorian America, for example, housekeeping, motherhood, and docility, among others; however, their autonomy, employment, and freedom are limited because they are still governed by more powerful patriarchal social forces, which ultimately confine them to a domestic setting. The triumphs they gain (if any) hold them rather stagnant, unable to fully transgress or progress. These paradoxical elements reveal the grim realities these old, unmarried, and at times isolated, women must face, including surviving at subsistence levels, if they do not fulfill gender-based assumptions of their time.

Freeman was quite cognizant of the eccentric subjects she chose to depict in her fiction and concerned about the response they would generate from her readers and critics. In a letter dated February 17, 1885, to Mary Louise Booth, the first editor of Harper's Bazaar who published many of Freeman's short stories, Freeman states, "I am on another story with an old woman in it; I only hope people won't tire of my old women. I wonder if there is such a thing, as working a vein so long, that the gold ceases to be gold" (Freeman 61). Freeman, along with her readers and critics, recognized the potential monotony of her first two published short stories collections, *A Humble Romance* (1887) and *A New England Nun* (1891). Freeman endeavored to enlarge her work by opening "another vein," writing plays and novels while

exploring younger characters (Kendrick 112). Notwithstanding the foregoing, as mentioned in the introduction, only two of her short stories remain relevant in scholarly conversations, both of which were only published in *A New England Nun*, not in any of her subsequent work. However, it is important to note that neither of the two short stories have old, poor women as protagonists; instead, they feature younger women who live comfortably: Sarah Penn from "The Revolt of Mother" and Louisa Ellis from "A New England Nun." Sarah is married and performs all domestic duties until she decides to revolt against her husband one day by transforming his new barn into their new home; Louisa chooses to remain unmarried and without children for the sake of her own independence and tranquility. Is this to say that the "gold cease[d] to be gold," that Freeman's old women became obsolete?

Given the inexhaustible list of Freeman's works, "three plays, fourteen novels, three volumes of poetry, twenty-two volumes of short stories, over fifty uncollected short stories and prose essays, and one motion picture play" (Kendrick 4), and the fact that the renewed interest in Freeman generally focuses on her first two collections of short stories, the gold certainly did not cease to be gold. Nonetheless, critics have continued to struggle with resolving the imbalance of Freeman scholarship. Researcher and scholar Brent L. Kendrick, the collector and editor of Freeman's letters, provides four reasons for this phenomenon: (1) being a prolific writer, there exists an unevenness in her work and the criticism it drew; (2) by 1918, there came a new generation of writers replacing the old with the new; (3) the categorization of Freeman as a local colorist or regional writer limited the appeal for and significance of her work and placed her instead in the realm of a social historian; and, (4) unlike Sarah Orne Jewett, there were no published biographical/critical studies regarding Freeman or her works for several years after her death (4-6). Another critic, Doris J. Turke, links the disproportionate critical reception of Freeman's work to the central figures in many of her stories – elderly, unmarried, childless New England women who were generally poor. Due to post-Civil War masculine American literature that dominated scholarly conversations in the turn of the twentieth century, Turke conceives that Freeman's subjects and their experiences were then only perceived as "snapshots of a dismal past" (197).

Placing Kendrick's third theory (Freeman as a local colorist or regional writer) in conversation with Turke's provides a social framework in which to rationalize the imbalance of Freeman scholarship and, more importantly, examine the paradoxical elements prevalent in the three short stories surveyed in this essay. If Freeman's fiction is said to have been a truthful representation of New England local color, then "A Poetess," "An Honest Soul," and "A Church Mouse" reflect not only the fictional patriarchal society in which these older women reside, but the post-Civil War society that maintained the idea of Victorian American domesticity. In this respect, unlike Turke's assumption, the experiences of these female protagonists are not "snapshots of a dismal past." Freeman vividly exposes (through local color fiction) the difficulties of living a solitary life and the societal limits continuously imposed on female autonomy and employment in the turn of the twentieth century, especially for older women living in remote New England villages.

Despite the lack of scholarly criticism available on "A Poetess," Betsey Dole is perhaps one of Freeman's sincerest representations of a struggling woman artist who has lived a solitary life and whose autonomy and artistic successes, regardless of how small, cease

alongside her. Betsey, who is described as old and poor, is enlisted by Mrs. Caxton to write a poem for her deceased son. Having no children of her own, Betsey has difficulty composing lines for the poem. After careful reflection, she completes the poem, presents it to Mrs. Caxton, and Mrs. Caxton's delight in the poem brings forth an abundance of joy for Betsey, "as if her poem had been approved and accepted by one of the great magazines. She had pride and self-wonderment of recognized genius" (Freeman 114). Mrs. Caxton promises to have the poem printed and provide a copy to Betsey. Betsey is immensely pleased with this small success, and Freeman's readers can take comfort in her triumph.

However, the narrator makes it clear that Betsey's pride and success are short-lived. Betsey realizes that she cannot afford a frame in which to mount her print, "She had never received a cent for her poems; she had not thought of such a thing as possible" (115). And, soon after, Mrs. Caxton relates to Betsey the village's collective response to her poem: "*Sarah Rogers says the minister told her Ida that that poetry you wrote was jest as poor as it could be, an' it was in dreadful bad taste to have it printed an' sent round that way*" (115). Betsey internalizes this criticism, recognizes the implausibility of being a female artist and earning income, and burns all the poetry she wrote in her lifetime. Following this event, Betsey falls into utter dismay and becomes tragically ill. The only person who volunteers to care for Betsey is Mrs. Caxton, while the other women only pityingly visit Betsey and whisper about her as they leave. As she nears death, she asks the minister (the one who criticized her writing and has had several pieces of poetry printed in a magazine himself) to compose a few lines of poetry about her, "mebbe my – dyin' was goin' to make me – a good subject for – poetry" (120). Even more heartbreaking, she asks him to ensure she is buried along with the ashes of her poetry.

There are many components in this story that allude to the inability of a woman to attain full autonomy or success while living in a patriarchal society. When describing her grim lifestyle, the narrator states, "Nobody knew how frugal Betsey Dole's suppers and breakfasts and dinners were . . . She ate scarcely more than her canary bird . . . Her income was almost infinitesimal" (114-115). The scarcity of food and money, surviving in subsistence levels, and her age set her apart from Freeman's most popular protagonists, Sarah and Louisa. More poignantly, however, is that even though Betsey undercuts Victorian American gender roles by remaining unmarried, childless, and an artist, her subversion and the one fraction of a triumph she gains do not grant her the same happiness or freedom they grant Sarah and Louisa. As one critic states, most of Freeman's stories, like "A Poetess," are not infused with "clinging sweetness of past fashions or ideals." Rather, they present "narrow conditions, the bleak dogma of isolated thought" and endings that are "the price of rending anguish . . . a tragic commentary upon life's denials and tyrannies" (Tutwiler 92). Life denied Betsey the power to be recognized as an artist and tyrannized her while granting the minister not only the power to judge a woman's writing and denounce her literary status, but the power to publish poems of his own and become renowned for them. The patriarchal forces are much larger than the ones depicted in Freeman's stories; they restrict women artist from attaining any freedom outside of a domestic setting. The innerworkings of this short story present the paradox in which a woman can appear to undercut and succeed in a patriarchal village of New England, but ultimately must face her downfall without having achieved much individual or social progress.

Furthermore, in "A Poetess," Freeman explores the separateness and destitution women like Betsey experience when they choose a solitary life and do not conform to the gender norms of their communities. Turkes, in examining Freeman's eccentric women characters, notes the role community plays in the lives of these characters, and how the disconnectedness they feel from their community only furthers their degeneration. Turkes asserts that life satisfaction/a sense of completeness is determined by two driving forces: personal and social evaluation (201). For Betsey, the social force in her community is a key determining factor to her success/failure as an artist and sense of completeness. Betsey spent her life loving and writing poetry, even if she had to resort to writing them "upon the backs of old letters and odd scraps of paper" (Freeman 112). She was satisfied with her solitary life and was economical with the infinitesimal income she had. When describing her dress, the narrator states, "Her costume was obsolete, even in the little country village where she lived. She had worn it every summer for the last twenty years . . . the old satisfied her. She had come to regard them as being as unalterably a part of herself as her body" (113). Yet, this satisfaction with the old was quickly overturned when she recognized her failure as an artist and detachment from her community.

Turkes defines this as an individual failure (driven by a social evaluation) to achieve self-esteem. She claims, "self-esteem cannot be achieved without society's approval of the appropriateness of one's life and life style" (201). Appropriateness in this context can be described as how suitable one's life is in relation to the patriarchal society they inhabit. Unable to meet the demands of this community leads these old, idiosyncratic women to social failure; they "end their years in despair, knowing that for them life did not turn out right" (202). Betsey took pride in her work and reveled in her solitary life, "the hot spicy breath of the evergreen hedge and the fervent sweetness of the sweet-peas seemed to greet her like the voices of friends" (Freeman 114). But, when she realized her failure, she spent her last days in misery, questioning her life's purpose, and feeling internally unfulfilled. Betsey Dole is simply one of many New England women Freeman portrays in her fiction, whose triumphs and freedom are limited by patriarchal social forces that continued to appropriate Victorian American ideals in the twentieth century, such as those of "True Womanhood."

"True Womanhood" and sense of completeness (not by social evaluation but by personal evaluation) is better explored in Freeman's "A Church Mouse." Susan Garland Mann employs the notion of "True Womanhood" to depict the way Freeman's characters both subvert and conform to Victorian American womanhood. "True Womanhood" is comprised of four-character traits - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Mann 42). Hetty Fifield in "A Church Mouse" is one of Freeman's clearest representations of a willfully obstinate female protagonist who undercuts the concept of submissiveness and domesticity, therefore deviating from the notion of "True Womanhood." Hetty was left without a home after the woman whom she worked for and lived with passed away. She asks the deacon in her community, Caleb Gale, for a job as the church's sexton, and to further test his temperament, she asks for permission to live in the east corner of the church's meeting house. Taken aback by such straightforwardness because no woman was ever allowed to be church sexton nor was the church meeting house ever considered a place of abode, Caleb refuses to grant Hetty's request. Disregarding Caleb's response, Hetty stubbornly and successfully obtains the job of church sexton and moves a bedstead, stove, and her sunflower quilt into the meeting house and "sailed in her own course

for the three months" (Freeman 98). Hetty relishes in her triumphs and, to apply Turkes' phrase, she gains a sense of completeness, in defiance of her community.

Mann admits that there are times in which Hetty appears to be conforming to the domestic ideals of "True Womanhood" by performing tasks such as keeping the meeting house spotless and decorative and habitually knitting. The meeting house is described as "very clean, there was not a speck of dust anywhere, the wax cross on the pulpit glistened in a sunbeam slanting through the house" (101). Mann justifies this performance by stating that Hetty has "learned to esteem homelife from the institutions around [her]" because that is the only realm in which she is allowed to prosper (46). Nevertheless, Hetty paradoxically subverts the domestic notion of "True Womanhood" by "actively redefin[ing] the value of domestic life" (46). She performs domestic roles to attain personal independence and freedom; she does not perform them for a husband, children, God, or, generally speaking, in order to meet societal gender-based expectations. She achieves a greater sense of self, and sense of womanhood, by establishing a home of her own. As Hetty finds comfort in this triumph, the village continuously condemns her because this home opposes "their ideas of church decorum and propriety in general; her pitching her tent in the Lord's house was almost sacrilege; but what could they do?" (Freeman 99). Evidently, she was not willing to submit to any type of authority or tradition, whether it be the church deacon or the village's "True Womanhood" conventions. The narrator comments that the community's New England "Puritan consciences" prevented their removing Hetty from the meeting house and placing her into the streets as she had no place to live. "There was no almshouse in the village, and no private family was willing to take her in" (99), so what were they to do?

This rhetorical question confronts not only Hetty's village, but readers alike. Freeman's diction in the story protests the limited job opportunities for women, gender income inequality, "True Womanhood" (as recently discussed), and religious piety. As this paper is not focused on religious piety, the following analysis is only based on the first two societal issues women were concerned with in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America. Hetty enlisting herself as church sexton was in and of itself unconventional. Mann argues that women during this period "felt enormous pressure to marry, and marriage was often the result of financial necessity" (47). Hetty, does not resort to marriage as a way in which to procure a home and income. In fact, the story's first line opens with the idea of Hetty independently seeking work, "I never heard of a woman's bein' saxton" (Freeman 93), to secure a place of her own. It then continues for a couple pages with a dialogue between Hetty and Caleb: Caleb struggles to convince Hetty that she cannot perform the duties of a sexton as well as a man while Hetty refutes every one of his claims. Hetty unapologetically contends (and this is where Freeman's social commentary on gender inequality is most noticeable) that "Men git in a good many places where they don't belong... jest because they push in ahead of women" (93). Men have the authority to take up space wherever they choose because it is considered their birthright. Whether or not she is granted the same authority, Hetty pushes ahead of men and claims her position as church sexton, which, rightfully so, causes social disorder and displeasure. To add fuel to the fire, the deacon must now decide how much to pay Hetty for a job that should have been allotted to a man, "All old Sowen got for bein' saxton was twenty dollar a year, an' we couldn't pay a woman so much as that" (94), and the village

must now decide what to do with this obstinate woman who blatantly undermines gender-based conventions. So, what could Caleb, the village, and Freeman's society do to a woman, specifically an old woman, who is extraordinarily defiant?

After three months of defiance, once the village was no longer able to tolerate the smell of Hetty's cabbage spreading through the church, Hetty is asked to leave the meeting house – marking one of several paradoxical moments in this short story. As Caleb and two selectmen approach Hetty in the meeting house, Hetty suddenly shrinks back but remains standing, "looking at them scared and defiant . . . small and trembling and helpless . . . like a little animal driven from its cover, for whom there is nothing left but desperate warfare and death" (Freeman 101). Hetty is both scared and defiant because she realizes that, as a woman, she has minimal social power and rights. She must assert herself but carefully. As one scholar observes, Hetty's defiant light is simply a fight to "maintain [her] integrity in the face of community pressures" and a "refusal to be denied humanity and justice" (Toth 83, 87). Hetty's outcry appeals to their humanity, at least that of the women. She shares the difficulties she had to endure throughout her life for simply being a woman, asks society to share a portion of men's fortune and agency with women, and heartbreakingly confesses that she had never felt much comfort in her life, "Won't you let me stay? I ain't complainin', but I've always had a dretful hard time; seems as if now I might take a little comfort the last of it, if I could stay here" (Freeman 105). With a sympathetic appeal, Mrs. Gale, responds, "Of course you can stay in the meetin'-house . . . You can stay jest where you are" (105). This moment is significant, not only for Hetty, but for her community.

The women form a coalition and upend the gender dynamics by granting themselves power to make the decision of allowing Hetty to stay in the meeting house. The men are left aghast and withdraw; Hetty is left triumphant. This triumph, however, is paradoxical because it is limited to the meeting house; it has boundaries, making it an enclosed space in which Hetty can exist, with limited rights and responsibilities. Outside of this home, she is still governed by patriarchal forces that underpay her and undervalue her work, forces that determine what job is right for a woman and how much power a woman should possess. Nevertheless, whether she achieves any social progress or not, she attains a sense of completeness and is satisfied with the outcome.

Another example of willful obstinance is Martha Patch, the female protagonist in "An Honest Soul," with one key difference being her literal disconnectedness from her community. Before analyzing her story and the many paradoxical elements it presents, exploring her name on its own merits is important. Suzanne V. Shepard, in examining the significance of patchwork quilt, notes that Martha's last name provides an insight into the character's life. The name "Patch" "suggests a lack of integration" (119). Shepard connects this to Martha's isolation and her having no sense of community. Furthering the concept of Martha being an unintegrated patch, Shepard recalls the home in which Martha lives. Her "fragment of a house," as Freeman terms it, "was an infinitesimal affair . . . not a door nor window was there in front, only a blank, unbroken wall . . . the lack of a front window was a continual source of grief to her" (Freeman 3, 5). Due to her solitary life and social seclusion, Martha nearly dies of starvation. However, Shepard argues that this near-death experience

and isolation are self-inflicted because the community does reach out and attempts to help, yet she willfully denies them the opportunity.

Though Shepard is right in assessing the community's efforts to assist Martha, Martha is not fully to blame for her lack of integration or isolation; the patriarchal forces existing at the turn of the twentieth century, in which many of Freeman's characters resist, are equally at fault. Early in the story, it is revealed that Martha's father, who was the sole income earner, passed away leaving her and her mother "in their little fragment of a house on the big, sorry lot of land . . . earning and saving in various little, petty ways, keeping their heads sturdily above water, and holding the dreaded mortgage off the house" (4). Years later, Martha's mother died, and Martha was left alone, unmarried, and childless. As there were limited jobs available to women during this period, Martha's only resort is to take on "housewifely jobs for the neighbors, wove rag-carpets, pieced bed-quilts, braided rugs, etc." (4). These jobs do not earn her enough income. Like Hetty and Betsey, Martha must survive at a subsistence level and accept all work available to her because that work is limited. It is true that Martha is prideful to her own detriment. When she fails to recall which pieces belong to which quilt and which quilt belongs to which neighbor, the completion of this job is delayed. This ultimately leads her to starvation. When her neighbor, Mrs. Peters, notices her, and offers to help, she willfully resists. However, it is vital to note that throughout Martha's life she had to learn to rely solely on herself and her immediate family, not her community. Even more, she spends her time "sitting and sewing . . . day in and day out" (5), not having much time to socialize or actively participate with her village. Through this lens, it is difficult to place all culpability on Martha for her lack of integration. Her isolation is economically inherited, hence her father's last name "Patch," and governed by patriarchal social forces. Contrary to Shepard's belief, Martha yearns for community but (because of her socioeconomic, gender circumstances) is deprived of it.

Alluding to this desire for community is the mode in which Martha's window is presented – a noteworthy symbolism in "An Honest Soul." Despite the nonexistent front window, Martha does have a window that "commanded only a rear view of the adjoining [house]," the only other house that was located so far back from the road (4). This window paradoxically reflects Martha's isolation from and inclusion with her community. Martha has an obstructed view of her community. She is only able to take notice of Mr. Peters' cows, the grass, the children who take a short cut through her back yard on their way to school, and the occasional birds that fly passed her window (in this manner, she feels a sense of inclusion within community). Conversely, she also experiences seclusion. As she monitors the children's and the grass' growth, she remains stagnant; as the birds freely flutter their wings, she remains encaged. These glimpses of social progress contrast her experience and only make her more conscious of her isolation.

Martha's culminating triumph – procuring her front window – is difficult to assess, unlike Hetty's success and Betsey's failure. The narrator describes Martha as "being delighted as a child," when she agrees to Mrs. Peters' offer to perform domestic work in exchange for a window. She knew her pride would suffer if she accepted Mrs. Peters' charity, but she felt no insult (Freeman 11). This triumph is paradoxical because she is finally able to gain window access to her community, and in a greater sense, she is internally satisfied, but

this access remains fragmented; it is still limited. She is still not able to fully exist outside of a domestic setting, thus not able to fully progress. The triumph she attains still requires her to work under the realm of a patriarchal society, "sitting and sewing . . . day in and day out," and ultimately does not resolve her disintegration from society.

The short stories "A Poetess," "A Church Mouse," and "An Honest Soul" are not simply "snapshots of a dismal past." They revealed the true realities of women in the turn of the twentieth century, post-Civil war era. They uncover the paradoxical triumphs and constraints old, unmarried, childless, and poor women experienced in patriarchal New England villages that still upheld Victorian American domestic ideals. Betsey, Hetty, and Martha's subversion of these gender roles, generally defined as "True Womanhood," is limited, as their freedom, autonomy, and employment are ultimately confined to a domestic space. Though the stories vary in terms of their relation to their community and whether they achieved a sense of completeness, they are equally valued as examples of Freeman's prolific success. These idiosyncratic New England (g)old women certainly do not cease to be gold.

Works Cited

Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins. *A Mary Wilkins Freeman Reader*, edited by Mary R. Reichardt, University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

---. Letter to Mary Louise Booth. 17 February 1885. *The Infant Sphinx: Collected Letters of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*, edited by Brent L. Kendrick, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982, pp. 61.

Kendrick, Brent L. General Introduction. *The Infant Sphinx: Collected Letters of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*, edited by Kendrick, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982, pp. 4-6.

---. *The Infant Sphinx: Collected Letters of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman*, edited by Kendrick, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982, pp. 112.

Mann, Susan Garland. "A House of One's Own: The Subversion of 'True Womanhood' in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's Short Fiction." *Colby Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1998, pp. 39–54.

Shepard, Suzanne V. *The Patchwork Quilt: Ideas of Community in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction*. Peter Lang, 2001.

Toth, Susan Allen. "Defiant Light: A Positive View of Mary Wilkins Freeman." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1973, pp. 82-93.

Turkes, Doris J. "Must Age Equal Failure?: Sociology Looks at Mary Wilkins Freeman's Old Women (American Women's Fiction)." *ATQ*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1999, pp. 197–214.

Tutwiler, Julia. "Two England Writers - In Relation to Their Art and Each Other." *Critical Essays on Mary Wilkins Freeman*, edited by Shirley Marchalonis, G.K. Hall, 1991, pp. 90-94.

Masculinity and The Trauma Narrative in Hector Tobar's The Tattooed Soldier

by Georgie Moy Arend

Hector Tobar's novel *The Tattooed Soldier* portrays a revenge narrative between two Guatemalan migrants whose need for revenge is brought to Los Angeles, a need that ultimately ends in death and violence. Following the lives of Antonio Bernal and Guillermo Longoria, Tobar presents this revenge narrative in a nonlinear fashion. The novel oscillates between their traumatic pasts in Guatemala and present lives in Los Angeles, where Antonio and Longoria meet seven years after their initial confrontation. Tobar gives the reader a comprehensive understanding of the men's tormented lives and the psychological effects of political violence.

It is made clear early on that Antonio is a refugee of political violence. In Guatemala, Antonio is arguably privileged, being well-off and educated. While a student at the Universidad de San Carlos, he meets Elena and marries her after she discovers she is pregnant. The marriage ends in violence when Longoria is ordered to murder Antonio and Elena. With the assassination of his wife, Antonia flees Guatemala and believes he has escaped his violent past until he encounters Longoria playing chess in MacArthur Park. This encounter opens Antonio's psyche to his repressed memories of his family's murder. At the same time, Tobar's description of Longoria's past challenges his position as a monstrous ex-soldier, as it is made clear he was brainwashed into a brutal military institution that was championed by the U.S. government. Diving deep into Longoria's past, the novel positions him alongside Antonio as being deserving of sympathy, as the men are shown to be both victims and perpetrators of political violence and sexist ideals.

Tobar's complex characters are critical to his presentation of United States imperialism. While Antonio and Longoria are first seen as enemies, the sympathy that is evoked for each of their situations turns the blame onto the U.S. government, and the right-wing Central American regimes it funded. In Dale Pattison's "Born in the USA: Breeding Political Violence in Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*," he argues that *The Tattooed Soldier* is a narrative that points out the ways in which U.S. involvement in Central America has failed

and caused a diaspora that U.S. immigration policies are unable to handle. This argument mirrors Eriz Vasquez's assertion that *The Tattooed Soldier* elicits questions of revenge and justice, while ultimately making the claim that meaningful justice comes in the form of broader social change. Alongside critiques of U.S. imperialism and U.S. immigration policy, Tobar's novel also puts forward a critique of hegemonic masculinities, more specifically the societal policing of masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity, understood as the expression of masculinity that perpetuates gender inequality, is shown through Longoria and Antonio as their violent and aggressive behaviors are a result of imposed gender norms and trauma.

Longoria and Antonio's experiences of gender norms, both in their performance and the imposed standards on them, push them to suppress their trauma and react violently. Longoria experiences this violence in Guatemala when the military uses homophobic rhetoric to pressure him into assimilation. Longoria carries these sexist ideals to Los Angeles, which limit his ability to heal from his trauma. Antonio's displays of masculinity can be seen in his relationship with Elena; he feels responsible for protecting her even though the systemic issue of political violence is beyond his control. In Antonio's mind, his family's murder as a result of political violence is a result of his shortcomings as a man, as opposed to the failure of a larger political and social system that should protect people. In this way, *The Tattooed Soldier* highlights the limiting Westernized hegemonic masculinity which intersects with trauma caused by American imperialism as a way of keeping trauma inside the body, making healing nearly impossible.

In *The Tattooed Soldier,* Longoria and Antonio's narratives show the presence of imperialism and colonization on Latino/a culture and identity. Longoria's and Antonio's complex experience as Latino men in both Guatemala and Los Angeles are indicative of the colonized definition of masculinity, positioning men as "macho tough guys" who display masculinity through aggression and domination (Rudolph 67). In addition, their trauma, which is brought on by political violence due to the United States' intervention in Central America, exemplifies the psychological effects experienced by the people of Central America. The masculine personality traits of aggression and dominance are effects of colonization: European forces invading foreign land and seeking control through political, economic, and cultural structures. In the case of masculine identities, colonization's use of gender dichotomies is a way of "seeking control of people's bodies with the intention of Western dominance" (Lugones 744). This policing and disciplining of bodies is shown in Longoria's indoctrination into the military, where he views himself as being formed into a "real man," as well as in Antonio's views as the provider and protector of Elena and his family.

While colonization's form of control is explicit, imperialism seeks control in an implicit way. Instead of physical occupation, imperialism gains control using economic policies and puppet regimes. In *The Tattooed Soldier,* Antonio and Longoria's experiences are largely the result of the United States' violent interventions in Central America. Dale Pattison describes the narration of political violence in the novel as showing how "political violence moves within and among bodies, and nations that export political violence, render themselves susceptible to its inevitable return" (Pattison 114). This possible "return" is true for *The Tattooed Soldier* as Longoria and Antonio carry the political trauma within them even in Los Angeles.

Antonio and Longoria's embodiment of Western masculinity within *The Tattooed Soldier* shows the effects of colonized gender roles. Contemporary analysis of gender conformity recognizes that "the interior soul understood as 'within' the body is signified through its inscription *on* the body" (Butler 2383). In understanding the colonial use of gender, we can understand that gender is performative: identity exists alongside the supposed "expressed gender," and these performances form the illusion of a stable gender identity. Antonio's and Longoria's anatomical bodies, in postcolonial Guatemala and Los Angeles, restrict their identity to fit inside the borders of a hegemonic masculine performance. Antonio and Longoria's association with these stereotypical norms is evident throughout the novel. Upon meeting Longoria, we are introduced to his identity as being a self-described "man of accomplishments," partly because of his "Spartan lifestyle" and "the wisdom of military leaders being passed down to him" (Tobar 21). Similar to colonial prescribed masculinities, Longoria identifies his manhood as parallel to his military lifestyle, which values aggression and violence. This parallels Antonio's description of his temper as being the result of "the men in Antonio's family [having] a genetic propensity to bouts of rage" (Tobar 45). Antonio's and Longoria's responses to the gender inscriptions put upon them, as a result of imposed Western ideals through a process of colonization and imperialism, eventually degrades into violent chaos as their masculinity is questioned.

Longoria's use of masculinity as dominance and power to counteract his oppression due to his Indigenous ethnicity echoes the links between gender and race within Latin American communities. His identity formation in regard to his masculinity needs to be understood within the context of Western domination and white supremacy (Rudolph). The Guatemalan society in which Longoria functions uses the Western idealized male image that prescribes heteronormative behaviors on male bodies. These heteronormative ideals intersect with White supremacy and favor White bodies as the correct way to be masculine. Centering white male bodies as the ideal masculinity defines "latino/a bodies, or working-class bodies, as insufficient masculinity" (Rudolph 2). This links Longoria's indigeneity to his masculine identity, for Longoria's Indigenous roots are seen as being feminine, which leads to his oppression under a social structure that favors whiteness. We get a glimpse into Longoria's Mayan identity through his description of his childhood. Longoria describes his childhood as only knowing "a life of work, hunched by his mother's side, baby fingers squirming like worms in the black earth" (Tobar 61). As a child, he is put in a working-class position where his survival is dependent on his ability to labor. The references to the "black earth" make clear that he was working in the fields, possibly the countryside. Longoria is not only working class but also a member of the Indigenous population whom the military describes as "backwards… because of their superstitions and their bad habits" (Tobar 226). In this case, the othering of the Indigenous population affects Longoria's psyche as he remembers being "ashamed of the image of his former self" (Tobar 226). This othering of his Mayan and working-class identity fractures his own identity and further impacts the power dynamics undergirding his own unconscious and conscious understanding of masculinity. Closely linking the masculine ideals and the "coloniality permeating all aspects of social existence [to] give rise to new social and geocultural identities" Longoria's identity positions him closer to femininity, which subordinated him to his white colonizer counterparts (Lugones 3). The institution

of the military becomes a vehicle by which Longoria can forge and affirm a normative masculinity that provides him, at least momentarily, with a sense of power and agency. His ability to adhere to the masculine norms is pertinent to his survival in the military, which evidently even leads to his ability to thrive within this power structure. His military training is remembered as "slowly … [making] him a man" (Tobar 61). Thus, Longoria is taking a dominant role in a system that oppresses him by adhering to an idea of masculinity that values aggression and violence.

The policing of masculinity that Longoria experiences within the military is evident of how heterosexist norms are used to perpetuate a patriarchal culture that encourages violence and aggression. Following the chain of command within the military, Longoria looks to his superiors for approval, while these superiors use homophobic rhetoric and repeatedly undermine the recruits' masculinity to create an environment where the recruits constantly need to prove themselves worthy. Longoria recalls the officers calling the conscripts "fags" and when giving orders the officers assert power by saying, "…are you refusing an order, you faggots" (Tobar 63). The language used by the officers perpetuates deep-seated heterosexist norms which originated from the colonial standards of gender and sexuality. Matthew Byrne explores the function of homophobia in the military arguing, "heterosexual officers in the military insult other heterosexual officers by calling them faggots, it's clear that the word, in this case, had little to do with sexuality… but instead deals directly with *patrolling* masculinity" (Byrne 17). The military leaders treat the term "faggot" as a universal term to show discontent over someone's behavior because this institution values a patriarchal definition of masculinity that positions men as "warriors" and "aggressors." Although there is "no tangible means of asserting heterosexuality" (Byrne 17), Longoria responds to the admonishing of his masculinity by strictly adhering to the masculine role the military has prescribed for him.

The privileging of heterosexuality within the military not only dominates Longoria's behavior but his body. The repeated condemnation of homosexuality as a tool to influence male behavior leads to Longoria's use of sex to validate his masculinity. In Rudolph's study on the portrayal of men and masculine culture, she intersects Chicano masculinity with sexuality by saying: "gay and/or queer identities for Latino men must problematize heteronormative assumptions, essentializing discourses and traditional kinship structures that often frame Latino male sexualities. Indeed, sexuality and appropriate gendered behavior have become linked to the history of Latinos…" (Rudolph 68). Using Rudolph's argument, it becomes clear that for Longoria, sex in a way that is deemed acceptable by the military is a part of maintaining his masculinity. In "Retracing Homophobic Tendencies in Two Central American Novels," Matthew Byrne discusses the policing of Longoria's masculinity, asserting that Longoria "looks to sex as a reinforcement of his own heterosexuality" (Byrne 17). This is seen in his view that masturbation is a "faggot habit" and that sex should be done the "right way" by being "taken to brothels, to attend to these needs" (Tobar 34). This intersection of gender performance and sexuality exemplifies how patriarchal gender norms pierce through every facet of life, including something as personally intimate as sex. These "inscription[s] *on* the body" go so far as to control intimate sexual behavior (Butler 2383). These inscriptions held by the military are not just projected

onto male bodies, but also determine them on a deep intimate level so that these men cannot escape it.

In opposition to working-class Longoria, Antonio is a privileged student who is considered of higher class because of his education, money, and European physical features. Antonio, who is described as "tall, European complexion" and a "petit bourgeois graduate," is in a privileged position as post-colonial Guatemala values "individuals... who showed European traits or values" (Tobar 1, 115; Byrne 13). Unlike Longoria, whose Indigenous ethnicity links him to femininity, Antonio's European features and class status are not a threat to his gender conformity. Perhaps because of his privileged position, he is able to move with more freedom and acceptance as his looks and status place him closer to the colonizer. He was able to attend university and is described as "a man who loves to read" (Tobar 5). In a Latino society where masculinity is defined through "images of warriors" and where actions are prioritized over intelligence, his descriptions as being a romantic intellectual cast him in a more "feminine" light as opposed to the more masculine men who assert dominance and power with action over intelligence. Tobar's descriptions of Antonio's love for poetry, passive nature, and intelligence question the way in which heteronormative structures are supposed to function in society, as Antonio is seemingly unwilling to adhere to these norms. Still, Antonio is able to lead a happy and successful life in Guatemala despite his "feminine" personality traits. He is able to attend college, fall in love with Elena, and start a family. At this time in Guatemala, Antonio's character is a sharp contrast to Longoria, who has done everything he can do to embody the perfect masculine machismo identity.

The tension between Antonio's fluid masculinity and the heteronormative masculinity begins to build once he is confronted with the violent effects of imperialism, leading him to adopt a more hegemonic masculinity. Antonio's inability to "control his wife" leads to her writing a letter to the sanitation department, despite his plea for her to "not do anything rash" (Tobar 135-6). The marriage between Antonio and Elena is a microcosm of gender roles within their community. When they first meet, Antonio's romantic intelligence positions him as feminine while Elena's aptitude for political activism masculinizes her. Once they are in danger of being persecuted for their political beliefs, Antonio takes on a more masculine role as the "head of household" as he is supposed to be "dominating his family" (Rudulph 69). Because Antonio is unable to control Elena, she writes a letter to the government anyway, which leads to her and his son's murder.

The trauma Antonio experiences because of his wife and son's murders further alters his relationship to masculinity. In a study of Antonio's trauma narrative, Crystal Miller argues that "trauma narratives insistently point out how victims are unable to speak of traumas, which are, by some definition knowable and require witnessing to call them forth" (Miller 370). Antonio's inability to voice his truth over the trauma he experienced and his inability to do anything other than run away from Guatemala, not only affect his inner psyche but also his sense of manhood. Just as Longoria's masculine identity is influenced by his disenfranchisement due to his ethnicity, Antonio's disenfranchisement from political violence influences him to take on a more masculine power similar to Longoria's. He becomes more aggressive; in the opening scenes of the novel Antonio shoves his landlord and attacks a homeless man, actions that contradict the past version of Antonio, whose shy

demeanor coded him as passive and romantic. Like the psychological effects of violence and institutionalization, Antonio, and Longoria's relationship to masculinity has fractured their sense of identity.

The two men's reunion in Los Angeles ties their stories together in this urban environment. While it is easy to view Antonio as a refugee, the same case can be made for Longoria as "in both cases Tobar concerns himself explicitly with addressing how victims of political violence ... as a result of political upheaval" process the trauma within the United States which denies both men citizenship (Pattison 114). In Guatemala, Antonio is bourgeois and educated while Longoria is indigenous and working class. Antonio's trauma comes from Longoria's violent military actions, while Longoria is damaged from the military ideology forced onto him. However, once in the United States, they enter a society that views immigrants as monolithic, the details of their identity scrubbed away and replaced with the projected stereotypes that follow most immigrants. Pattinson further argues that the urban space within *The Tattooed Soldier* is Tobar's way of creating commentary on "how individuals may process trauma stemming from political violence" (Pattinson 114). Longoria and Antonio can reasonably be seen as opposing characters in the book but their dysfunctional lives in Los Angeles connect these two characters. Los Angeles, which is seen as a heterogeneous urban landscape, is the home to both men who are unable to process their trauma in a healthy way. While Antonio and Longoria were originally seen as rivals, this binary was disrupted because of the economic, political, and social structure into which they enter in Los Angeles. This new racialized, classed urban space positions them both as immigrants who work low-paying jobs, live in dangerous neighborhoods, and have difficulty forming community.

In excavating Antonio's psychological trauma, the violence and political turmoil in Guatemala come to the forefront of the narrative. The memories of his wife and kid are warped in pain and mourning because of their violent murder. When Antonio is confronted with their memories because his mother sends him a picture of their grave, he becomes angry at his shortcomings as a husband who was unable to provide a proper burial for them. Conversely, Longoria (who is responsible for the death of Antonio's family) is equally disgusted when he learns an old friend, who was in the military with Longoria, is taking medication to address his mental health. Longoria and Antonio can reasonably be seen as opposing characters in the book, but their dysfunctional lives in Los Angeles connect these two characters. Both are unable to put the war in Guatemala behind them as the narratives of both characters rely on a postmodern aesthetic, one which dislocates time and space and reconsiders the boundaries between the past and the present. Tobar sends the message that both men are continuing to relive their trauma as pieces of their present life evoke memories of Guatemala.

There is a joining of the two storylines in the midst of the Los Angeles Rodney King Riots. Tobar's creation of an environment that mimics the violence and unrest of Guatemala signifies a return to political violence. The Rodney King Riots, being a manifestation of economic, racial, and ethnic tensions in Los Angeles, are congruent with the Guatemalan political unrest because both are "express versions of emergent collectivity in which demonstrations, confrontations with the police, and calls for insurrection occur and then

diminish into a mere festival of *settling accounts*" (Vázquez 140). This violent resurgence of collective retribution brings a similar narrative as the men's experiences in Guatemala.

Antonio and Longoria's individual responses to the riots are symbolic to their processing of their trauma. Unable to comprehend the lack of control in the United States, Longoria becomes disgusted with the rioters and views himself as a part of the military as he felt he was "one of their own, a soldier trapped behind enemy lines" (Tobar 297). Even in the United States, where he lives as an immigrant no longer a part of the Guatemalan war, he still looks to an institution to affirm his identity. Unable to move past military days, Longoria finds himself stuck in the riots, which leads to his violent death. Antonio, on the other hand, views the riots as his chance for vengeance. He wanted to "finish [Longoria]. For Elena and Carlos" (Tobar 213). This preoccupation of justice, which, for Antonio, can only come in the form of Longoria's death, is a use of Eric Vázques use of interrogative justice; which leads the reader to question if Antonio's violent manifestation of his trauma is really justice or an attempt for restoration of something Antonio feels has been taken from him. In his quest for justice as the champion for Longoria's victims, Antonio remembers that he "did not bury [his] wife and child, but [he] can stand and seek vengeance" (Tobar 187). Antonio's fantasy for justice is tied to his obsession with "Longoria being the walking embodiment of injustice" (Vázquez 133). These thoughts imply that Antonio ties the unjust actions that were done to him to Longoria. While Antonio's personal vendetta against Longoria may be valid, Antonio's views ignore the larger system that indoctrinated Longoria into believing he must assert his masculinity through violence. And since these actions are what shifted his perspective on his own masculinity, causing him to believe that his failure to protect his family undermines his masculinity, his justice fantasy is an attempt to restore his masculinity. This restoration of masculinity, for Antonio, is only achievable through killing Longoria. These thoughts imply that Antonio conflates masculine power with violence and aggression, which mirrors Longoria's masculine identity.

The complete reuniting of their story happens in a dark tunnel where Antonio and Longoria are together. As Longoria lies on the ground, "the black well of his mouth opened to the ceiling, as if to gather the water that fell around him.... eyes were locked in an empty stare" Antonio sits beside him ruminating on the fruition of his justice fantasy (Tobar 309). These final moments between the two men, as Antonio sits with a dying Longoria, is an intimate look into how they both reach redemption. Longoria slips into a Mayan afterlife, an afterlife where his Indigenous roots are no longer held against him, releasing him from the feminizing of his identity. Antonio wanders the streets, continuing to be consumed by the memories of his slain wife and son. These intertwining stories, coming to an end once Longoria is murdered, are a symbolic portrayal of how destructive trauma is. If understanding and healing trauma is done through forming a sense of community and a witness of stories, which can only be done through radical vulnerability, westernized masculinity that values stoicism and suppression resists this healing. In this way, Longoria and Antonio's embodiment of masculinity creates a tough armor that keeps the trauma inside their bodies, only to be expressed through violent actions.

Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* intimately tells a personal narrative of two men's journeys navigating identity, immigration, and masculinity, and, in the end, madness in

a world affected by political violence. Using the trauma between Longoria and Antonio, the novel acts as social commentary on the implications of colonialism and aftereffects of Western imperialism. Antonio and Longoria have been burned many times throughout their story, but the real tragedy is the intentional and systematic dehumanization done to them. Their masculine bodies, which value a hard demeanor, keep their trauma trapped inside their bodies, ultimately leading to the narrative's violent end.

Works Cited

Arias, Arturo. "Central American- Americans: Invisibility, Power and Representation in the US Latino World." *Latino Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2003, pp. 168.

Butler, Judith. "Gender Troubles." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Leitch Vincent, 3rd edition, Norton, 2018, pp. 2372-88.

Byrne, Matthew. "Retracting Homophobic in Two Central American Novels: Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* and Javier Payeras' *Ruido De Fondo*." *Revista de Filología y Lingüística de la Universidad de Costa Rica*, vol.41, no.2, pp.12-19.

Garrett, M.T. and Barret, B. "Two Spirit: Counseling Native American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, Vol.31, pp. 131-142.

Lugones, María. "Towards a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2010, pp. 742–59.

Miller, Crystine. "Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* and the Latino/a Trauma Narrative," *Latino Studies*, Vol.13, Issue 3, 2016, pp.364 - 383.

Pattison, Dale. "Born in the USA: Breeding Political Violence in Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*," *Studies in American Fiction*, Vol.44, Issue 1, pp.113-137.

Rodríguez, Ana Patricia. "Diasporic Reparations: Repairing the Social Imaginaries of Central America in the Twenty-First Century." *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2013, p. 27-41.

Rudolph, Jennifer Domino. "Masculinities." *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, edited by Suzanna Bost and Frances R. Aparicio, Routledge, 2013, pp.65-74.

Rudolph, J. *Embodying Latino Masculinities: Producing Masculatinidado*. Springer, 2016.

Tobar, Hector. *The Tattooed Soldier*. New York, Picador, 1998.

Vázquez, Eric. "Interrogative Justice in Héctor Tobar's The tattooed Soldier," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol.64, No.1, 2018, pp.129-152.

Demon Daughters: The Possessed Womb in King Lear

by Sarah Moon

In her discussion of King Lear's daughters, Janet Adelman underscores the historical significance of the womb as a source of anxiety for Lear: "Lear discovers his origin in the suffocating maternal womb and traces his vulnerability to it" (114). As Eve Keller evaluates the conflicting assertions in sixteenth and seventeenth century medical guides written for women, she argues that these texts contain a "range of implicit tensions and embedded anxieties characterizing medical knowledge about women," stemming from a fixation on the womb (72).[1] Despite conflicting medical opinions on the mobility of the womb in the early modern period, the "suffocation of the mother" or "hysteria" was nonetheless prevalent in concerns regarding the womb.[2] Although Galenic thought has suggested against the Hippocratic notion of a "wandering womb," wherein "the womb was held in place by ligaments," Keller explains, "many therapeutic interventions for womb-related diseases still managed to treat the womb as the predominant agent of female existence," as in early modern French physician Lazare Rivière's "madness of the womb" (93). With the early modern tendency to attribute female ailments to the womb, then, we might understand Lear's fixation on his daughters' anatomy as a means for justifying the self-inflicted corruption that drives him to madness. The womb, against volition, becomes responsible for his daughters' villainous evolutions, with the "power to shake" his "manhood thus" (1.4.312).

At the same time, associations of the demonic with his daughters' bodies are too apparent to neglect. Precisely, "fiend" is used in *Lear* more times than any of Shakespeare's plays—seventeen total. While thirteen of these instances are reserved for Edgar's performance as Poor Tom, the four other occasions are allocated for use against Lear's

[1] Keller references the seventeenth-century works of John Sadler and Nicholas Sudell: (1) Sadler, John. *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse*. London: Anne Griffin, 1636. (2) Sudell, Nicholas. *Mulierum Amicus; or, the Woman's Friend*. London: J. Hancock, 1666.

[2] See Keller, Eve. "Fixing the Female: Books of Practical Physic for Women." Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England, University of Washington Press, 2007, pp. 71–98.

daughters. Although "devil" is utilized only twice in the play, both uses are directed at Lear's daughters. It is striking that nearly a third of the play's references to the demonic are reserved for Lear's daughters while the remainder is employed in a performative attempt at madness. While demonic possession and displays of exorcisms were notably criticized by Samuel Harsnett for their evident fabrications, Stephen Greenblatt reminds us in his discussion of sixteenth century English exorcisms that "the possessed gave voice to the rage, anxiety, and sexual frustration that built up easily in the authoritarian, patriarchal, impoverished, and plague-ridden world of early modern England" (99). While Lear's daughters are clearly not possessed, it is compelling to consider their demonization as a negative response to their authority as women and their subversion to the patriarchy of the early modern period. Furthermore, we might treat the demonization of women in the play as a reflection of the amalgamation of early modern anxieties surrounding the female body and demonic possession, as a defective womb was allegedly capable of possessing the body. Ultimately, I assert that *Lear*'s demonization of women's bodies reflects an early modern perturbation over the female body that prompts Lear to dehumanize his daughters—namely Regan and Goneril—in attempt to absolve himself of his self-inflicted corruption. Consequently, the masculine failures of the play are overshadowed by the negative fixation on Lear's daughters, underscoring the constructions of female hysteria and demonic possession as faults of the early modern patriarchal structure.

From act one, Lear demonstrates the fragility of his masculine and familial authority in response to his daughters' concerns, prompting severe verbal abuse towards his kin. When Goneril expresses concern over the misconduct of Lear's knights as well as his own behaviors early in the play, she has assumed her own role of authority, which Lear deems threatening to his. She insists that Lear will need to address the situation although it may feel shameful: "Which else were shame, that then necessity / Will call discreet proceeding" (1.4.218-19). More importantly, she is perturbed by his temperament of late: "I would you would make use of your good wisdom / Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away / These dispositions which of late transport you / From what you rightly are" (1.4.225-28). Although Goneril's later actions in the play suggest ulterior motives in her pursuit for power, she appears to express valid concerns that hint at the beginnings of Lear's mental deterioration while asserting her right to feel comfortable in the space of her own home wherein she has hosted him. Lear, however, cannot seem to fathom these concerns, and immediately questions whether Goneril truly is his daughter. Her contention prompts Lear to disown his "degenerate bastard" of a daughter upon his cry of "darkness and devils!" (260-64). His earlier disowning of Cordelia for her refusal to "love my father all" suggests that Lear's spiteful language and actions towards his daughters derive from a fear of losing his authority—as a father and a king (1.1.115). Simultaneously, Lear reveals how fragile his masculine authority truly is as he imagines his daughters as anything *but* his daughters. As Dan Brayton argues, "What Lear perceives as ingratitude and betrayal becomes metonymically linked to a threatening female somatic terrain; the demonic kingdom of female faults and unlicensed wills becomes the site of deception that Lear consistently blames for his own dissolving Powers" (410). Similarly, Peter L. Rudnytsky observes Lear's fear of the feminine in himself, particularly as he weeps or reveals emotional vulnerability ("And let not women's weapons, water drops, / Stain my

man's cheeks"), while his anger takes on a more masculine undertone (2.4.318-19). With this, Rudnytsky maintains that "the antithesis between anger and weeping confirms that the play's relentless dichotomizing of 'good' and 'evil' characters is based on a gender polarity" (296). In Lear's daughters, then, evil correlates with the feminine while Lear desperately clings to his masculinity. His daughters become devils, for in their fiendish complexion, he can dissociate himself from the threat he perceives in them—a threat that manifests in their womanly bodies.

In demonizing his daughters' bodies, Lear allows himself to further justify their defiance to human order—to nature, as he perceives it. His consistent allusions to monsters and devils present his daughters as supernatural beings—as "others"—for it is the only means by which he can psychologically fathom the evil he perceives in them. Valerie Traub asserts that "the ambition, lust, and avarice that motivate Lear's two 'pelican daughters' (3.4.70), their seemingly unprovoked rebellion against the authority father and husbands, is generally seen as an attempt to wage war against nature itself" (61). To Lear, their evil is unnatural and otherworldly, and his daughters' corruption transcends the body and manifests as a threat to nature. We might recall Lear's call to nature, his "dear goddess," in 1.4, wherein he asks nature to sterilize Goneril's womb: "Into her womb convey sterility. / Dry up in her the organs of increase / and from her derogate body never spring / A babe to honor her" (1.4.292-95). Plainly, Lear's distrust of the female body, a source for "disnatured torment" (1.4.297), is evident in this moment, but his specific request to *nature* highlights his perception of a nature that is orderly and rejects the unnatural. Nature, even in her role as "goddess," is molded by Lear and other male characters of the play to fit their patriarchal conception of what is natural. From the opening scene of the play, Lear delivers a controlled depiction of nature as he describes the "bounds" of "shadowy forests [and with campaigns riched, / With plenteous rivers] and wide-skirted meads" which he plans to allocate to his daughters (1.1.69-72). These minor additions to the Folio addition, while seemingly unsubstantial, help render a fertile and beauteous nature, a representation of Lear's daughters as they fit his construction of nature—of patriarchy. As soon as they reject Lear's idea of nature, they become the unnatural, and their sexual design becomes the only viable source for this. Following his prompt to "let them anatomize Regan," and "see what breeds about her heart," Lear questions, "Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?" (3.4.80-82). Lear wonders if nature is capable of producing such villainy. If Regan is examined, it will become clear that her anatomy—as a woman—is the source for her corruption. As Keller explains, "The womb affects and is affected by all that happens both in the body's principal parts, namely brain, *heart*, and liver..." (95; emphasis added). And, in her bodily corruption, Lear's construction of nature becomes increasingly chaotic in his subsequent loss of control.

In 3.4, we witness Lear's anxieties over the female body in alignment with a corrupted nature, as is manifested in the thundering storm. Initially, Lear encourages the storm in his mad rage, condemning his daughters through nature's power:

> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head. And though, all-shaking thunder,

Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world.
Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man. (3.2.5-10)

His request for the storm's thunder to ruin the "molds" of "nature" appears to challenge his prior perceptions of nature; at the same time, he looks to nature in desperate attempt to destroy that part of nature which is corrupt—his daughters. If nature is responsible for molding such daughters, then it is capable of ruining them. In his desired destruction of their bodies, "all germens spill at once," effectively removing their source for reproduction. The *OED* defines the use of "germen" here as "a reproductive element, esp. a seed or embryo; the rudiment of an organism, capable of developing into a new one." In this moment, Lear recalls his anxiety over the womb and its reproductive agency, echoing his earlier request for nature to sterilize Goneril and "dry up her organs of increase" (1.4.292-93). It is apparent, then, that Lear's need for the storm's power is aligned with his need to decontaminate nature by removing the female source of infection. However, Adelman contends that "if the storm is classically the domain of the male thunderer, it is simultaneously the domain of the disruptive female power...this storm becomes in effect the signature of maternal malevolence, the sign of her power to withhold and destroy" (110). In the storm's ability to "undermine authority" and its "sexual wetness," Adelman explains, the storm becomes a reminder of the "sulph'rous" female corruption that Lear is so desperate to cleanse himself of, as is later revisited in his perturbed speech about his daughters' "sulphurous pit" (111).

Ironically, however, Lear's fixation on his daughters' bodies as a source for his ruination is challenged as nature prompts him to question his own sense of humanity. Still in the storm, Lear's encounter with Poor Tom evokes his own distress over his daughters as he instantaneously ascribes Tom's poor state to female corruption. Even as Kent explains that Poor Tom has no daughters, Lear is contentious: "Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature to such a lowness but his unkind daughters" (3.4.76-7). Furthermore, he equates daughters to "pelicans," which were "thought to feed on their parents' blood" (Mowat and Werstine 140).[3] Despite Lear's attempt to dehumanize his daughters, Laurie Shannon importantly draws attention to the lack of humanity Lear reveals in *himself*. In his pity on Poor Tom's pathetic and naked state, Lear reflects upon "thy uncovered body" in such "extremity of the skies" and questions, "Is man no more than this?" (3.4.109-10). He comes to realize, "Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art," and begins to tear at his "lendings" (3.4.113-15). However, Shannon argues that in his "flagrant insufficiency," Lear is "barely an animal at all," as he "reduce(s) himself to a human truth stripped of its animal supplements" (196). In this way, Shannon maintains, "*Lear* anatomizes man, philosophically" as much as it "taxonomizes man" (196). Lear's questioning of his own identity is a reminder of his self-inflicted corruption; in juxtaposition with the anatomization of his daughters, Lear's confrontation with himself and his own role in nature reveals his failure in justifying the chaos that threatens his stability in the patriarchal structure. In her discussion of Lear's "moment of confrontation,"

[3] See annotation on p. 140 in Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine's Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *King Lear*.

Traub expresses that "Lear's humanist point of reference in this anatomical encounter is neither confident nor secure; just as his consideration of Regan's 'hard heart' fails to reveal its cause, Poor Tom's anatomical 'epitome' resists transcendent meaning" (64). This moment in the storm, like the collapse of his landscape, serves to underscore Lear's own failures and insufficiency as both a ruler and a man, simultaneously revealing the anatomization of his daughters as nothing more than a direct result of his own incompetence and fears over such.

As Lear's madness progresses, presentations of a corrupt female anatomy—especially in fusion with monsters and devils—becomes more strikingly apparent. In an incensed attempt to explain his condition to Gloucester (reminding him he is "every inch a king"), Lear blames his daughters' "riotous appetite" and describes them as centaur women (4.6.127, 139):

> Down from the waist they are centaurs,
> Though women all above. But to the girdle do the
> Gods inherit; beneath is all the fiend's. There's hell,
> There's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit;
> Burning, scalding, stench and consumption! (4.6.140-44)

The centaur body itself presents an unnatural fusion of human and beast; the *OED* defines the centaur as a "mythological creature, usually depicted as having the head, torso, and arms of a human, joined to the body and legs of a horse." While this definition predating the early modern period is not gender-specific, centaurs in late medieval and early modern texts often reference the sexually charged half-man. Furthermore, the *OED* regards the centaur as "a fierce, savage, or bestial creature" in early modern contexts. This duality in association, then, physically denaturalizes them *and* masculinizes them. "Savage" and "bestial" implies a non-human element while the masculine connotation of the term furthermore places the sisters in roles of defiance that are unfeminine and only explicable by supernatural alignment. In his 1583 work, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, Philip Stubbes describes the monstrous, shape-shifting abilities of women: "Proteus that Monster could never change himself into so many forms and shapes as these women do, belike they have made an obligation with hell and are at agreement with the devil…" (163).[4] Similarly, the 1620 pamphlet *Hic mulier: or, The man-woman* ascribes devilish "deformities" to masculine women, whether by dress or assertions of authority: "'Tis of you, I entreat, and of your monstrous deformity; You that have made your bodies like antic Boscadge, or Crotesco work, not half man, half woman; half fish, half flesh; half beast, half Monster: but all Odious, all Devil…" (164).[5] Lear's disgust over his daughters' defiance manifests to reflect these early modern associations with the masculine female and the devil; in their deformities, they are not only women, but monsters, by sexual anatomy.

In addition to the malformation of their female masculinity, the centaur is suggestive of a heightened level of anxiety that is fixated on the womb itself as a site for corruption. Lear

[4] Page number correlates with "Sources, Analogue, and Contexts" section of Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. Ania Loomba. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011.
[5] Page number correlates with "Sources, Analogue, and Contexts" section of Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. Ania Loomba. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011.

identifies the bottom-half of the female body—the female sexual anatomy—with imagery of hell and sensory reproach. As Brayton explains, "The monstrous apparition of the older sisters' increasingly evident ingratitude will be framed in terms of a threatening interiority and a demonic sexuality" (411). The bestial half of the body is "all the fiend's" and directly indicative of a devilish or demonic being, and inside the body harbors a female space for hell which replicates its "burning," "darkness" and the "stench" of sulphur. The *OED* notes: "In popular belief sulphur has been associated with the fires of hell, with devils, and with thunder and lightning." We might also allude to the "sickening stench" of "putrid flesh" in the "dark depths" of the literal pit– "the stinking ditch"—of Dante's hell (29.51-79). The hellish uterus which Lear describes is evocative of Dante's "trench," specifically reserved for "the falsifiers," and subject to the worst punishments of hell (29.50). Furthermore, the "sulphurous pit" implicates early modern conceptions of "hysteria" or the "suffocation of the mother," which Keller explains as "the protean condition anciently ascribed to a wandering womb" (94). Critics like Rudnytsky and Adelman cite allusions to the "wandering womb" in 2.4: "Oh how this Mother swells up toward my heart! / *Histerica passio*, downe thou climing sorrow, / Thy element's below" (2.4.62-4). Rudnytsky refers here to Lear as "a male hysteric" who "fears that he harbors within himself the internal organs of the despised female body" (295). Similarly, Adelman contends that "Lear discovers his origin in the suffocating maternal womb and traces his vulnerability to it" (114). The possibility of a "wandering" womb rather than a stable womb, Adelman explains, conveys his daughter's "organ as the epitome of the woman who refuses to stay in her proper place; she turns up at the very center of masculine authority, in the king's own body" (114). By the seventeenth century, however, hysteria was "understood to arise either from more localized movements of the womb within the abdomen or from the noxious vapors emerging from retained seed" (Keller 94). In either sense, these moments in the play suggest the mixed and evolving consensus surrounding women's reproductive organs in the early modern period. Furthermore, both the wandering womb and fixed womb theories comparably demonstrate the anatomical manifestation of Lear's perturbations over his daughters' devilish corruptions.

At the same time, the hellish womb underscores the potential of a possessed body that lends justification to Lear's renouncement of his daughters. In her discussion on early modern exorcisms and Harsnett's influence on Shakespeare's work, Meredith Skura writes: "Lear voices the priests' sexual loathing of what lies beneath 'the girdle,' the accusations they make to justify their sexual violation of the female demoniacs" (140). As Skura illuminates, "sexual hysteria" was implicit in the justification for exorcisms against women, and "Shakespeare evokes the horror of this vision even more vividly than Harsnett does" (14). In addition, according to seventeenth century medical conceptions of female hysteria, Keller explains, "the condition itself had numerous manifestations, from immobility and seeming cessation of respiration to convulsive fits, howling, and crying" (94). In Edward Jorden's *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Womb* (1603), Jorden reports of hysteria's disturbing symptoms, which notably seem to resemble the "turbulent and stirring" motions experienced by the demonically possessed in Harsnett's work (38):

And sometimes these are complicated and together with a venemous vapour, arising from this corrupt humor vnto diuers parts of the bodie, there will be an euill position of the

matrix also: either because the ligaments, vaines and arteries beeing obstructed: by those vapours are shortened of their wonted length, and so draw vp the part higher then it should be, or for that the matrix being grieuously anoyed with the malignity of those vapours doth contract it selfe and rise vp by a locall motion towards the midrif. (6)[6]

In his introduction, Jorden notes that "these fits of the Mother" have often been regarded by "the common people" as matters of demonic possession, treated by means of exorcism (1). Although he acknowledges these cases as possible "possessions by the Diuell," as "the Diuill by witchcraft may inflict a natural disease," Jorden warns his audience that "such examples" are "verie rare now adayes" (1). Published the same year, Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* casts doubt on the legitimacy of demonic possession and exorcism in early modern England. Greenblatt importantly points to the theatrics of possession and exorcism as contended by Harsnett and notes that "by 1600, then, Shakespeare had clearly marked out possession and exorcism as frauds" (115). Thus, the suggested possessions of Lear's daughters seem to play into Lear's chaos, fortifying the idea that Lear must fabricate their demonization as means to justify his own detriments as a father. As Adelman asserts, the womb "is necessarily the place of corruption…a site of illegitimacy" (108). Although Lear's daughters are not illegitimate in the same sense as Edmund, she contends, "Lear imagines his daughters illegitimate when he cannot tolerate their failure to meet his needs," and he attempts to "make their disruptive femaleness entirely derivative from their mother's sexual fault" and "dissociate himself wholly from it" (108). Lear's remarks against his daughters' bodies and their bodily alignments with hell thus invite us to consider the illusory threat Lear's daughters pose in their femaleness in conjunction with the illusory threat of demonic possession. In demonizing their bodies, Lear attempts to purify his own "corrupted blood," and exorcise himself of the "disease" in his "flesh" (2.4.255-58). His daughters' tainted blood cannot be his own, and he must remove his physical and familial ties to the possessed daughters who might force him to consider the corruption he instigates himself.

Albany's demonization of Goneril echoes a similar fixation on the female-devil body suggestive of a precisely female problem that threatens nature and simultaneously implies demonic possession. First, he condemns Goneril's actions against her father as a daughter: "[I fear your disposition / That nature which contemns its origin / Cannot be bordered certain in itself]" (4.2.40-43). Goneril is criticized and reprimanded for the disdain and disrespect she has towards her "origin"—her father. As Traub observes, "nature in *King Lear* paradoxically is a reflection of the divinely sanctioned hierarchical, patriarchal social order, and an instinctual repulsion from it" (62). This moment precisely serves as another example of the influences of patriarchal order in male perceptions of nature. Lear's daughters pose the ultimate threat to this type of natural order, challenging what should be the inherent authority of the father and husband figures. After rebuking Goneril for resisting her role as daughter, Albany's reinforcement of patriarchy then becomes an attack on the female "shape" itself:

[6] From The Project Gutenberg eBook of *A Briefe Discovrse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother*, by Edward Jorden

See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity [shows] not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman…
{Thou changed and self-covered thing, for shame
Bemonster not thy feature. Were 't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee.} (4.2.73-82)

Albany contends that "proper deformity" is expected of devils, but Goneril's deformity is worse as a woman. Unlike Lear, who fixates on the sexual half of the female as the source for demonic corruption, Albany conflates the demon's evil with the female body in its entirety, suggesting that her body is not her own. Yet, he reveals his confliction over this; he struggles to make sense of her corruption and concludes that this must be the workings of a demon concealed by a woman's body. As a woman, Goneril's corruption serves still as an assumed defect within her anatomy, recalling the womb's believed susceptibility to demonic possession, in effect controlling the body as a whole. It is additionally interesting to consider the omission of Albany's "thou changed and self-covered thing…" in the Folio version of the play, which in the Quarto adds another layer of cruelty in his attack on her womanhood; concurrently, Albany's remarks in the Quarto emphasize the invention of the demon-woman, and its later removal possibly reflects changing attitudes towards demonic possession in the early seventeenth century. Like Edgar's performance of demonic possession which Greenblatt underscores, the demon ties to Lear's daughters are "theatrical" (119). Greenblatt argues that "demonic possession is responsibly marked out for the audience as a theatrical fraud…evil comes not from the mysterious otherworld of demons but from this world, the world of court and family intrigue" (119). Greenblatt highlights an important distinction on the point of evil in the play and enables us to consider the consequences of chaos that is derivative of human constructs of order, whether familial or hierarchical. In the case of Goneril and Regan, their evil comes in the form of selfish defiance to masculine and paternal authorities, and their demonic associations come as masculine reactions to the threats they, as women, pose to these established structures.

Contrarily, we might consider how corruption is depicted in Edmund, our male villain of the play. Unlike Goneril, Albany does not consider Edmund demonic for his treason nor his "disposition" against his "origin." Even as Albany announces Edmund's treason and warrants his arrest, Goneril is noted as the "serpent" accomplice, another devil-reference: "Edmund, I arrest thee / On capital treason; and in [thine attaint,] / This gilded serpent" (5.3.98-100). Although an implied accessory to Edmund's treason, Goneril is yet the one demonized. Adelman makes a similar observation: "…they (Goneril and Regan) are increasingly identified as the source of evil; finally removed wholly from the realm of human sympathy—as Edmund never is—they die as monsters, consumed by their own excess" (115). No matter the severity of Edmund's crimes and manipulations, devilish language is strictly reserved for Goneril and Regan outside of Poor Tom's performance. While Skura acknowledges the "unnatural

ingratitude" that Edmund similarly demonstrates toward his father, "attributed only to designated villains," we are left wondering why it is that Goneril and Regan are not merely villains, but devils (132). Both Lear's and Albany's demonization of women's bodies, then, reinforces a masculine need for theatricality—for illusion—in order to justify Goneril and Regan's evil.

When women's bodies are vilified, it is important to consider how the imagery serves as a reflection of he who projects that image. *Lear* contains a plethora of references to animals and monsters in discussion of its female villains, but the particular use of demons and devils prompts a distinct consideration of masculine perceptions of evil beyond their concurrent otherness. As Adelman notes, the corruption Lear perceives is inherently female, as "his daughters disrupt the patriarchal ideal" (108). Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan, at various points, challenge Lear's authority, both as a king and a father, and Lear's disowning and subsequent demonization of his daughters contributes to his vulnerable state bordering on madness. Thus, the demonization of women in the play underscores the fragility of the patriarchal structure that men like Lear and Albany strive to maintain—the constructions of power that depend on the subordination of women, in mind and body. By anatomizing his daughters, Lear is successful in removing the humanity from his daughters, reducing them to their female parts. It is the only means by which Lear can fathom the reality that he is no longer in control, as the order and obedience he has built his kingdom and family upon is diminished. Although Lear bestows positions of power and ownership of land upon Goneril and Regan, he does so under his own terms of authority. The moment his authority is questioned or challenged by a woman—by his own daughter—he must invent and impose a way to justify the incomprehensive agency she asserts. Similarly, Albany cannot perceive Goneril's actions as anything but those of a devil. Moreover, the association of devil with womb—and the possibility of a demonically possessed womb—stresses the feminization of Lear's problem and alludes to early modern anxieties and uncertainties over the female body. Women, it seems, cannot challenge nor corrupt without being associated with demons or devils. With this, the debate over Goneril and Regan's evil itself is negated because the demonic corruption that is perceived is distinctly female. While men such as Edmund can be villains, only the women of the play can be both villains *and* demons.

Works Cited

Adelman, Janet. "Suffocating Mothers in King Lear," *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*, Hamlet to the Tempest, Routledge, 1992.

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy: The Inferno*, Ed. John Ciardi, New American Library, 2003.

Brayton, Dan. "Angling in the Lake of Darkness: Possession, Dispossession, and the Politics of Discovery in 'King Lear.'" *ELH*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2003, pp. 399–426. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029882.

Greenblatt, Stephen Jay. "Shakespeare and the Exorcists," *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, University of California Press, 1988, pp. 94-193.

Harsnett, Samuel. "A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1603)," *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, F.W. Brownlow, University of Victoria, 1993.

Hic mulier: or, The man-woman: being a medicine to cure the coltish disease of the staggers in the masculine-femininesof our times. London: John Trundle, 1620.

Jorden, Edward. *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Womb*. London: John Windet, 1603.

Keller, Eve. "Fixing the Female: Books of Practical Physic for Women." *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*, University of Washington Press, 2007, pp. 71–98. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvcwnm19.8.

OED Online, Oxford University Press, September 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/29630.
---. Oxford University Press, September 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/193843.
---. Oxford University Press, December 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/77886.

Rudnytsky, Peter L. "'The Darke and Vicious Place': The Dread of the Vagina in 'King Lear.'" *Modern Philology*, vol. 96, no. 3, 1999, pp. 291–311. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/439219.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of King Lear* from The Folger Shakespeare. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat, Paul Werstine. Folger Shakespeare Library, 2015.

Shannon, Laurie. "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of 'King Lear.'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2009, pp. 168–96. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40468404.

Skura, Meredith. "Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children: Warring Generations in King Lear and Its Sources." *Comparative Drama*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2008, pp. 121–48. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23038017.

Stubbes, Philip. *The Anatomie of Abuses Containing a Discoverie, or Breife Summarie of Such Notable Vices and Imperfections, as Now Raigne in Many Christian Countreyes of the Worlde*, London: Richard Jones, 1583.

Traub, Valerie. "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, 'King Lear.'" *South Central Review*, vol. 26, no. 1/2, 2009, pp. 42–81. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40211291.

Mores, Morality and Malory: Nicomachean Ethics and Futurity in Thomas Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur

by Celina Cooper

Manipulation, rape, infidelity, and beheadings- where does *Le Morte* draw the line? Contemporary readers might be eager to condemn Malory and his work for its ambiguous moral positionality regarding seemingly immoral action. While there is a wide array of scholarship focused on deciphering the code of ethics that is established in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, many scholars have agreed on one point- our conventional moral systems cannot be applied to the text without complications. Actions that a reader might wish to condemn or prosecute due to their negation of standard ethics are often not positioned by the text as either right or wrong. This moral ambiguity has resulted in what many critics refer to as a moral "gap" in Malory. Ultimately, the code of ethics in Malory is not working as a division between "good" and "bad," wherein between exists a gap, but rather it is working to suggest that what is moral exists as a *mean* between lack and excess- the latter being symbolized through monstrosity and actualized within the knight's, as well as Arthur's, own faults. Actions that are deemed unethical in the text are those which exist at either end of the spectrum. Within *Le Morte*, this mean is compromised by the overwhelming excess which in turn threatens the futurity of Arthur's world. Therefore, Malory's moral code is not one based solely on a conventional ethic system, but rather on a "mean of morality" which preserves the world's futurity.

Medieval scholars have made various attempts to understand the code of ethics working within *Le Morte* by examining Malory's own moral positionality. Herein, they have "come to terms with the perceived differences in morality between, on the one hand, the chivalric and pious nature of Le Morte Darthur and on the other, the doubtful life ethics of its probable author, Sir Thomas Malory of Warwickshire, who stood accused of burglary, kidnapping and repeated rape" (Wallin 105). While there is what Marie Wallin refers to as a "gap," between Malory's own ethics and the chivalric order in his work, which may very well be worth exploring, there is an even more interesting gap between the pious and doubtful ethics isolated and working within the text itself. Since this gap is then understood to be working solely within the text, it is worth questioning- might the code of ethics by which the characters abide

by be one that exists within the Arthurian world alone as well? Or might our observed moral systems be working in the text similarly to how we ourselves experience them?

Empirical ethics are understandably difficult to apply to Arthur's ideal world as it exists outside of temporal reality- however, it does not mean the effort of application is fruitless. In his perennial article, "Malory and the Chivalric Order," Stephen Miko raises the questions: "Can we or can we not apply 'strictly moral grounds'? If Malory's vows are ethical, does that mean he has an ethic? Judgment in Malory is neither so rigorous nor so easy as a moral system would imply" (212). He concludes that contemporary moral systems cannot easily be applied to the text as much of its orders (primarily chivalry) are idealized. Our empirical code of ethics then cannot work in conjunction with the ideal in Malory's *Le Morte*. However, I argue that one system of ethics that *does* prove lucrative within Malory's work is the "mean of morality" established in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In his book, Aristotle explains how what individuals might deem moral often exists outside the polarity of "good versus evil," and instead exists in the space between. His spectrum of morality is quite contrary to common belief as it spans between excess and defect rather than good and evil, stating that "excess and defect destroy the goodness . . . while the mean preserves it" (26). For Aristotle, to be concerned with a code of ethics is to be "concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate . . . Therefore virtue is a kind of mean" (27). If we can understand virtue as the intermediate, then Malory's "ethic" can be understood as a "mean" rather than the opposition present within the traditional dichotomic codes of ethics. Furthermore, the excess which undermines the "mean" is positioned by the text as immoral not for the mere sake of excessiveness but for its threat to the sustainability of Arthur's reign. For many post-structural theorists, what is considered malign is that which pushes against a society's symbolic order, and this symbolic order is one that maintains the future of the society. When actions are vilified, it is then due to their unsustainability. Therefore, it is not that conventional codes of ethics cannot be applied to Malory's work, but rather that the codes are not dichotomous and are also contingent upon the world's futurity.

For the Future and the Forthcoming: Futurity as "Moral"

The beginning of *Le Morte* consists of morally complex and ambiguous behaviors. The basis of the story is grounded on seemingly unethical practices; however, since these practices birth the futurity of Arthur's world, the text establishes no explicit ethical positionality. In one of the initial scenes of the story, Uther Pendragon makes sexual advances towards Igrayne despite her marriage to the duke. Igrayne rejects his proposal, informing her husband about the advance and suggesting that they leave before morning. In response to this rejection, Uther seeks assistance from Merlin the Magician to contrive a plan that will convince Igrayne to have intercourse with him despite her initial refusal. Merlyn then states, "'Now make you redy,' . . . 'This night ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntagel. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband' (Malory 3). However, Merlin's seemingly unethical scheme is not solely to fulfill Uther's sexual desires as it comes with one important condition: "the first nyght that ye shal lye by Igrayne ye hal gete a child on her; and whan that it is borne, that it shall be delyvered to me for to nourisshe thereas I wille have it, for it shal be for your worship and the childis

available as mykel as the child is worth." While for the contemporary reader this deceptive and non-consensual sexual act would be a cause for moral condemnation, the subsequent birth of Arthur as a result of this deception allows for the text to avoid making an explicit ethical standpoint. The story remains ambiguous in its moral stance as it neither encourages nor condemns Merlin's scheme for Arthur's world later becomes a direct product of his contentious birth. In his book *No Future*, Lee Edelman postures "the Child as the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value and proposes against it the impossible project of a[n] . . . oppositionality that would oppose itself to the structural determinants of politics" (4). In the context of *Le Morte*, Arthur may be conjectured as the "Child as an emblem." Therefore, his birth, despite all the perceived unethical air that surrounds it, is in full adherence to the social order of this *ideal* world. Since these acts protect the "Child as an emblem," the text cannot criticize or decry what critics have characterized as Igrayne's "rape."

It is important to note that Merlin and Uther's act of deception toward Igrayne is addressed by the text in a manner contrary to other occurrences of deception and manipulation throughout the story. This dissimilar censure further suggests that Uther's act of deception toward Igrayne is left uncondemned by the text not necessarily because it believes it to be moral but rather because of its production of an Arthurian future. Similarly to Stephen Miko, Felicia Ackerman argues that this ambiguity is because our dichotomous moral system, or what we deem "good" or "bad," does not apply to Arthur's world. She purports that for the text, behavior that is deemed moral is the behavior in which the means justifies the end. For example, there are many instances where the text condemns deceptions wherein the means *does not* justify an end: Arthur manipulating Lancelot into getting trapped in Guinevere's chamber, a temptress manipulating Percival, and Melegaunt manipulating Lancelot into getting trapped in a cave (Ackerman 12). It is only within this initial case of Igrayne and Uther that the text remains dubious. Igrayne herself never exhibits resistance or dismay regarding the transgressions taken against her. When the king confesses to her how he has deceived her, he states, "for it was I myself that cam in that lykeness. And therefor desmay you notm for I am fader to the child,' and there he told her alle the cause . . . Thenne the quene made grete joye whan she knew who was the fader of her child" (Malory 5). As explained, she not only accepted the transgressions against her, but made great joy for the sake of her child's future – the means, therefore, justifies the end. Ultimately, Arthur's entire reign was founded upon seemingly unethical and deceptive practices; however, from this came a symbolic social order eager to be maintained.

Excess and Monstrosity: Excess as "Immoral"

While the child is used as an emblem of futurity in Malory's work, monstrosity is an embodiment of the excess which threatens it. In the section "King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," there are multiple depictions of monstrous entities both dreamt and actualized. In his dream, Arthur has an encounter with a "dredfull dragon" with a "hede . . . enamyled with asure . . . his claws were lyke clene golde... and an hideous flame of fyre there flowe oute of his mowthe" (153). After describing the dragon, in all of its petrifying and threatening glory, a "grimly beare, all blak, in a clowde, and his paws were as byg as a poste" approached him. Upon

this approach, a fight between the behemoths ensues. The description of these two figures and their subsequent battle not only foreshadows Arthur's own encounter with the grotesque actualized, but they are, in and of themselves, symbolic of an excess which threatens. Between the dragon's immoderate display of hazard and the bear's exorbitantly sized paws, they are both embodiments of the extreme. As they manifest to Arthur within a dream state, the two embodiments are temporally removed, existing within the story potentially as symbols of foreign dynastic threats.

Upon awakening, Arthur is summoned to Mount St. Michel where he is asked to battle with a giant who has ravaged the land along with multiple generations of the townspeople. The Giant of St. Michel ultimately exists as a loose conglomeration of excesses in violence and consumption. Arthur's encounter with the Giant of St. Michel is a primary allegory within the text that has been traditionally heralded as symbolic of the dichotomous "good versus evil" dilemma, influenced by imperialist and religious ideologies. In this particular case, however, "evil" is characterized as the excess which compromises the sustainability of order. The Giant of St. Michel is ultimately an embodiment of violent, sexual, and gluttonous excesses which prove a direct threat to the town's futurity as he, "hath devoured of thy people mo than fyve hundred and many mo of oure children, that hath been his sustynaunce all this seven winters" and then "forced [the douches] by fylth of himself, and so after slytte hir unto the navyll" (Malory 154). In defense of their town, the knights of St. Michel *attempt* to warn him off. However, "he hath made hym a coote full of precious stonys, and the bordoures thereof is the berdis of fyftene knyges, and they were of the grettyst blood that dured on erthe" (156). Here, the Giant exhibits excess in size, savagery, and the fear which he induces.

Shortly thereafter, Arthur arrives (previously established as the "Child as an emblem of futurity") in order to battle and sustain the legacy of St. Michel. In the "Allegorical Imagery in Malory's 'Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor of Lucius,'" Whitaker takes a symbolic look at the battle between King Arthur and The Giant of St. Michel, wherein she establishes Arthur as a Rex Christianissimus figure. She argues that the Giant's "physical ugliness reflects his evil disposition," and "in this way the primitive concept of the culture hero ridding the land of monsters in order to benefit mankind is assimilated into the medieval view of the sovereign's responsibility for the maintenance of law and order" (501). In stating this, Whitaker suggests that the Giant is synonymous with the dynastic concerns and fears, enforcing a monstrosity that embodies foreign and internal threats to the nation. Since his actions exist outside of the mean and also present a direct threat to the "child as an emblem of futurity" by murdering and consuming the children of St. Michel, the giant is positioned by the text as morally subversive. Along with his horrific transgressions against children, Catherine Batt also discusses how the Giant of St. Michel's ravaging of the women functions as an act symbolic of the fears and anxieties surrounding excess as a threat to the existing social order. The Giant being characterized as a conglomerate of animalistic traits allows for "The gruesome physical details of the Giant's behaviour divert attention from what the Pentecoastal Oath recognizes as the potential actuality of rape as a threat from within . . . [as well as] an external threat to the social system" (Batt 86). Therefore, monstrosity within Le Morte embodies excess as it undermines the existing social orders existing to sustain the nation's futurity.

Excess to Endings: Excess and the Immoral as Unviable

Back within Arthur's own court, Malory starts to detail the beginning of the end as the infidelity between Lancelot and Quene Gwuenevyre serves as catalyst for the divide between the knights of the Round Table and King Arthur. Although the affair between Lancelot and Quene Gwuenevyre has maintained itself as a prominent storyline throughout the entirety of the book, the text only begins questioning the immorality of the infidelity when it becomes a direct threat to the sustainability of the court. There have been many other instances wherein the texts remain neutral regarding infidelity: Tristram and the wife of Sir Segwarides, Tristram and Isode, and Uther and Igrayne. While the text quite often maintains an ambiguous stance regarding morality, especially in regard to affairs, it explicitly places blame for the fall of Arthur's reign onto Lancelot and Gwenevyre. For instance, within the final pages, a hermit approaches Lancelot, awaking him to say, "Ye be to blame, for ye dysplese God with such maner of sorrowmaking" – a blame which Lancelot and Gwenevyre bear for themselves as well (937).

While a portion of the Round Table is in support of Lancelot upon the discovery of his affair with the quene, the others are against his behavior and in full support of King Arthur. This divide in the court is not sustainable for futurity and since it was directly caused by this particular instance of infidelity, the text, along with its characters, deem the act immoral. Not only is the affair a direct threat to the world's futurity due to the division it causes but also due to the excessive reaction it induces in Arthur. In "'Oute of mesure': Violence and Knighthood in Malory's Morte Darthur," Raluca Radulescu argues that excess is most prominently displayed in love and the sorrow which results from it, violence and subsequent emotional reactions, and in the widespread atmosphere of doom. Due to the "oute of mesure" nature of those three tenants, the latter (atmosphere of doom) gradually increases throughout the book. Therefore, it is the increase in excesses, resulting from a lack of temperance, that ultimately leads to the fall of Arthur's kingdom. Radulescu states that within the final tale, "The atmosphere of excess is spreading over the court and even the wisest counselor, Gawain, who initially asks Arthur to reconsider his harsh judgment of the queen, falls prey to feelings of extreme anger and revengeful impulses when he hears of the accidental killing of his two brothers by Launcelot" (130). Most notably, it is the excess in emotional reactions that Radulescu notes which threatens Arthur's reign as his reaction to Lancelot and Gwuenevyere's infidelity is, as Malory would also put it, "oute of mesure." Upon learning about their affair, Arthur is enraged. His anger is immoderate in comparison to how it has appeared throughout the entirety of the text as his initial response was to find Gwuenyvere for the sake of killing her. The text positions Arthur's desire to kill Gwuenevyre as immoral due its excessiveness as well as the threat it presents to his reign considering it sparks great discontent within his court. When he expresses his desire to find the quene, the knights around him do not follow in accordance with his will (Malory 919). This act of disobedience is one of the first instances wherein his court is overtly in opposition to his word due to the excessive nature of his reaction. After this development in the court, the narrative solidifies its unsustainability by including Arthur's death within the few subsequent pages. Then, in full acceptance of what she now believes to be her wrongdoing, Gwuenevyre ends up submitting the rest of her life to God by joining a

convent. In her likeness, and in accordance with her wishes, Lancelot himself then becomes a hermit. All that was once familiar is naught within Arthur's world, proving that the excessive undermining of the "mean" leaves no room for futurity.

Although it is simple enough to say that our conventional codes of ethics cannot be applied to *Le Morte*, it is more accurate to say that the way the code of ethics works within the story challenges how we view, and therefore wish to apply, empirical moral systems. The moral and philosophical insights present within Malory's work challenge readers to reevaluate the familiar: emotions and their influence on action, the qualities of mind (rationality, reflectiveness, etc.), and social and political concepts such as individuality and subservience to the order (Ackerman 322). The seemingly ambiguous morality of Malory's work might not actually be ambiguous at all. Instead, what *Le Morte* deems moral is that which fills the gap between excess and defect, existing as a mean instead of a polarizing dichotomy. Malory draws his line, then, when this mean is undermined and when the futurity is therefore threatened.

Works Cited

Ackerman, Felicia Nimue. "Late in the Quest: The Study of Malory's Morte Darthur as a New Direction in Philosophy." Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol. 23, 1999, pp. 312-334.

Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Edited by H. Rackham, Harvard UP, 2003.

Batt, Catherine. "Malory and Rape." *Arthuriana*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1997, pp. 78–99. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27869277. Accessed 13 Nov. 2022.

Malory, Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur*. Edited by P.J.C. Field, D.S. Brewer, 2017.

Miko, Stephen J. "Malory and the Chivalric Order." Medium Ævum , 1966, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1966), pp. 211-230.

Radulescu, Raluca L. "'Oute of mesure': Violence and Knighthood in Malory's Morte Darthur." *Reviewing Le Morte Darthur: Texts and Contexts Characters and Themes*, 2005, pp. 119-132.

Wallin, Marie. "How to Be a Man: Malory and the Moral Paradox." *Essays in Medieval Studies*, vol. 27, 2011, p. 105-115.

Whitaker, M. A. "Allegorical Imagery in Malory's "Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emerpor of Lucius." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, vol. 74, no. 3, 1973, pp. 496–509. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43342850.

Decent Guys and Square Shooters: The Power of Queer Camaraderie in James T. Farrell's Young Lonigan

by Ray Paramo

Young Lonigan, the first in a trilogy of novels by James T. Farrell, centers on the titular character of William "Studs" Lonigan as he navigates his adolescence during the months following his graduation from Catholic grade school. In addition to the challenges that often correspond with young adulthood—burgeoning identity and sexuality—Studs finds himself grappling with the expectations imposed upon him by his Irish American community: his parents want him to be hardworking and religious with the possibility of priesthood in his future; his friends want him to be tough, a fighter on the streets of South Side Chicago. Studs is happiest, however, when he finds himself in situations in which he doesn't have to be anything but himself. In Ann Douglas' introduction to *Young Lonigan*, she writes, "Studs knows no way to live but before an audience . . . the happy, magical times [he spends] swimming in Lake Michigan…or sitting in a tree in the park with his girlfriend Lucy . . . turn out to be mere respites from the relentless contradictory imperatives…issued to him by every authority he recognizes: be a God-fearing Catholic, his world scolds, be masculine" (vii). Douglas mentions Studs' varying audiences and the ways in which he behaves as a result. He is a performer in all aspects, especially in the way he expresses his gender and his masculinity. Though Farrell's novel predates Judith Butler by nearly six decades, *Young Lonigan* portrays gender in ways that could be considered proto-Butlerian. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes:

> [Gender] operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration. (xv)

Butler outlines gender as a manifestation of an individual's identity partly resulting from societal expectations and expressed through repeated behaviors. In *Young Lonigan,* Studs behaves in ways that externally adhere to the expectations imposed upon him, though he often experiences an internal dissonance with these behaviors. He struggles to conduct a performance that satisfies society's definition of masculinity, and he begins to suffer as a result. The characterization of Helen Shires—one of Studs' only female friends—also sees her challenging the expectations imposed upon her. She does not adhere to traditionally feminine behaviors. These complications can be understood, in Butlerian terms, as queer. In *Gender Trouble*, queerness is nonnormative, something that destabilizes the gender binary of masculinity and femininity; if men and women do not adhere to masculine and feminine behaviors respectively, they can be understood as queer. Though Farrell's *Young Lonigan* at times reinforces this binary, the novel also challenges such gender norms through its portrayal of Studs and Helen, their behaviors, and their desires. The resulting camaraderie that forms between them also demonstrates the possible benefits of allowing for queer individuals to behave in accordance with their authentic selves.

It is not difficult to see that Studs' masculinity is atypical when compared to the gender performances of the other boys in his neighborhood. A recurring motif of *Young Lonigan* entails Studs struggling to reconcile his emotional sensitivity with the masculine toughness that he is expected to portray. His artistic, romantic, and imaginative impulses have no place in his family, nor are they accepted in the Irish-Catholic and American community at large. Throughout the novel, the traits that he categorizes as "goofy" or "soft" are often the ones that his society traditionally associates with femininity. In *Young Lonigan*'s opening scene, Studs stares at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. He oscillates between a performance of masculinity and a reminiscence of a time in which he walked home with Lucy Scanlan. Such memories give him "goofy, dizzy, flowing feelings" (10). Realizing that these emotions are inappropriate, however, Studs immediately reacts: "[he] god-damned himself, because he was getting soft. He was Studs Lonigan, a guy who didn't have mushy feelings! . . . He took another drag of his cigarette . . . He faced the mirror, and stuck the fag in the right-hand corner of his mouth. He looked tough and sneered . . . He studied himself with satisfaction" (10). Farrell immediately establishes Studs' repressive tendencies and the conflict between his inner behaviors and the way in which he expresses himself outwardly. Any feelings associated with romance, emotion, or love convey a sensitivity that Studs considers unmasculine. *Young Lonigan* reinforces the gender binary as it equates the unmasculine with the feminine equates unmasculine with the feminine, but it simultaneously positions Studs as nonbinary in the sense that he consistently experiences slippage between the two gender expressions. Any unmasculine behavior is quickly self-critiqued and self-regulated, but such a chance in performance is only temporary. Studs' outward masculine performance is incessantly undermined by inward impulses or behaviors that are deemed sensitive, emotional, or even nonheteronormative.

Farrell deliberately chooses to use the word "queer" many times throughout the novel, and often in association with Studs, whether it be via his internal thoughts or his observations. As Butler notes, queerness takes on different meanings when discussing sexuality versus gender. While gender queerness describes performed or expressed identities that complicate or reject the gender binary of men as masculine and women as feminine, queer sexuality denotes any

sexual desire that is nonheteronormative; gender and sexuality cannot be conflated (Butler xiv). In the seventh chapter of *Young Lonigan*'s first section, the word "queer" and variations thereof are used four times in quick succession, all within a single scene. In the wake of his graduation ceremony, Studs finds himself reflecting on his time at St. Patrick's grammar school. Having dismissed himself from his classmates, Studs spends a moment alone in the lavatory, smoking and thinking about sin: "He puffed and looked about the dark and lonely place. He could hear himself breathing, and his heart beating away, and the queerness of the place seemed to put strange figures in him, and the strange figures walked right out of his head and moved about . . . leering at him like red-dressed Satan" (Farrell 39). Studs' focus initially lingers on his own body, his vitality, his pulse, his breath; the environment in which he stands is the boys' restroom, a place that can be linked to images of secrecy, sordidness, or male-on-male sexual exploits. Queer thoughts are provoked in Studs as a result. The text links these thoughts with images of Satan, or sin, prompting the narration to continue in a very intriguing manner. The mental images that surface in Studs' mind are gendered male: "[Studs] felt like he used to feel when he was a young kid . . . he would have nightmares, and strange boys, like demons, and as big as his father, would come and lean over his bed" (39). The "strange boys" from Studs' childhood nightmares are shown to be representatives of his queer, sinful thoughts, and even upon waking, Studs remembers being chased by them, incessantly pursued until "his old man [would come] and shag them away" (39). Unable to accept his queerness and the sin with which it is associated, a young Studs is only able to find solace in the presence of his father, who exemplifies for him the antithesis of sin and queerness: Irish Catholicism and traditional masculinity respectively.

The restroom scene ultimately leaves Studs feeling "a little queer" (39). This is the second instance in which the narrator uses the word, and immediately thereafter, Farrell illustrates how Studs goes about handling occurrences like this one: "Whenever [he] had queer thoughts he had a good trick of getting rid of them. He imagined that his head was a compartment with many shutters in it . . . he just watched the shutters close on the queer, fruity thoughts, and they were gone, and he'd have a hell of a time bringing them back, even if he wanted to" (39). The analogy used expresses another method of repression, as is typical of Studs. He shuts out thoughts that he perceives not only as strange but perhaps even as homosexual. The word "queer" appears twice more, as does the use of the term "fruity."

At the time of *Young Lonigan*'s publication in 1932, Farrell would have been aware of the connotations that these words carried with them. George Chauncey explores the history of queer terminology in his *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World*, noting that by the 1910s and 1920s in the United States, the term "queer" was, indeed, "used to describe men on the basis of their homosexual interest" (15-16). Similarly, the term "fruit" was often employed to describe "effeminate or queer men" in pre-war America (Jackson 5). The intention behind the word choice of Farrell's narrator in *Young Lonigan* suggests that Studs is being characterized as queer. This is not to say that Studs is simply a male harboring repressed homosexual desires. As evidenced throughout the novel, Studs engages in heterosexual or heteroromantic relationships, most notably with Lucy. Farrell's repeated use of the word "queer" then suggests that Studs' sexuality and gender transcend the "hetero-homosexual binarism" which would have been considered the hegemonic "sexual regime" of American culture at the time (Chauncey 13).

Studs is not the only character in *Young Lonigan* who is intentionally presented as queer. His friend, Helen, is one of the few female characters in the novel with whom he has a relationship that is not predicated on romance or sexual attraction. Helen is ultimately labeled a "tomboy" by Farrell's narrator (164). When she is first introduced, Helen is described as a "lean, muscular girl" whose athletic prowess leaves Studs feeling a bit jealous (75). She is sporty, tough, and exhibits behaviors normally associated with masculinity to the point that even Studs is envious of her ability to naturally portray such characteristics. Helen herself proclaims that she is not "fussy and babyish, like [the other] girls," and she critiques their behaviors, saying, "girls are always tattling, and squealing, and snitching, and I can't stand them" (77). Just as with Studs, Helen is associating very specific behaviors with feminine gendered behaviors. While the novel continues to reinforce the gender binary through these associations, it also presents Helen as queer when that very same binary is contextualized. Unlike Studs, whose inner thoughts are revealed to the reader, Helen's othering—the way in which she is positioned as queer—is portrayed through the perceptions of her. Her mother, for instance, does not approve of her behaviors and interests:

> [She] wasn't like other girls; they said she was too old to go on being a tomboy. Her old lady wanted her to do like other girls and give up playing ball, so that she could pay more attention to other things like studying music, dancing and dramatics. She said for her part, if she would be allowed to play basketball on the Englewood high school team, music dramatics and dancing could all go hang. She said she was fed up on her old lady's nagging. (164)

There are expectations imposed upon Helen that adhere to gender roles. Sports are reserved for boys, while the arts are reserved for girls. If a girl happens to harbor an interest in sports, as Helen does, then she is nonnormative and her behaviors are queer. Additionally, the language that Helen uses when griping about her mother's disapproval parallels that of Studs. Expressions like "fed up with her old lady's nagging" employ phrasing that Studs and the other neighborhood boys use at many other points throughout the novel. Farrell's many strategies to liken Helen's gender expression to that of the normative young men in the novel thus illustrates her queerness.

Young Lonigan does more than merely present two characters as queer through the way in which Studs and Helen challenge normative behaviors, expressions, and interests. In bringing the two together, Farrell creates a type of dynamic between them that, at least for a short time, promotes an embracing of their authentic identities. This camaraderie between Studs and Helen, and the ways in which they interact with one another, removes for each of them the need to perform an identity that is not true to who they are. Early in *Young Lonigan*'s second section, Studs and Helen meet up and play football, and a conversation ensues. Studs quickly recognizes the ease with which he can be himself when around Helen. Farrell's narrator writes, "Studs told himself that there was something very fine about Helen. She was a square shooter, and she understood things . . . A guy couldn't find a pal like Helen every day" (78). Studs' admiration for Helen sees her positioned as an equal to him, a pal or comrade. He appreciates the traits that present her as nonnormative, and he does not feel in any way judged when he is around her. Even when he does something like "sip a soda with a spoon," an act that would

make others "laugh at him," Helen conveys no criticism (78). Phallic connotations aside, Studs knows that he need not worry about any sort of mockery or ridicule from a person who shares his differences. Additionally, during their football match, Helen suggests to Studs: "You ought to make the football team at Loyola" (76). Studs immediately replies with, "I'd like to" (76). There is no hesitation in his response; no internal dialogue occurs between the lines of narration, as is common in many other parts of the novel. This is one of the rare instances in which Studs considers his future and immediately takes Helen up on her spontaneous advice. All of these occurrences convey a dynamic in which Studs can truly be comfortable in his queer identity. Likewise, it is evident that Helen has similar feelings about her relationship with Studs. She says to him, just after her declaration that she is not like the other girls in her neighborhood, "With decent guys, you can be . . . well, you can be yourself," (77).

In addition to encouraging authenticity, the queer camaraderie between Studs and Helen also illustrates a dynamic in which there is a mutual respect or even a willingness to concede authority to one another. Notably, in the fifth chapter of the novel's third section, Studs and Helen spend some time commiserating about their families and discussing their futures. Studs tells Helen, "My old lady wants me to be a priest. Can you imagine a guy like me bein' a priest?" (163). When Helen does not immediately answer him, instead expressing her own familial frustrations, Studs again asks Helen for her advice: "But can you imagine a guy like me bein' a priest?" (164). He goes on to intermittently repeat himself twice more. Helen never answers his question, but Studs' persistence demonstrates that he views her, on some level, as a mentor; her opinion matters a great deal to him. There is almost desperation in the manner with which he asks for her advice. Helen instead advises him on a different topic: "I like you, Studs, and you're a nice kid, but for your own good, I'd say that you ought to shake them bastards" (166). She is speaking of the new gang with which Studs is associating himself. The language she uses here—calling Studs a "nice kid"—demonstrates an awareness of herself as a mentor figure. It is Helen, in fact, that encourages Studs once again to pursue a football career. She cares for him, and because she is able to identify with him in ways that are unique to their experience, she finds herself in a position that carries influence.

Unfortunately, as time passes, Studs grows increasingly burdened by the expectations of his masculinity. Not only does he become alienated from Helen, but *Young Lonigan* concludes on a somber note, with Studs' fate in question. Despite this somber ending, Farrell's novel contains at its core a study of gender and sexuality that is somewhat surprising considering the time of its publication. Farrell made deliberate choices to characterize his protagonist as a complicated young man whose gender expression is not fixed, whose behaviors, impulses, and interests slip back and forth between opposite ends of a binary that the novel does reinforce. Of course, *Young Lonigan* is imperfect; its portrayal of gender roles, race, sex, and even other aspects of queerness is problematic in many ways, but its inclusion of characters like Studs and Helen also convey on Farrell's part an attempt to deconstruct and even challenge the very same binary. Through the interactions between these two characters, Farrell illustrates the potential benefits of finding camaraderie in queerness: both Studs and Helen are happiest when they are in one another's company because they feel no pressure to perform. Each can express themselves freely and behave in ways that remain authentic to who they are. In this sense, *Young Lonigan* is envisioning the potential of a reality in which queerness, at least in regard to gender, is normalized.

Works Cited

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990.

Chauncey, George. Introduction. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*, Basic Books, 1994, pp. 1-29.

Douglas, Ann. Introduction. *Young Lonigan*, Penguin Books, 1993, pp. vi-xxiv.

Farrell, James T. *Young Lonigan*, Penguin Books, 1993.

Jackson, Paul. Introduction. *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military during World War II*, McGill-Queen's UP, 2004, pp. 3–28.

Aemilia Lanyer's Reclamation of Female Agency with a "Chaste, Yet Loving Kiss"

by Cassandra Abigail Amaya

"Great ladie of my heart. . . / All what I am, I rest at your command."
—Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*

In 1611, London bore witness to the first publication written by a woman. The literary feat and effort of Aemilia Lanyer display many properties outside of gender alone. Lanyer—born outside of nobility, daughter to a Jewish court musician and married unhappily to another, mistress to the Lord Chamberlain, a mother for only a short time, and the speculated "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets—carefully mediates a spectrum of religion and authority within her work. In "The Description of Cooke-ham," Lanyer portrays a reverent image of Margaret Clifford, her daughter Alice, and the estate itself, creating a space for which she can express her affections and love to them while being aware of the illusory chains of class and duty that separate them outside of their home. Within the imagined Edenic realm of Cooke-ham, Aemilia Lanyer's poem reclaims female agency with a "chaste, yet loving kiss," as she creates space for her authority as a writer and unity with other women through community and female-led religion.

Before delving into the poem, understanding why the relationship between the Cliffords and Lanyer is both curious and stimulating for its time until now, it is important to identify why female agency—women's ability to define themselves, their goals, and participate in society—subconsciously links them to each other. Barbara Lewalski's "Re-writing Patriarchy and Patronage" asserts that the trio of women were deeply connected because of their network of overlapping societal relationships. When George Clifford—the third Earl of Cumberland—died, his wife and daughter were engaged in a difficult legal struggle to contest the will left behind. Margaret hoped to maintain Anne's claims to some of the properties left behind, but this claim as women in a patriarchal society placed them "against the entire Jacobean patriarchy: male relatives, their husbands, court society, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and King James himself" (Lewalski 87). As Jacobean women

suffered from the loss of Elizabeth's cultural dominance, education declined, and an outpour of overtly misogynistic writings and sermons came into resurgence (Lewalski 88). Anne Clifford and her mother, Margaret, did not accept the loss of their property and sat with authorial judgment on the matter; their memoirs were written by Anne detailing their resistance to the aforementioned patriarchy. Interestingly, Anne, like Lanyer, put emphasis on "matrilineal heritage and kinship network," claiming guidance and wisdom came from the community of women around her (Lewalski 93). At the time of her becoming a patron to the Cliffords, Lanyer too was facing issues caused by the patriarchy and seeking community, and she may have found this kinship within Cooke-ham as the three battled separate matters: Anne, her right to property; Margaret, her rejection of succumbing to widowhood norms; and Lanyer, her social decline at the rumors spreading of her personal relations. For this trio, reading and writing became the resistance to the patriarchy and a mode of reclaiming agency for themselves amongst other women.

Part of what makes the country house poem, "The Description of Cooke-ham," distinct is the lack of male presence. Lanyer, her pen a public servant to the Cliffords, is meant to speak highly of them, which she does, but the poem also presents this moment of fleeting time together as mystical and divine. Cooke-ham is like the biblical Eden: free of sin, outside evils, and a place where nature is deeply connected to its residents. Due to the lack of male voices within the poem, Lanyer may be insinuating that the lack of males also contributes to the estate being an intimate, safe place for the women residing there. Lanyer does not begin the poem by humbling herself as a poet or a woman; she asserts that the muses have given their full consent—the "power the virtuous content"—to tell her "sacred story" (ll. 3—6). Amongst women who she sees as exemplifying goodness, she feels she has the better authority over what she needs to write. Interestingly, even her choice of allusions creates a safe space for other female mythological figures, one that was denied to them and glorified by other poets. The ancient poet Ovid was a familiar figure to Modern English audiences and one to whom they could habitually identify "as the locus classicus" of referencing the immortalizing of people through the written word, as well as the character's fates becoming allusions within literary works (Reid 574). Though with no certainty can it be measured how much Lanyer herself was affected by Greek influences in the 17th century, her poem also alludes to and names three key figures in Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* Echo, Philomela, and Phoebus. Choosing these specific mythical figures to be part of the poem appears to have a deeper meaning other than serve an aesthetic purpose, as each represents a myth that robs women of their voice, body, and power.

For example, cursed only to repeat the sounds and words of others, the nymph Echo finds herself in doomed love with Narcissus, a hunter who dies obsessionally in love with his own reflection. It is difficult to determine the length of Echo's suffering as she watches her beloved–a man who had cruelly rejected her before being trapped by the river's bed-wither away. Though an immortal being, Echo is depicted fading away into the Earth with the grief of losing him, her bones "petrify'd", her voice "found" amongst the caves and mountains where they'd remain forever (Ovid 74). Echo lacks the agency to speak, is cursed by another woman (Hera) for following a man's (Zeus's) order and is only able to find solace by embedding herself into nature. Her sad story is symbolic of the lack of authoritative voices for

women. Then, Philomela: she presents herself as a nightingale in Lanyer's poem, first singing and then forced to "leave her mournful ditty" as the Cliffords leave the estate (ll. 31–32, 89). Philomela, oft portrayed as the nightingale she is changed into in mythology, is another victim in Ovid's poetry. The princess of Athens is raped by her sister's husband and when she attempts to speak her truth, is mutilated by her attacker, her tongue cut out, and left mute. In a final attempt to have her story told, Philomela weaves a tapestry depicting her story and as further events unfold, is forced to beg the gods for an escape from her rapist, thus resulting in her being turned into the nightingale (Ovid 153–62). When the Cliffords are present in the garden, Philomela is singing in praise of both the women and the place. Like Echo, Philomela represents a woman robbed of her agency, body, and voice, mercy only being granted at the request of the same male patriarchal rulers that harmed them. But inside of Cook-ham, they are safe and happy alongside the community of women Lanyer writes of. The lack of male presence within the garden and the cohabitation of the women signifies a safe, holy space that Lanyer not only reclaims for her dedicatees, but for the mythological figures that were denied such agency in their stories. When Philomela and Echo are left, and the garden once again becomes average—losing the Edenic qualities—they are openly mournful.

Phoebus, also known as Apollo, was harder to place. As with many other male pantheons of Greek mythology, Phoebus had violated women for personal gains, yet Lanyer presents him in passing-a figure attempting to get close to Clifford but unable to because of the oak tree's protection:

> Desirous that you there should make abode;
> Whose fair green leaves much like a comely veil . . .

The choice of "comely veil" is interesting, as it alludes to weddings and the protection linked to it; rather than a man, it is nature that protects her. If we consider how widowhood affects the real Margaret Clifford and her place in society, Lanyer is discreetly retrieving that protection under God rather than matrimony. The tree then:

> Defended Phoebus when he would assail;
> Whose pleasing boughs did yield a cool fresh air,
> Joying his happiness when you were there. (ll. 62-66)

The story of Phoebus is a significant one. Phoebus, struck by Cupid's arrow in the act of vengeance, falls madly in love with the river nymph, Daphne. Phoebus chases her and begs her to love him, forcing Daphne to run to the edge of a river's bank. Knowing she would be unable to escape him forever but unwilling to let herself be taken, she calls out to the Gods to save her; to change the form that which all her sorrows came. Ovid depicts Daphne being turned into a laurel tree at the instance she makes her plea, but it is Phoebus's reaction in *Metamorphoses* that makes his correlation to Lanyer's poem so significant. Still being able to sense Daphne's presence and consciousness within the tree, Phoebus embraces the tree despite her lack of consent; he "fixt his lips upon the trembling rind; / It swerv'd aside, and his embrace declin'd" (Ovid 19). A kiss declined by a tree seems uncannily similar to the very

same kiss that Lanyer reclaims for herself later in the poem. Daphne is forced to lose her agency, and her physical body, to protect herself from men and still suffers significantly for it. But rather than have Daphne in the poem, it is Margaret Clifford that the garden protects from Phoebus—her beauty and divinity qualities to be praised but denied that chance to be robbed inside of Cooke-ham. And rather than Phoebus claiming a kiss in his desire to possess a woman, it is Lanyer—with genuine adoration of her patroness—that steals it.

Separately, the religious connection to women outstretches much more than the allusions to the mythical. By lifting Margaret and Alice up as divine beings, the poem implicitly undermines patriarchal ideologies of women not having a voice in religion. Lanyer does this in two ways: pathetic fallacies and claiming women as equals in their intimacy to God through nature. It is their presence that Cooke-ham reacts to and through the use of pathetic fallacies, Lanyer demonstrates the way nature responds to their staying and eventual leaving. When Margaret and Alice are there, Cooke-ham is a beautiful oasis—Philomela sings, the trees, and flowers "embraced each other, seeming to be glad" (ll. 24). What is more, the sun is depicted as being glorious:

> Oh how methought each plant, each flower, each tree
> Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee!
> The very hills right humbly did descend,
> When you to tread on them did intend.
> And as you set your feet, they still did rise,
> Glad that they could receive so rich a prize (ll. 33—38).

In "Reclaiming the Space of the Closet," Katherine R. Larson describes the significance of stanzas like this as emblematizing the realm that makes Lanyer capable of expressing her true devotions to Margaret and Anne. Per Larson's argument, Lanyer is characterizing her text "more generally as a closet that grants her dedicatees exclusive access to Christ," and importantly "positions herself as holding the keys to that space, claiming the authority to control her patrons' reading experiences even as she enjoys the proximity to them" (74). So, in the process of lifting Margaret and Alice, Lanyer is also lifting herself as a writer, this protofeminist approach disguised by pretty, pastoral language. Cooke-ham is beautiful *because* of the presence of women. Now, compare the former with what happens when the women leave the Eden created by and for them:

> The trees that were so glorious in our view,
> Forsook both flowers and fruit, when once they knew . . .

The first two lines of this stanza are a direct mirror to lines 33—34 of the poem, and continues:

> Of your depart, their very leaves did wither,
> Changing their colors as they grew together.
> But when they saw this had no power to stay you,
> They often wept, though, speechless, could not pray you,

Letting their tears in your fair bosoms fall,
As if they said: "Why will ye leave us all?" (ll. 133–140)

It is almost comical the manner in which the estate desperately tries to hold Margaret and Anne from leaving. Cooke-ham represents the peaceful time that women prospered with God and one another; their departure, at the hands of man and societal expectations, signifies its complete destruction.

In "Book, Body, and Christ: Reading Aemilia Lanyer's Eucharist," Julianne Sandberg asserts that Lanyer "heralds the virtues of the female reading experience," her works beckoning for women to see the way they absorb both literature and God differently from men (Sandberg 1). We know her work did not change the systems that oppressed her and other women, but it represents a fixed moment in literary history where the humble, meek female idea of authorship was rejected by a second-generation Jew of no nobility, nor extraordinary access to education. So, to read Lanyer only in the regard of traditional Protestantism risks marginalizing her, for Lanyer also writes with imagery from a culmination of religions that challenges her time. We have seen Lanyer reference Protestant values, mythological allusions, and glorify the pastoral scenery, but still to be looked at is the writer's Jewish and class influence. When describing Clifford's spiritual connection to holy figures when she walks and meditates amongst nature, Lanyer first presents the Creator's image in nature. Clifford recognizes that God is present "in all his creatures" by "perfect law" (ll. 77–78). There, in the garden, Clifford sees the Creator's "beauty, wisdom, grace, love," and "majesty" (ll. 80). Continuing in the meter of iambic pentameter, this material and style seems conventional of Elizabethan/Jacobean Protestantism; Lanyer is speaking of God with gentle praise. However, this is not simply about praise—Clifford is *connecting* with him, intimately seeing God's power in a manner often reserved to men. Whilst Clifford continues to walk, the reader sees new figures appear:

In these sweet woods how often did you walk,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talk;
Placing his holy Writ in some fair tree
To meditate what you therein did see . . .

This represents another moment of Lanyer building on more familiarity between women and religion. Clifford is able to speak with Christ and his Apostles, her pious nature and goodness placing her on the same level as those with religious authority. Lanyer writes of Protestantism in a style not unfamiliar until the meditation begins to pull other figures into the garden:

With Moses you did mount his holy hill,
To know his pleasure and perform his will.
With lovely David you did often sing
His holy hymns to heaven's eternal king.
And in sweet music did your soul delight,
To sound his praises, morning, noon, and night.

With blessed Joseph you did often feed
Your pined brethren when they stood in need (ll. 81—92).

Moses, David, and Joseph are important figures in Judaism and Lanyer makes a point to dedicate lines of her poem to describe them on par with Christ and his apostles. Note, that in a poem that lacks the presence of men, only these holy figures are granted access into the garden other than Margaret, Alice, and the speaker, Lanyer herself. And this is not the first time Lanyer has done this with her writing. In *Salve Deus Rex Jadaeorum* (1611), as a dinner party's host, she invites her female guests to the table of the Eucharist, a ritual that fits both Jewish and Protestant paradigms. By uniting women at a table (or in Cooke-ham's example, an Eden) that is primarily reserved for men, Lanyer "rhetorically erases class borders to reassert her status within the social elite of the royal court, a step that requires, according to Ann Baynes Coiro, "all the back of Jesus Christ to propel [Lanyer] into that place" (Sandberg 9). From the beginning, Lanyer is acknowledging her place in society but rejecting conforming to meek poetry; she is passionate about her feelings for the residents of Cooke-ham, without forgetting that she is not their equal in a patriarchal world. Yet rather than accept her position, she reclaims her agency as a writer by being the one that unites people of higher positions—like Margaret and Anne—and levels them in a religious landscape.

So, though a bit predictable, we end at the final stanza of Lanyer's country house poem:
This last farewell to Cooke-ham here I give,
When I am dead thy name in this may live…

Here, Lanyer claims that her writing will immortalize Margaret and Anne, even as the women are forced to leave Cooke-ham behind. In a moment of power, she seized the kiss from the tree, watched as the estate withered, and praised her patronesses for their time together. She finishes:

Wherein I have performed her noble hest
Whose virtues lodge in my unworthy breast,
And ever shall, so long as life remains,
Tying my life to her by those rich chains (ll. 205—210).

It is peculiar to see that the first stanza of "The Description of Cooke-ham" begins with a farewell, while the last insinuates that Lanyer could never truly separate herself from it. While many have explored different meanings to the rich chains that bind her, it appears to me that Lanyer is reminding her readers that just as she is bound, they are too by her eternalized poetry.

Nearly four hundred years after the death of Aemilia Lanyer, there still remains much to consider about the literary works she left behind. Her elevation of women through religion and community, as well as her feat of publishing in a time of great risks to public writers, places her at the forefront of resisting oppressive institutions while remaining a woman of her time. As she bids her final farewell to Cooke-ham, aware that she must depart her Eden created by women *for* women, she unconsciously creates a new one for readers to seek if they only brave the world outside the garden walls.

Works Cited

Larson, Katherine R. "Reading the Space of the Closet in Aemilia Lanyer's "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum."" *Early Modern Women*, Fall 2007, Vol. 2, Fall 2007, pp. 73-93.

Lanyer, Aemilia. "The Description of Cooke-ham." *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edi. Stephen Greenblatt, 10th edition, 2018 pp. 454—457.

Lanyer, Aemilia. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. 1611. University of Oregon, edi. 2001, pp. 60. Retrieved online: https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/752/lanyer.pdf

Lewalski, Barbara K. "Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 21, 1991, pp. 87–106.

Ovid, 43 B. C-17 A. D. or 18 A. D. *Ovid The Metamorphoses*. Edited by Horace Gregory, New American Library, 2009, pp. 15—20, 72—77, & 153—162.

Reid, Lindsay Ann. "Translating Ovid's Metamorphoses in Tudor Balladry." *Renaissance Quarterly* 72.2 (2019), pp. 537-581.

Sandberg, Julianne. "Book, Body, and Bread: Reading Aemilia Lanyer's Eucharist." *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-25.

What Happens When Our Helmets Are Off: A Reading of Sir Tristram's Madness through Thing Theory

by Sarrah Wolfe

It is clear within the text of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* that the armored body is held with a certain regard by those around it. Throughout the tales, knights are identified by national colors displayed on their armor, as in the case of Sir Perarde, Sir Pertholope, and Sir Perymones — the notable Black, Green, and Red Knights. King Ban, with his "bendis of grene and thereupon golde crownys," comes in to help Arthur fight against King Lot (26). Men are hidden behind helmets and breastplates, yet they often remain identifiable by the colors and emblems of their swords and shields. Such displays of color and emblems indicate to its observers either the impending threat or safety that is brought about by that knight. Inasmuch as Tristram's black armor indicates safety and triumph, Marke's armor indicates anger and incompetence. But just as much as a knight's armor is used to reveal an identity, it is also used to conceal it. Knights are frequently seen going incognito and leveraging armor to maintain a disguise. As crucial as armor is to the text of *Le Morte Darthur*, its signification is never stable, and no armored body holds the same importance or regard as another. King Arthur is the only knight who is given a sword that is so esteemed it becomes nearly metonymic for Arthur himself. The preoccupation within *Le Morte Darthur* with a knight's armor and the seemingly inconsistent ways in which armor is leveraged then begs the unique question: What is a knight's relationship to their armor?

Drawing on the ideas of Bill Brown and his ideas of "thing theory," I argue that an application of thing theory to Sir Tristram's madness reveals a complex subject-object relationship that allows for a knight's armor to overtake his physical, material body. It is not the armor that, in its absence in the wilderness, loses its function, but Sir Tristram himself. Such a reading of the text and of Sir Tristram as object-turned-thing further reveals that Tristram's armor had prohibited him from negotiating his murderous identity, propelling him into his madness.

Thing theoreticians like Bill Brown have called upon the work of Martin Heidegger to reconsider the human's relationship to inanimate objects. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*,

Heidegger proposes a distinction between "object" and "thing," wherein an object becomes a thing once it fails to serve its function. Brown extends this concept to ideas of human relationships with inanimate objects in order to complicate the "human-thing" and "subject-object" divide. For Heidegger, and later for Brown, an "object" denotes an item or substance that has been normalized for use by its subject; an object fails to call attention to itself. But a "thing" reveals and reorients the relationship between itself and its subject often through a lack or loss of function:

> We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation. (Brown 8)

Brown supposes such ideas might be utilized in literature and culture to examine the ways in which human relationships with inanimate objects are configured. Yet he also exhibits a hesitation toward the ways in which thing theory has been applied and "recast[ed] into essays that do not always maintain a focus on things, but that nonetheless show how the question of things has been integral to what the text at hands is trying to get said" ("Introduction" 18). Many scholars fall victim to their own human-thing biases, and ultimately fail to broaden the understanding of the subject-object relationship within the text. Instead, they often result in another indexical reading of objects in the text. This vulnerability is often seen in applications of thing theory to medieval texts, as in Albrecht Classen's "Symbolic Significance of the Sword in the Hero's Hand" and James Paz's "Æschere's Head, Grendel's Mother, and the Sword That Isn't a Sword." While these studies thoughtfully examine swords in various medieval texts, their focus on symbolics and unreadability arguably exhibits the same anxieties that Brown himself expressed. The question then follows of how to circumnavigate such vulnerabilities.

As Kellie Robertson notes, "the premodern object would *not* have been subject to the sharp differentiation between…the human and the thing, subject and object that followed the Enlightenment" (4). Robertson's assertion is well supported by the question of the eucharist that occurred during the Middle Ages. Miri Rubin argues that the idea of transubstantiation and the subsequent narratives to support it were designed "to sustain the claim that the little white disc over which the Latin consecration was said was thus transformed into the body of Christ which could occasionally be received into the human body" (47). What Rubin explores is a reconfiguration of the subject-object relationship in religious communion. Such controversies and debates that marked the Middle Ages make the medieval and premodern times rife for application of thing theory.

This lack of differentiation that Kellie notes in the premodern object simultaneously points to the solution to the concerns that Brown has expressed. The many misapplications of thing theory to medieval texts ultimately fail because of their modernist impulse to assume the living as subject and the inanimate as object. Instead, the premodern notions

that Robertson points out allows us to assume that it is not necessarily the inanimate that is the object, but the living human. Looking more specifically at the text of *Le Morte Darthur*, focusing on Tristram as the object which has become thing, instead of as the subject may reveal more about the human-object relationship while avoiding the vulnerabilities that exist in thing theory.

The first point that must be made then in such a reading of Sir Tristram is the way in which he becomes the thing that "reorganize[s] the relationship of person to thing" (Lightsey, qtd. in Robertson). From the outset, Tristram is marked by thingness when his birth brings about the death of his mother. Just before her death, Tristram's mother cries out "A, my lytyll son, though haste murtherd thy modir! And therefore I suppose thou that arte a murtherer so yong, thow arte full lykly to be a manly man in thyne ayge" (290). Tristram's entrance into the world is marked by nakedness and monstrosity, as opposed to a more objected nakedness and innocence that are the more accepted associations of children. Had his mother lived, Tristram may have maintained his objecthood in the simultaneous maintenance of his innocence, but an infant child that is deemed a murderer reorients the mother-son, subject-object relationship, placing Tristram in a state of thinghood.

As Tristram continues to grow, his thingness only becomes more pronounced though it is mediated by the inanimate subject of his armor. The many mentions of Tristram as "strong and bygge," would have otherwise associated him with monsters or giants (293). However, when Tristram demands to be made knight of King Marke in order to defend Cornwall, he avoids such a relegation by donning armor and fighting against Sir Marhalt. As the two men fight "togedyrs lyke rammys to beare eythir other downe," their "wylde" behavior is mediated only by the presence of their shields, helmets, and swords (299). It is only through the presence of armor that this violence is accepted and that Tristram is relieved of being outcasted for his giganticness and monstrousness. Dingman argues that the bestowing of swords to knights gives "authority or power over the people around them," but in the case of Sir Tristram, it is the sword and its associated armor that exhibits power over the knight in determining his social caste (375). However, the resulting implication is that Tristram is now an object that is subject to the inanimate armor.

The agency of the armor and the obfuscation of the subject-object divide is further exhibited later when Tristram lodges himself at the castle of the King of Ireland under the disguised name of "Tramtryste." After retrieving the "pyese of the swerde that was pulde oute of Sir Marhaltys brayne-panne after that he was dede," the queen holds it to Tristram's sword, and "hit was as mete as hit might be as whan hit was newe brokyn" (306). Tristram's armor, specifically his sword, determines the actions that follow his defeat of Sir Marhalte. His identity is revealed at the behest of his armor. As Brown reminds, analysis of things and objects "concerns the slippage between *having* (possessing a particular object) and *being* (the identification of one's self with that object)" ("Introduction" 13). The action of the sword breaking in the fight against Marhalte ultimately reveals such a slippage that gives agency to the armor over Tristram, forcing him to surrender his identity to his armor.

Leading up to Tristram's exile into the wilderness, the complications that arise from the armor's authority and agency manifest in his anger towards Sir Keyhydns. Upon discovering the letters that Sir Keyhydns and La Beale Isolde have exchanged, Sir Tristram exhibits

monstrous rage as he "drew his swerde and seyde 'Sir Keyhidyns, kepe the!'" (387). In this moment, Tristram attempts to exhibit power over the armor, which has previously mediated his monstrous identity and restricted his acts of violence to chivalry. Yet in this moment of "raging madness, triggered by love," he attempts to overthrow his armor by drawing his sword in a manner that is uncharacteristic of chivalric principles (Hood 21). Subsequently he leaves the Castle of Tyntagyll and "armed hym in such armour as he had for to fight with hem that wolde withstonde hym" (388). He dons his armor and exits in a rampage as his monstrous identity is pit against the agency of his armor.

Tristram's exile and nakedness then becomes a pivotal moment for him to finally negotiate and contend with his monstrous identity, unmediated by his armor. His withdrawal into the wilderness at the news of La Beale Isode and Sir Keyhydns' correspondence is heavily marked by his nakedness: "And than was he naked, and waxed leane and poore of fleyshe;" "Thus sir Trystramys endured there an half-yere naked" (390). He achieves ultimate thinghood as he becomes what Yamamoto identifies in medieval texts as a "wild man." In the wilderness, Tristram is able to reorient the relationship with his armor — the relationship between subject and object — as he simultaneously poses "questions about…the distinctiveness of human identity" (Yamamoto 145). As Yamamoto notes,

> the forest of the Middle Ages…is, at least in part, inhabited, and its inhabitants are characteristically those on the margins of human society—hermits, outlaws, or those taking part in some kind of liminal activity—caring for animals, such as swine, or pursuing them in a hunt" (151).

The wild forest, in its liminality, then exists as a place where "things seem slightly human and humans seem slightly thing-like" where he is able to contend with his monstrous identity ("Introduction" 13). As Tristram exiles himself into the forest, he is able to explore his monstrous identity that previously was overpowered by his armor.

Upon entering the forest, Tristram experiences what is, in essence, a spiritual rebirth that immediately recalls the monstrous identity that was bestowed upon him at his physical birth. He removes his armor completely, his nakedness invoking a sense of infancy that recalls the beginning of Tristram's story. Furthermore, this rebirth coincides with his assumed death to society. Tristram's cousin, Sir Andred, had convinced King Marke that Tristram died "bycause he wolde have had sir Tristtramys londis" (392). Tristram's fabricated death and metaphorical rebirth ultimately provide him a liminal space to reorient himself to his identity and his armor.

In this liminal space, Tristram is allowed to indulge in his monstrous identity. As "he yeode unto the wyldirness and braste down the treys and bowis," his fit of rage recreates the sense of destruction that marked his birth and the death of his mother (389). In contrast to his initial birth, which was at the mercy of a chivalric society, Tristram is allowed to play out his monstrous rage without the power of armor constraining him.

However, Tristram's exodus, though marked by nakedness and lack of armor, is not entirely devoid of errantry. As Tristram engages in these acts of violence in the wilderness where his "stronge and bygge" demeanor is unrestricted, he reasserts agency and power

over the armor in choosing to interact with it as opposed to having it imposed upon him by chivalric society. In a moment of anger towards Sir Dagonet for beating the shepherd that had provided Tristram fellowship in the woods, Sir Tristram attacks Dagonet without a sword or armor and "gaff him such a falle to the earth and brused hym so that he lay stylle" (392). Tristram is then face-to-face with not Dagonet, but the armor that once restricted him. Tristram chooses to "wraste hys swerd out of hys honde," attack the other squires, and then continue on "running as he had been wylde woode" (392). Tristram, in wresting Dagonets sword from his unconscious hands, is no longer an object being acted upon by the subject armor but is instead a thing that allows for the reorientation of the subject and object.

His state of simultaneous subject and objecthood culminates into a "metamorphosis of the one into the other" as he subsequently rescues Sir Dynaunte from a giant ("Introduction" 13). The giant is particularly significant in its reflection of Sir Tristram's own monstrous traits. Throughout the text, giants are associated with the same destruction and devastation seen in Tristram's birth, as evidenced earlier by Lucius' gathering of "fyfffty gyauntys that were engendirde with fendis…to dystroy Arthures londys" (151). Yet the giant that Tristram fights to save Sir Dynaunte was afraid to leave his castle for seven years "for feare of Sir Trystram" (393). The confrontation that occurs between Tristram and Tauleaus then becomes an opportunity for Tristram to confront his own monstrous identity. When Tristram "was ware of the swerded of the knight thereas hit lay," he proceeds to pick it up, demonstrating a renegotiation of his relationship to armor and his identity (393). It becomes imperative then that Tristram leverage his monstrous rage to defeat the giant and engage in chivalry, as opposed to quelling that through his armor. As Tristram successfully engages in a chivalric act, he is finally able to contextualize his monstrous identity in a society that would have otherwise outcasted him, allowing for a relationship with his armor that is marked by cooperation and unity, not dominance and power.

Following Tristram's defeat of the giant, he reenters society with a much clearer sense of his knighthood as he engages in an epic proclamation of his accomplishments:

> Grete well Kyng Marke and all myne enemyes, and sey to hem I woll come agayne whan I may. And sey hym well am I rewarded for the fyghtyng with Sir Marhalt, and delyverd all hys contrey from servayge. And well am I rewarded for the fecchynge and costis of Quene Isode oute off Irelond and the daunger that I was in firste and laste…And well am I rewarded for the sleyng of Tauleas, the mighty gyaunte. And many othir dedys have I done for hym, and now I have my waryson. (397)

His newfound sense of his knighthood undoubtedly arises from the reorientation of his identity as a monstrous murderer that is controlled and repressed by his armor into an identity that can coalesce his armor and his monstrosity.

Only by overturning the instinctive characterization of "object" as inanimate and "subject" as living can the vulnerabilities of thing theory be avoided. While much work has been to study the significance of armor in *Le Morte Darthur,* scholars have often relied on indexical readings of armor to understand what swords, helmets, and breastplates may symbolize. Yet these continued conversations are often unproductive and ultimately do little

to broaden our understanding of the medieval text. Previous applications of thing theory to other medieval texts fall victim to the subject-object divide that marks modern thought and sparked Brown's conception of what is now identified as thing theory. Such fruitless indexical readings of medieval texts might be avoided, and more productive discussions presented through applications of thing theory, as presented here.

In trying to understand the ways in which a knight relates to their armor through the ideas of Bill Brown, careful consideration of the ways in which thing theorists succumb to their own subject-object differentiation led to an analysis that allowed for Sir Tristram to be viewed as the object and the armor as the subject. In doing so, Sir Tristram's madness reveals a contention with his armor for his own identity and agency, and a necessary renegotiation of the monstrous identity that branded him from infancy. Emerging from the wilderness as a noble and just knight, Tristram successfully transforms his relationship with his armor by acting without it.

Works Cited

Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 28, no. 1, Autumn 2001, pp. 1-22. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/1344258.

Brown, Bill. "Introduction: The Idea of Things and the Ideas in Them." *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*, U of Chicago P, 2003, pp. 1-20.

Classen, Albrecht. "Symbolic Significance of the Sword in the Hero's Hand: *Beowulf*, The *Nibelungenlied*, *El Poema de Mio Cid*, *Volsunga Saga*, and *Njal's* Saga. Thing Theory from a Medieval Perspective." *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur* älteren *Germanistik*, vol. 80, no. 3, 2020, pp. 346-370. *Brill*, https://doi.org/ https://doi.org/10.1163/18756719-12340186.

Dingman, Paul. "Sword-made Men: Mystical Armament and Earthly Authority in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*." *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society : Studies in Honor of Richard W. Kaeuper*, edited by Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke, 2017, pp. 368-80. *Brill*, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004341098_020.

Hood, Gwenyth E. "Medieval Love-Madness and Divine Love." *Mythlore*, vol. 16, no. 3, Spring 1990, pp. 20-28. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/26812986.

Rubin, Miri. "The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities." *Culture and History: 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, edited by David Aers, Wayne State U P, 1992, pp. 43-63.

Paz, James. "Æschere's HeadA, Grendel's Mother, and the Sword That Isn't a Sword: Unreadable Things in Beowulf." Examplaria, vol. 25, no. 3, Fall 2013, pp. 231-51. https://doi.org/10.1179/1041257313Z.00000000033.

Robertson, Kellie. "Medieval Things: Materiality, Historicism, and the Premodern Object." *Literature Compass*, vol. 5, no. 6, Nov. 2008. pp. 1060-1080. *Wiley Online Library*. https://doi-org.csulb.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2008.00588.x.

Yamamoto, Dorothy. "The Wild Man I: Figuring Identity." *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, Oxford U P, 2000, pp. 144-68.

Beastly Man and Manly Beasts: Adam, Eve, and Animals in Paradise Lost

by Kim Hu

The early modern perception of animals, or beasts, as inferior creatures to man, provided Milton with a hierarchical relationship that was congruent to the politically corrupt relationship between rulers and their subjects. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "animal" describes "any living creature, including man," with this definition evolving in the late sixteenth century to differentiate nonhuman living creatures from humans. The extended definition of "animal," which took hold in the late sixteenth century, applied to "a person without human attributes or civilizing influences" or "one who is very cruel, violent, or repulsive" (*OED*). In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Milton used this moralized definition of an animal to equate people whom he considered to be lower, unprincipled, or perverse classes of men, to beasts and brutes. In essence, the inhumane and beastly were also considered nonhuman. To this point, despotic rulers were members of this nonhuman, animal category as Milton believed that citizens were justified in executing "wicked Princes as monsters and cruel beasts" (*Tenure of Kings*). Thus, for Milton, the animal was not only a taxonomical classification that distinguished humans from other living creatures, but more importantly, was a social, political, and moral category that encapsulated the characteristics of barbarism, tyranny, and moral indecency.

The Miltonic connection between rulers and animals becomes significant in reading Adam and Eve's relationship to the animals in *Paradise Lost*. Within Eden, we see Adam's dominion over the animals, politicizing their relationship and establishing a hierarchy between them. The question of what it means to be human is consistently present throughout *Paradise Lost,* and for Adam and Eve. In what Erica Fudge observes as a general trend in early modern culture, what it meant to be human became dependent on what it meant to not be an animal and vice versa. In rationalizing their superior positions to the animals on the grounds of possessing reason, or a Cartesian rational soul, Adam and Eve turn Eden into an anthropocentric space that elevates them above all other sentient creatures. However, as Milton's political writings reveal, humans—especially those within positions of

power—are not immune to losing their humanity and becoming animalistic. In this essay, I argue that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton explores the division between man and animal as not an impermeable distinction; rather, it is one that is porous and recognizes the potential for man-animal hybridity, or the capacity for men to become beastlike and for animals to be anthropomorphic. Through comparing *Paradise Lost* to Margaret Cavendish's "The Hunting of the Hare," I explore what Bruce Boehrer observes to have been anthropocentric anxiety in the early modern period and how it reflects the political relationship between humans and animals as they are portrayed in early modern literature, contending that it complicates and critiques the Cartesian anthropocentric attitudes of Milton's early and mid-seventeenth century contemporaries (Boehrer 8).

Critics have long investigated the binary relationship between man and animal in *Paradise Lost*, viewing it as a relationship that reflects Milton's divergence from contemporary anthropocentric attitudes towards nature. Establishing a historical and cultural foundation for early modern anthropocentrism, Boehrer argues that "Shakespeare and his contemporaries inherit a crisis of distinctions that expresses itself through a fixation on the human-animal relationship" and that Descartes's hypotheses about animals were treated as cures to this crisis (10). Noting the impact of Descartes's *Discourse on Method* on early modern culture and literature, Erica Fudge and Diane McColley trace the development of anthropocentric attitudes and philosophical debates surrounding the sentience and rational capacity of animals that culminated in Descartes' philosophical theories.[1] Viewing the relationship between humans and animals in the early modern period as forming a recursive identity for humans, Fudge examines how the concept of what it meant to be a human was subject to what it meant to not be an animal and vice versa. This is most apparent in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost* in which Adam defines himself in relation to the non-laboring animals in Eden. However, the hierarchical relationship between Adam and the animals is challenged in Book 9 when Eve questions if "For us alone / Was death invented?" (*PL* 9.766-7). Marking this ambivalence, McColley reads Milton's "empathetic and libertarian" descriptions of animals, especially in Book 7, as an indication of his non-anthropocentric stance, which calls Adam and Eve's human superiority into question (162). Fudge's observation that "Animals were needed in order to express the superiority of humans...But by holding this position, animals constantly undermined ideas of difference and superiority" (192) applies to McColley's reading of Milton's portrayal of animals in Book 7. Essentially, while Milton stays true to Adam's biblical dominion over the animals, Milton's additions that call this superiority into question reflect his skepticism toward, and possible disagreement with, Cartesian anthropocentrism.

The anthropomorphism of animals in early modern literature like *Paradise Lost* and Margaret Cavendish's nature poems reveals both how human subjectivity is defined vis-à-vis humans' relationship to animals and the natural world and also challenges the

[1] In "Part V" of *Discourse on Method*, Descartes expressed that the division between humans and animals was warranted by animals' apparent lack of reason and their consequently inability to speak. While Descartes did not deny that animals were living organisms or that they could possess physical senses, he nevertheless believed animals to be basically animated vessels, or machines. Essentially, Descartes's theory not only reinforced the definition of animals as nonhumans but also contributed to anthropocentric attitudes that would become an integral part of early modern culture.

Cartesian view that animals are distinctly inferior creatures to humans. Anthropocentric cultural attitudes—especially the Cartesian theory that considered animals merely animated machines—could justify the objectification and maltreatment of animals, which "*requires* the absence of anthropomorphism, [and] *requires* that animals be automata," (Fudge 154) and, more generally, man's exploitation of and violence against nature by validating humans' dominion over the inanimate natural world. Writers like Cavendish challenged the philosophical beliefs and cultural attitudes that divorced humans from nature and other living creatures as such sentiments bred cruelty against fellow humans. Donna Landry observes that Cavendish's use of figurative language in her hunting poems "democratiz[es]" the relationship "between humans and other species" (471) as the anthropomorphized animals, like women, are victims of patriarchal violence. This connection between women and prey animals conveys a view of animals as innocent and sympathetic, which demonstrates a positive shift in how some perceived animals during the early modern period. However, the association of animals with indecency—both in the physical and moral sense—continued to prevail during Milton's time. William Silverman's reading of Satan's animal transformations reflects the dominant view of animals as vile, arguing that the progressively descending animal forms that Satan takes on align with his moral descent. As Stephen Fallon examines the implications of Milton's monism, he notes that Milton viewed moral corruption as harmful to both the physical body and the soul (88). If humans and animals were made of the same matter, as both Milton and Cavendish believed, then the implication was that even if they were taxonomically distinct from each other, humans and animals could figuratively hybridize or evolve and devolve across taxonomic categories by adopting each other's characteristics. As Fudge examines, this potential idea generates an anxiety regarding "the possibility that a natural, innate humanness did not exist, [and] the breakdown of human superiority in the face of animals' lack of vice" (148). Milton exposes this anxiety through Adam and Eve's relationship to the animals in Eden.

Milton establishes Raphael and Adam as Cartesian figures who regard animals in Eden as the antithesis to humans, distinguished by their ability to reason. However, Eve's status as Adam's inferior, which is strongly reinforced by Raphael, complicates this man-animal dichotomy. Establishing Adam's superiority as an ontological fact, Raphael directly informs Adam that he was created as "a creature who not prone / And brute as other creatures, but endued / With sanctity of reason" (*PL* 7.506-8). Even before Raphael tells Adam of this, Adam demonstrates an innate awareness that the distinction between himself and other creatures is rooted in a difference of rational capacity. This is shown in Book 8 when Adam asks God to give him a companion who is "fit to participate / All rational delight" (*PL* 8.390-1) because "the brute / Cannot be human consort" (*PL* 8.391-2). Interestingly, Adam seems to contradict himself when he describes his feelings towards Eve to Raphael:

> For well I understand in the prime end
> Of nature her th'inferior, in the mind
> And inward faculties, which most excel,
> In outward also her resembling less
> His image who made both, and less expressing

> The character of that dominion giv'n
> O'er other creatures; yet when I approach
> Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
> And in herself complete… (*PL* 8.540-8)

Adam essentially views Eve as a better, more "absolute" and "complete" version of himself, and Raphael becomes unsettled by this because Adam's infatuation with Eve threatens to disrupt the stability of natural order, or the Great Chain of Being. Although Adam and Eve are of the same species and Eve is "fit to participate [in] / All rational delight" (*PL* 8.390-1), Eve's natural "inferior[ity]," which is emphasized by Adam's repeated description of her as a "less[er]" version of himself and of God, establishes her as inferior to Adam, situating her closer to animals on the Great Chain of Being. Furthermore, in not being fully recognized by Raphael as part of the rational human category nor the animal one, Eve defies an Aristotelian classification, which Boehrer documents as part of the tradition of distinguishing between different species and what eventually led to the thematic man-animal divide of the early modern period (22-3). This complicates the man-animal dichotomy by creating a liminal area that Eve, and other human women, occupy. This, in turn, unsettles the power dynamic that exists between humans and animals. Through Adam's confused feelings towards Eve, and her ambivalent status as both his inferior and equal, Milton draws attention to how the characteristics associated with humans and animals are not static and exclusive to the members of each respective species.

Thus, in *Paradise Lost*, human superiority founded solely on the Cartesian grounds of possessing reason becomes open to doubt; if Adam is supposed to be the highest form of all earthly creatures because of his capacity for reason, then Eve's comparable—and, according to Adam, even greater—rational capacity should also place her on equal footing with Adam. Before Raphael attempts to correct him, Adam appears not only open to the possibility that Eve is superior to him because "Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat / Build in her loveliest, and create an awe / About her" (*PL* 8.557-9), but he seems wholly convinced of it:

> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded, wisdom in discourse with her
> Looses discount'nanced, and like folly shows;
> Authority and reason on her wait, (*PL* 8.551-4)

Raphael sees Adam's perception of Eve as problematic because, in Adam seeing her as rationally superior, Adam inverts the patriarchal hierarchy, an action which holds potentially devastating effects for the congruent anthropocentric and divine hierarchies as well. Raphael responds to Adam by likening the feelings that Eve arouses to the impure "carnal pleasure" (*PL* 8.593) experienced by animals. Raphael convinces Adam that true love "hath his seat / In reason, and is judicious, is the scale / By which to Heav'nly love thou may'st ascend" (*PL* 8.590-2). However, this definition of love is "in passion not" (*PL* 8.588) and reduces love into a logical, emotionless feeling, which completely contradicts the meaning of love. Raphael's passionless definition of love aims to steer Adam away from the bodily

love that Raphael associates with animals. In effect, Raphael advises Adam to not degrade himself to the level of beasts by giving into his desires for Eve. However, as Adam's speech demonstrates, Adam's love for Eve stems from an admiration of her mind rather than just her body. In a way that directly contradicts how Raphael sees their relationship, Adam loves Eve precisely because of how human, or rational, she is.

The disconnect between Adam's speech and Raphael's interpretation of Adam's words reveals where Raphael's primary concerns lie; Raphael's adverse attitude towards Eve reflects his interest in preserving the integrity of the divine hierarchy that keeps him completely separate from lower beings. As an angel, Raphael possesses stakes in maintaining the structure of the divine hierarchy because, as Satan and his followers' fall demonstrated, angels were not exempt from losing their positions in the hierarchy. By studying how humans relied on the existence of animals to reaffirm their own humanity, Fudge perceives that humans did so in order "to place men next to angels" (192) in the Great Chain of Being. In Raphael's case, this relationship can be flipped to suggest that he relies on Adam's lack of animality—or possession of humanity—in order to affirm and maintain his angelic identity. Raphael sees Eve as an invitation for Adam to participate in beastly behaviors that are improper for rational beings. In Raphael's eyes, Eve possesses the power to figuratively hybridize humans and animals, which gives Raphael cause for immediate concern. In Silverman's reading of Satan's transformations into different animals like the toad and serpent, hybridizing with animals means moving farther down the Great Chain of Being and away from the divine. As a result, the hybridizing agent possesses the potential to become more morally perverse. By protecting Adam's anthropocentric position in Eden, Raphael also shields what it means to be human from what it means to be an animal.

Raphael's motives illuminate Milton's critical views on believers in Cartesian anthropocentrism, as Raphael essentially embodies the early modern cultural "crisis of distinction" (Boehrer 10), which leads him to turn to Cartesianism as an answer to that crisis. Raphael reminds Adam of his rational faculties and animals' lack thereof, and he uses this distinction to justify Adam's necessary avoidance of animal-like behavior. However, animals' difference in rationality does not reflect any sense of morality or immorality on the animals' part. As noted, animals were used to describe humans who acted inhumanely or perversely as in Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; however, this negative connotation associated with animals is absent in *Paradise Lost*'s prelapsarian Eden. In Book 7, McColley reads the undertone of Raphael's language used to describe the newly created animals as "empathetic" (149), and the unpossessed serpent is characterized as "Not noxious" and "obedient" (*PL* 7.498). However, Raphael's language seems more neutral than empathetic. Although Raphael seems to adopt a different attitude when he talks about animals in regard to Eve, this is due to the fact that Raphael was careful to use more reverent language in describing the sixth day in creation so as to not suggest that God created morally indecent creatures at the onset. Moreover, in Book 4, Adam describes the animals as "idle unemployed, and less need rest" (*PL* 4.617), "unactive" (*PL* 4.621), and "of their doings God takes no account" (*PL* 4.622). While Adam believes that animals are inferior to humans and his description of the animals certainly is not gracious by any means, it fails to communicate the same level of disgust and disapproval that Raphael feels towards animals. Although Adam rules over the animals, he

considers them as nearly negligible beings since they neither contribute to the labor that he and Eve must perform to maintain the garden, nor does God care to take notice of what they do. While Adam expresses no desire to be like animals, he also does not view being an animal as necessarily evil either. It is only after Raphael convinces him otherwise that Adam's views on animals begin to change, and it is only after Adam and Eve's fall that the animals' behavior becomes more in-line with Raphael's attitudes towards them.

While Adam's rule over the animals is sanctioned by God, Adam's politically-charged language problematizes this hierarchical relationship as his words are reminiscent of those spoken by kings who defended their tyrannical actions on the grounds of divine right, which Milton decried in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. While Milton's Adam remains true to the biblical Adam in that both are granted dominion over the animals and are told to "Subdue it" (*PL* 7.532), Milton's grievances against rulers who claim to only be accountable to God complicates how the reader may view Adam as someone who has been given divine right. Since he does technically possess divine right, Adam grounds his superiority in his closer proximity to God than the other creatures: "Has thou not made me here thy substitute, / And these inferior far beneath me set?" (*PL* 8.381-2). Adam views his position as an earthly ruler not only as a role that God has provided him, but also as an indicator of his divinity. While the Son did declare "Let us make now man in our image, man / In our similitude, and let them rule" (*PL* 7.519-20), the background context of Milton's anti-monarchism and grievances against divine rule causes Adam's role as an earthly king, who views himself as superior to his subjects, presents itself as potentially problematic. Since the animals cannot speak their minds and voice their opinions to Adam, he—for all intents and purposes—holds absolute earthly power in Eden and only answers to God. Furthermore, the mutism of the animals invites an allegorical reading of Adam's dominion, which speaks to how Milton politicizes animals. Just as the subjects of a tyrannical king are virtually silenced, so are Adam's animal subjects.

While Raphael and Adam accept the inferiority of animals as an ontological truth, Eve's questions and doubts reveal that this "truth" may very well be an arbitrary distinction. Unlike Adam, there is little to no evidence to suggest that she inherently believes herself to be superior to animals, and this becomes apparent when she encounters Satan disguised as the serpent. When Eve hears the serpent speak, she reacts with curiosity rather than with incredulousness:

> What may this mean? Language of man pronounced
> By tongue of brute, and human sense expressed?
> The first at least of these I thought denied
> To beasts, whom God on their creation-day
> Created mute to all articulate sound;
> The latter I demur, for in their looks
> Much reason, and in their actions oft appears. (*PL* 9.553-9)

Descartes rationalized the inferiority of animals and their distinction from humans by arguing that they could not speak, which was a symptom of their lack of reason: "they could

never have the use of speech, nor of other signes in framing it, as we have to declare our thoughts to others…" (Descartes 91). Eve's surprise at the serpent's ability to speak reflects how Milton engaged with Descartes's ideas in *Paradise Lost* as the biblical version of Eve did not comment on the serpent's ability to speak. Her ponderous response to the serpent demonstrates a challenge to the Cartesian division between man and animal and the Cartesian beast-machine hypothesis as although she reacts with breaming curiosity, she does not discredit the serpent nor is she entirely surprised. Although Eve clearly recognizes the dichotomy between humans and animals when she ascribes characteristics like "language" and "sense" to "man" and "mut[ism]" to "beasts," she does not view these distinctions as indicators of human superiority. She comments that she had often observed indicators of reason in animals; however, she was compelled to believe otherwise due to the fact that they could not speak. Eve's dismissal of her theories regarding animals' rational capacity reflects how, as Boehrer observes, in early modern culture, "the apparent sentience of other animals" was "dismiss[ed]" "as an anthropomorphic projection, so that how beasts behaved no longer told us anything about what they thought or felt" (9). In other words, early modern anthropocentrism relied on people's willful ignorance or the rationalization of animals' human-like behavior in order to justify the idea of human superiority.

As Cavendish's hunting poems reveal, however, this human superiority gained through the denial of animal sentience leads to moral corruption on the part of the human. Cavendish rejected Cartesian dualism and, like Milton, believed that everything including all living creatures were composed of material matter. Milton's and Cavendish's shared monistic beliefs reveal how they view nonhuman creatures as different from humans, but not as irreconcilably divorced from them as Descartes proposed they were. Hence, both Milton's and Cavendish's philosophical theories allow for a two-way man-animal hybridity: animals could just as easily display human-like behavior as much as humans could exhibit animal-like behavior. Cavendish uses this two-way hybridity in her hunting poems as she depicts both an anthropomorphized hare and stag who are hunted by cruel and violent men. While her hunting poems do not depict animals that possess the ability to speak, Landry notes how Cavendish's vivid anthropomorphic poetic language reflects how she "empathizes with the hare's fear and identifies with animal suffering" (476). Cavendish's hunting poems demonstrate a rejection of anthropocentric attitudes that glorified violence against nature and nonhuman beings. Her depiction of the anthropomorphized Wat as a helpless victim of human violence petitions her readers to sympathize with the animal rather than the humans in the poem. With language that is similar to how Milton criticizes despotic rulers in his political texts, Cavendish disdainfully exposes the hunters at the end of her poem:

> 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. (Cavendish 101-6)

Both Milton and Cavendish see the potential for men to grow morally corrupt as a result of their assumed dominion over nature and animals. Just as Milton described despotic rulers as "monsters" and "cruel beasts" in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Cavendish situates "cruel, wild" men with other "creatures." Significantly, Cavendish also marks the religious and political implications of this human tendency when she describes the man as believing they are "godlike" and that other creatures were created for men to "tyrannize." Interestingly, Adam's question to God "Has thou not made me here thy substitute, / And these inferior far beneath me set?" (*PL* 8.381-2) follows a similar structure to the ending lines of Cavendish's poem, which demonstrates how Milton and Cavendish observe the same tendencies in humans in their typical relationships to animals. Ultimately, what both Milton and Cavendish reveal about humans who suffer from a "crisis of distinction" in regard to animals is their hypocrisy. In their efforts to ensure that animals are excluded from having any human characteristics, whether through philosophical or physically violent means, humans often become more like the beasts from whom they have attempted to distinguish themselves.

This thin—and, as it is revealed throughout the poem, porous—boundary separating humans from animals creates a tension that manifests in Adam and Eve's anxieties about committing sin and doubts regarding what it truly means to be human. While rationality positively sets them apart from the other creatures, William Walker argues that this capacity for reason also allows them to sin because their "will must in some way be answerable to reason" (149). Essentially, the very characteristic that validates their superiority also damns them to having the ability to sin and, consequently, to fall from grace. This tension culminates during Eve's temptation when she asks "For us alone / Was death invented? Or to us denied / This intellectual food, for beasts reserved?" (*PL* 7.766-68). Eve's doubts raise even more questions regarding her human subjectivity: what does it mean for her and Adam to have human reason and free will that enable them to sin and therefore be vulnerable to death, while animals, who are also living creatures, are seemingly free from such dilemmas? As a result, Eve's doubts challenge the anthropocentric attitudes that she has been taught to believe. It is precisely because of her reason—the distinctive quality of her humanity—that she is capable of falling and dying despite being divinely closer to God than other creatures. For Eve, to be human is to be cursed with the burden of sin and threat of death while to be an animal is to be free.

Significantly, the animals in Eden only devolve into the savage beasts that early modern people—as well as modern audiences—typically associated with the term "animal" after Adam and Eve's fall. The negative definition of an animal, therefore, is a postlapsarian one. After Sin and Death escape Hell, the animals become belligerent. Consequently, the description of their behavior differs drastically from the account of the sixth day of creation. In Book 10, the violent animals are anthropomorphized and begin hunting each other instead of living in peaceful coexistence, which recalls the prey and hunter in Cavendish's hunting poems:

> Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,
> And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
> Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe

Of man, but fled him, or with count'nance grim
Glared on him passing: (*PL* 10.709-14)

Essentially, the postlapsarian animals develop the qualities that future generations of humans will also take on as they violently attack each other to satiate their appetites. "Hunting of the Hare" also likens physical appetites with bloodlust, and the speaker of the poem denounces the idea that "God did make creatures for man's meat, / To give them life and sense, for man to eat" (Cavendish 95-6). Furthermore, the effects of Adam and Eve's transgression on the entire Earth, including the animals, prompts the reader to consider how that affects the boundary between man and animal. The animals devolved alongside humanity, which emphasizes that what it meant to be of one species was informed by what it meant to be a part of the other.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton deeply engages with early modern anthropocentric attitudes and philosophical theories about animals, and his anti-monarchical political views and grievances against the divine right of kings that he communicates in his political works complicate the ways that we can read his portrayal of animals. Milton's expansions on the books of Genesis reflect his deep interest in how his contemporaries viewed animals and what that implied about themselves. At the center of the man-animal "crisis of distinction" lies the burning questions: what does it mean to be human, and how do we define it? While Milton adopts an anti-anthropocentric stance by challenging the Cartesian perception of animals, Milton himself does not take a definitive stance on the side of humanity or on the side of animals. Like Cavendish's hunting poems, *Paradise Lost* invites the reader to consider how power structures are constructed and perpetuated as much through the political relationship between Adam, Eve, and the animals as they are in other more explicitly power-centric relationships like the one between the Father, the Son, and Satan. Nevertheless, the question that *Paradise Lost* invites its reader to consider in the end is what it means to be human.

Works Cited

"animal, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/273779.

Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csulb/detail.action?docID=3441770.

Cavendish, Margaret. "The Hunting of the Hare." *Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition*, edited by Liza Blake, 2019, http://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/2019/04/29/the-hunting-of-the-hare/.

Descartes, René. *A Discourse of a Method for the Well Guiding of Reason, and the Discovery of Truth in the Sciences*. London, Printed by Thomas Newcombe, 1649. *ProQuest*, http://csulb.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/discourse-method-well-guiding-reason-discovery/docview/2264209264/se-2?accountid=10351.

Fallon, Stephen M. "Material Life: Milton's Animist Materialism." *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England*, Cornell UP, 1991, pp. 79-110.

Fudge, Erica. *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England*. Cornell University Press, 2006, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt22p7hqw.

Landry, Donna. "Green Languages? Women Poets as Naturalists in 1653 and 1807." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2000, pp. 467–89, https://doi.org/10.2307/3817613.

McColley, Diane Kelsey. "Zoic Poetry: Animals, Ornithology, and the Ethics of Empathy." *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell*. Ashgate, 2007, pp. 139-170.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*, edited by William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, The Modern Library, 2008.

---. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. John Milton Reading Room*, edited by Thomas H. Luxon, 1997–2021, https://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading_room/tenure/text.shtml.

Silverman, William John. "Milton's Satan and the Early Modern Treatment of Animals." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 82, no. 2, 2017, pp. 154–72, https://www.jstor.org/stable/90013650.

Walker, William. "On Reason, Faith, and Freedom in 'Paradise Lost.'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2007, pp. 143–59, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4127497.

The Fantasy of Persecution: Antisemitism and Martyrdom in "The Prioress's Tale"

by Sydney Brazil

In "The Prioress's Tale," the Prioress ascribes a young boy's martyrdom to a Jewish community who are so repulsed at hearing the singing of a hymn that they decide to commit murder. On the surface, the Prioress presents a straightforward narrative of pure faith standing in the face of apparent evil, yet she includes descriptions of horrific antisemitism. By the late 1300s, the Jews had suffered at the hands of Christians for decades, but the Prioress chooses to ignore this fact as she is telling her tale. Instead, she twists reality to her own desires by labeling Christians as the oppressed and Jews as the oppressors. This paper will explore the relationship between the Prioress's fetishization of Christian persecution and martyrdom, which coincides with her erasure of the humanity of the Jews. I argue that the Prioress's obsession with blind faith serves to further the persecution narrative of the Christians; because she advocates for childlike faith, the Prioress absolves herself, as well as the Christians in her tale, of any atrocious acts, such as the brutal killing of the Jews. By weaponizing her language to vilify the Jews, the Prioress creates an inversion of roles by misrepresenting Christians as powerless victims who are struggling to overcome their Jewish oppressors. In constructing this false narrative, the Prioress demonizes the Jewish community in order to absolve any responsibility of persecution of the Jewish people from Christians, as well as to further solidify Christianity as the dominant hegemony.

In her prologue, the Prioress quickly establishes her main line of reasoning for what she believes constitutes true faith for Christians: true faith is not just found among people with great skill and knowledge, but by trusting blindly in God. In her prologue, she says, "by the mouth of children thy bountee / Parfourned is, for on the brest soukynge / Sometime shewn they thyn herigne" (Chaucer, lines 287-291). Because the Prioress is placing importance on trusting in God in the same way a child would cling to its mother, she is simultaneously uplifting the faith of the laity, or non-clergy, while also absolving herself of any backlash that might come her way because of the content of her tale. The Prioress focuses so much on the image of Mary that it can only go hand in hand with her belief that blind faith is

purer than reason. In Carol F. Heffernan's article entitled "In Praying Before the Image of Mary: Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale,* VII 502-12," Heffernan argues that the Prioress setting up the tale in Asia, an area of the world where the Eastern Church was the dominant tradition and iconography was more prevalent, is significant to understanding how the symbol of Mary is used in the tale. Heffernan suggests that the Prioress's obsession with conjuring Mary's image in the prologue would have been one of the reasons why she sets the tale in Asia; in this way, iconography and blind faith is linked in the Prioress's mind (Heffernan 104). The Prioress's preoccupation with childlike faith does seem to be connected to her use of imagery: the prologue shows her fixation on the image of Mary in an almost ritualistic way, as if just talking about Mary evokes so much emotion that she wants to worship her. This emotive based faith is drawn upon throughout the entire tale, particularly in the little clergeon's obsession with the "Alma Redemptoris," and shows how the Prioress's faith is inextricably connected to the visualization of Mary. Her choice to make the little clergeon fixated on visualizing Mary while he sings shows how focused the Prioress is on likening her own ritualistic, child-like faith to the status of saint-like faith which is found in the little clergeon. In this way, she labels herself as a "good" Christian who is above reproof and should be imitated and revered rather than criticized.

The "litel clergeoun" provides the Prioress with the perfect example of ideal Christian behavior. From the moment he hears the "Alma Redemptoris," he is completely fixated on it. He listens to it so much that "he the first vers koude al by rote," despite not knowing the language in which it was sung (Chaucer 521-23). In her description of the little clergeon, the Prioress provides the example of the perfect Christian martyr. The Prioress seems to see herself in the young boy and she wants her audience to exemplify him because his absolute devotion is not hindered by his inability to understand. According to the Prioress's theory, faith starts with emotion and rote memorization, with salvation quickly following after that (544-548). Her description of faith sets up the perfect microcosm of the church in her tale; when the boy has fallen in love with the song and begins to memorize it, he goes to his older friend to explain to him the meaning of the song. Their relationship and their conversation are reminiscent of a layperson asking for spiritual guidance from a church authority, even from someone like the Prioress. However, the interesting part about their exchange is that the older boy does not have all the answers, but only explains what he can up to his own understanding. Although it is a small interaction within the narrative of the tale, it shows how the Prioress again absolves herself and the clergy of responsibility, while also insinuating that reason can only explain so much. The sign of true faith is someone like the little clergeon, who in spite of the lack of answers and clarity, still chooses to worship Mary simply because of his emotional connection to a hymn.

As soon as her tale begins, the Prioress immediately positions her audience to view the Jews as outsiders. She starts her tale by describing how the Jewery was "amonges Christene folk" and that the Jews were well known "for their foul usure and lucre of vileyneye" (489). With these lines, the Prioress signals the other pilgrims, and any other Christians, to align themselves with the good Chrisitan folk in the tale; in this case, the Jews are infiltrating the boundaries of a community that they had no place in. The Prioress takes this rejection a step further by saying that the Jews were "hateful to Crist and to his compaignye" which signals

the rejection of Jews from society, not just by Christians, but by Christ himself (492). This mention of Christ, and his supposed detestation of the Jews, serves to absolve the Prioress of anything in her tale that might be harmful or hateful towards the Jews; she is allowing herself the space to perpetuate hate against the Jews by claiming that this hate is sanctioned by God himself. Although the Prioress does not mention the Jews for another sixty lines in her tale, she has masterfully primed her listeners to view them as the "Other." Dawn F. Colley suggests that, although the Prioress gives off an air of naivete and obliviousness, the rhetoric she uses points to the contrary (Colley 292). The Prioress is, in fact, extremely in control of her use of language. However, since she "assumes the role of the appointed speaker of her pious congregation, the Prioress's prologue, and thus her tale, include the pilgrims for whom she speaks; the tale is not spoken *to* them, it is *about* them" (293). As Colley indicates, the Prioress chooses her words carefully and draws in the pilgrims to be on her side. In this way, the pilgrims become accomplices to whatever she says in the rest of her tale, which frees her from any criticism because they cannot critique behavior that they are complicit in.

As soon as the Prioress begins to describe the Jews in her tale, she instantly begins her process of dehumanizing them. She begins by naming "oure first foo, the serpent Sathanas" as being present in Jewish hearts; as soon as the Jews hear the little clergeon's song, Satan causes "his wasps nest" to swell up in their hearts (Chaucer 558-60). Eugene Anthony Petracca notes that the mention of Satan in regards to the Jews is particularly interesting because of the Prioress's fascination with Mary (Petracca 301). According to the Christian and Jewish tradition, Satan is synonymous with the serpent in the garden of Eden, although the Jews call him "the accuser" (301). The fact that Satan is seen as the leader of the Jews and in direct opposition to Mary is significant because she is the woman who repairs Eve's mistakes and overcomes Satan by giving birth to Jesus Christ (301). This symbolism of Mary and Satan as two opposing forces sets up the opposition between the Christians and the Jews. It also indicates that Mary is the perfect woman because she is the fulfillment of the woman Eve should have been. Unlike Eve who brought about the fall of the world, Mary will not be tricked by Satan but will succeed in defeating him and, in conjunction, bring down the Jews as well.

This description of the Jews being rallied by Satan presents them as demonic beings that are not fully in control of their own actions but are instead completely at the whim of the devil. This further emphasizes the opposition between Christians and Jews by aligning Christians with God and Jews with Satan. In the tale, the Jews in their own way are led by a lack of reason: they respond to the emotive call from Satan to rise and strike down the little clergeon without a second thought. The parallel between the little clergon's blind faith to God and the Jew's blind faith to Satan only serves to further highlight the Prioress' hypocrisy. Even though there is a striking similarity between the Christian and the Jewish blind faith, the Prioress tries to create a distinction, which is why she relies heavily on monstrous imagery when describing the Jews. Unlike the little clergeon's faith, the Prioress indicates that the Jew's type of blind submission to a higher power is evil and, rather than absolving the Jews from any responsibility in the murder of the little boy, it only serves to seal their fate in being seen as a wicked force. The imagery of a wasp's nest presents the Jews as monstrous because they are like a horde that cannot be controlled or stopped. In the article "The Wasp's Nest: Antisemitism, Conspiracy Theory, and the Prioress's Tale," Lisa Lampert-Weissig

argues that "Chaucer's verbal conjuring of a swarm amplifies his tale's dehumanizing lack of individuation for Jewish figures . . . Described as a group (only one Jew is ever singled out and he is the Jewish murderer the community hires), the Jews in *The Prioress's Tale* form a striking contrast to the vulnerable clergeon and to the other Christian characters" (Lampert-Weissig 135). The Jews in "The Prioress's Tale" move and act as a unit; even when Satan is speaking to them, he addresses all of them as the "Hebrayk peple" (Chaucer 560). This collective understanding of the Jewish people also leads to their punishment as a group at the end of the tale. It does not matter who hired the murderer or who actually performed the act; by the Prioress's line of reasoning, they all deserved to be punished because the entire community is evil. As Lampert-Weissig pointed out, it is even more obviously an act of dehumanization simply because the other characters in the story are described individually; the only time the Christians are referred to as a group is in their collective grieving or in how they interact with each other (135). The usage of the Prioress's language to describe a swarm of Jews strips them of their humanity and also attempts to make it more tolerable when their graphic execution is described.

The murder of the little clergeon comes about because of the visceral reaction the Jews have when they hear a Christian song being sung in their community. As soon as Satan addresses them, they "conspired this innocent out of the world to chace" and quickly hire a "homycide" (Chaucer 565-67). Lisa Lampert-Weissig's work on conspiracy theories traces the history of the word "conspiracy" in antisemitic texts (Lampert-Weissig 112-49). Although Chaucer only uses the word "conspired" once in "The Prioress's Tale," Lampert-Weissig notes that it should immediately bring to mind how conspiracies have been used for centuries to further antisemitism. In Chaucer's time, "these accusations claimed conspiracies of Jewish violence and murder, speaking to a worldview in which persecuting Christians could 'feel persecuted'. . . These conspiracy theories also developed in relation to Christian apocalyptic expectations, in which the Jews had a preordained role" (121). The entire narrative of "The Prioress's Tale," whether or not it was Chaucer's intent, pushes the narrative of the helpless Christian community that is persecuted by seemingly demonic outside forces. This persecution complex is directly linked to a martyrdom complex, which is a way for the Prioress, and the Christian community, to romantize martyrdom without taking any responsibility for their actions. This martyr complex is important because without persecution, there can be no sacrificial martyr and this would make the structure of "The Prioress's Tale" fall apart. The Prioress knows that if the alleged murders of children for the sake of blood libel proves to be false, or does not continue on, then the Christian community would be forced to examine their own actions. By the time Chaucer was writing "The Prioress's Tale," the Jews had been expelled from England for almost 100 years. Therefore, there is intentionality behind the Prioress resurrecting a perceived threat that was no longer present in England. Her decision to bring up this antisemitic fear where Jewish people prey on innocent Christian children solidifies her narrative of the glory of martyrdom. The fact that she sets the tale in Asia, rather than England, indicates how she is trying to prove that the threat of Jewish persecution against Christians still existed in other parts of the world, even though there is no evidence besides her own fantasies to corroborate this theory.

In the midst of the miraculous singing of the little boy and the Christian people delivering him to the abbot, the Jews are executed in the space of seven lines that could almost be passed over if they were not so disturbingly violent. The text says that "with torment and with shameful deeth echon, / This provost dooth the Jewes for to sterve," indicating by the use of the word "echon" that there was no investigation into who hired the murderer; they were all put to death equally (Chaucer 628-29). This is just another example of the dehumanization of the Jews because they are all executed for the crime of one person. There is no time spent by the Prioress, or the provost, in individuating the Jews from each other; the provost simply states that "he nolde no switch cursednesse observe/ Yvele shal he have that yvele wol deserve" (631-32). On the surface, these statements have the facade of justice by stating that evil will come to those who enact evil. However, the apparent annihilation of the Jewish community over the actions of one person gives no sense of justice, only of brutality. The Jews are killed by being drawn apart by horses and then hung by the neck which, in its very description, lumps them together again as a single mass unit. Their execution is cruel and painful, and yet the Prioress does not shy away from the gore but again seems fixated upon it. As soon as the Jews are dead, however, she no longer mentions them: they are completely erased from the remainder of the tale. In her historical research on violence and antisemitism, Hannah R. Johnson's article entitled "Stories People Tell: The Blood Libel and the History of Antisemitism" outlines the relationship between Christian persecution of Jews and violent acts of antisemitism. Throughout history, Johnson argues that what is "represented is a broadly sketched process of projection and repression, in which the Christian projects onto the Jewish other characteristics that he denies or represses in himself . . . This model is premised on an idea of a fundamental insecurity or anxiety about Christian identity" (Johnson 18). The Prioress's fetishization of violence represents a part of herself that she chooses not to acknowledge, so instead she fixates on violence in her tale and assigns it to the Jews in an attempt to absolve herself of it. Likewise, the violent Christian response to the actions of the Jews only reflects back on them their own self-hatred and animosity amongst themselves. The Christian community does not allow any Jewish individual to defend themselves about whether or not they were involved with the boy's murder. Instead, the Christians choose to inflict a mass execution without any real investigation. Yet, the Prioress's overly graphic description of the violence against the Jews actually has the reverse effect, solidifying her as the true oppressor of the tale. The Prioress tries to hide behind her daintiness and accuse the Jews of atrocious acts; but her own revelry in the violence inflicted upon the Jews and the little clergeon reveal her to be the only real oppressor.

When the little clergeon is murdered, it is difficult to focus on anything else except for the Prioress's fetishization of excessive violence and orifices. However, a closer look at the murder shows that it is about more than excessive violence because the manner in which the young boy is killed is unique to Jewish martyrdom narratives of the Middle Ages. In "The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption: Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale," Lee Patterson notes that motifs of righteous martyrs suffering to atone for the sins of their people comes directly from Jewish texts of real Jewish martyrs that the Prioress may be imitating (Patterson 524). A common theme in Jewish martyrdom stories is that the martyr is usually killed by having their throat slit in order to signify a ritualistic temple sacrifice,

which is exactly how the little clergeon is killed. This misappropriation of Jewish martyrdom to describe the Christian martyrdom is the "perfect instance of the cruelest kind of antisemitism, one that turns against Jewish martyrs their own heroic piety. The best that can be said for the teller of such a tale is that she acts in ignorance – not the innocence for which she yearns, but a culturally fostered condition of being unable to understand the origins and the historical meaning of her own religion" (536). The Prioress's ignorance and disrespect in the tale she tells reveals her inability to conceptualize true persecution. Rather than being ignorant of her violations, the Prioress shows that she is aware of these connections by her reference to Hugh of Lincoln at the end of her tale (Chaucer 684-685). Although Hugh of Lincoln was a Christian boy who was killed, it created an uprising against the Jewish community who were blamed for the crime (Dahood 481-482). The Prioress' reference to this shows that she is aware of the political and social tensions surrounding violence against the Jewish community, and would therefore most likely be familiar with the ways this violence was being perpetuated. If the Prioress truly was being persecuted in the way that she wants her audience to believe that she is, then she would understand the violation she is committing in stealing from Jewish martyrdom stories in a tale where she describes Jews as perpetuating aggressive, violent behavior.

When the young boy is murdered, the Prioress spends time describing the pit he is thrown into and lamenting the violence of his death. She describes how the murderer cuts the little clergeon's throat all the way to the neckbone and then throws his body into a pit (Chaucer 649) where "thise Jewes purgen hire entraille"(573). Despite her dainty appearance, the Prioress seems to enjoy telling graphic descriptions of the murder of this child and the way in which his body was dishonored by being thrown into a pit which the Jews used to defecate in. The Prioress is either not aware of the graphicness of her descriptions or does not care; either way, the intensity of the violence against the little clergeon appears to make his martyrdom even more fulfilling for the Prioress.The glorification of his death is a psychological twisting of the persecution narrative of Christians: the more horrific the physical death, then the greater the spiritual reward will be in heaven. The Prioress's biblical reference to Cain and Abel has been noted by several scholars, specifically when she says that the clergeon's "blood out crieth on youre cursed dede" (578). However, the story of Cain and Abel is not the only biblical reference that the Prioress is making. In Revelation 6:9-11, the story of Cain and Abel is echoed on judgment day when the innocent martyrs cry out for God to avenge their own blood that is calling out for justice (*NRSV*). Since the Prioress does not name Abel, she could also be referencing this passage that would be seen as consolation to Christians that God would avenge all martyrs' deaths. Yet, the Prioress swiftly moves past this moment of compassion for the little clergeon and refuses to focus on the fact that the consolation of that verse is that God will bring justice to martyrs so that Christians do not have to worry about their death being in vain. If the Prioress was applying the Bible verse correctly, she would understand that the murderer would receive recompense in the next life, but instead she chooses to misinterpret the verse as a reason for the Christians to punish the Jews themselves.

A major element of the erasure of Jewish identity in the tale is how the Prioress reconstructs Jewish history and religion, claiming it as Christian history. This appropriation

takes place throughout the entire tale: from the inability to acknowledge the fact that the Virgin Mary was Jewish, to using Rachel as an example of the widow's grief. Merrall Llewelyn Price argues that the "suppressed Jewishness of Mary . . . helps explain her role as punitive upholder of Christian doctrine, in which role she is particularly responsible for demonstrating to Jews the crippling physical consequences of mishandling the holy things of Christianity, including her own body and that of her son" (Price 207). Instead of being presented as a Jewish woman, any Jewish representation of Mary is completely erased in order to uphold the standard doctrine in the Christian faith that the Jews had crucified Christ and therefore were not welcome in Christian spaces. The obvious parallels in "The Prioress's Tale" between the widow and Mary only serve the Christian's persecution complex if Mary is not coded as Jewish. It is difficult to not see the parallels between the widow desperately searching for her little boy and the devastation of Mary over losing her Jesus. However, the Prioress never entertains any imagining of Mary as being anything other than Christian. Another instance of the Prioress stealing from the Jewish tradition is in the widow's grief over losing her son being likened to a "newe Rachel" crying out for her children (Chaucer 625). Rachel is brought up in the Old and New Testament multiple times as the epitome of a mother's grief over losing her children; however, every time she is mentioned in the Bible, it is always in relation to the persecution of the Israelites or, in the case of the New Testament, of the Jews (*NRSV*, Jer. 31.15; Matt. 2.18). The fact that the Prioress mentions Rachel in the context of an imagined Christian persecution at the hands of a minority group that had been persecuted by Christians for decades, is an extremely cruel and obvious misrepresentation. The mention of Rachel directly preceding the description of the Jewish execution shows her complete disregard for the actual persecution of the Jews. It reveals that she would rather overlook their suffering in order to continue her own fantasy of the hardship of Christians.

When the widow finds her son's body in the pit with his throat cut, the emotion of her discovery is so great that it causes the Prioress to break momentarily from her narrative to lament to God. Overcome with the sadness of the child's martyrdom, the Prioress says "O grete God, that parfournest thy laude / By mouth of innocentz, lo heere thy myght! / This gemme of chastite, this emeraude /And eek of martirdom the ruby bright" (Chaucer 607-10). In this interjection, the Prioress unites chastity and innocence with Christian martyrdom. This is followed by the continuation of the narrative in which an apparent miracle takes place: despite his cut throat, the boy begins to sing the Alma Redemptoris again (611-13). The miraculous singing of the young boy signifies the holiness and purity of his death; if there was any question before this passage that he was a martyr, the Prioress states it blatantly and follows that statement with a miracle surrounding his murder. Although there is no resurrection of the young boy, the miracle surrounding his death, along with the correlation of his mother to Mary, show his similarity to Christ. Although he can sing, and even speaks later on in the narrative, he does not speak of forgiveness for the Jews or even say a word of comfort for his mother; instead, his thoughts are focused on praising Mary and of her miraculous preservation by placing a "greyn upon [his] tonge" (663). When he is brought before the abbot, he is asked how he is able to sing because of his throat. The boy responds by saying that he was kept alive so that "Jhesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde, / Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde" (653). Even though the boy had to have blind faith in life, since he was

unable to understand the words of the song, the Prioress reveals that he has found knowledge in his death. Now that he has seen Mary, he is given divine knowledge so that the roles of the young boy and the abbot are reversed. In this way, the Prioress elevates martyrdom above living a good Christian life or studying Scripture because everything that is unknown will be revealed in death. In the Prioress's view, trust and faith are required on earth because of the physical limitations of the body, whereas spirituality and knowledge are found with God in the afterlife.

At the end of the tale, the little clergeon's soul is finally laid to rest with the removal of the grain from his tongue. While scholars have attributed the grain on the little clergeoun's tongue as a symbol of the Eucharist, Denise L. Despres adds to this conversation by highlighting the classic medieval image of the "child-as-Host" (Despres 417). According to Despres, this imagery symbolizes a kind of idealistic bodily perfection that medieval Christians would have longed for. Despres argues that "in certain conservative cultures, bodily perfection symbolizes an ideal theocracy, and these cultures construct symbolic patterns and rituals in which elaborate purification procedures provide a measure of internal control against evolution or change" (415). For "The Prioress's Tale," the symbolism of the Eucharist and the little clergeon's body highlights the need for martyrdom in the type of faith that the Prioress is adhering to. The abbot and the monks at the end of the tale act as a congregation that feeds, not on the Eucharist, but on the miracle of Mary who preserved the little clergeon for the sole purpose of hearing his praises sung to her. The abbot and the monks are overcome with the pure faith and innocence of the child that when the child dies, the abbot "gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde / And stille he lay as he had leyn ybounde" (Chaucer 675-76). Lee Patterson points out the strangeness of this part of the tale, particularly in regards to the larger frame narrative of *The Canterbury Tales*. Patterson observes that "in most of the analogues to this tale found elsewhere, the miracle of the postmortem singing acts as an agency of conversion . . . But not here: with the Jews already exterminated, the clergeon rehearses his story not before those in need of conversion but before the Christian congregation gathered in the abbey to celebrate the Mass" (Patterson 511). This observation highlights how the Prioress has elevated martyrdom to a level of a sacrament that is worthy of an almost cult-like worship.Yet, she also leaves out the most important moment in the legend of a martyr: the moment of conversion for the martyr's enemies. By making the moment of conversion about other Christians physically seeing a young boy's faith manifested in front of them, the Prioress subtly inserts the narrative that Jews are not worthy of conversion and that the effort of trying to convert them would be a waste.

The blatant antisemitism throughout "The Prioress's Tale" is finalized at the end of the tale when she mentions Hugh of Lincoln. The reference to the alleged murder of Hugh of Lincoln by Jews in 1255 shows that the Prioress is again trying to situate her audience into a specific state of mind. She slips again into an almost meditative state as she laments to herself saying, "O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also / With cursed Jewes, as it is notable, / For it is but a litel while ago," continuing to ask him to pray for them as they are "synful folk unstable" (Chaucer 684-87). The significance of the Prioress mentioning Hugh is paramount to understanding the antisemitism that is woven throughout the entire tale. Although the Prioress says that the murder of Hugh happened "but a litel while ago," in reality, it had

happened more than 100 years before Chaucer was writing *The Canterbury Tales*. This means that anything that was known about Hugh of Lincoln was based on narrative; after seeing how the narrative of "The Prioress's Tale" is heavily influenced by antisemitism, it is not far-fetched to believe that stories around Hugh of Lincoln were just as fraught with antisemitism as well (686). The juxtaposition of Hugh of Lincoln with the "cursed Jewes" also highlights how the Prioress positions us to think about her tale. She presents Hugh as the poor martyr, while the Jews are cursed and therefore Othered. The offhand comment "as it is notable" shows that the Prioress has an agenda by ending the tale with this reference; she wants her audience to take note of the similarities between Hugh of Lincoln and the little clergeon and draw their own conclusions (686). The conclusion she leaves her audience with is heavily manipulated by her use of rhetoric. By attempting to root her tale in a specific historical event, the Prioress manipulates her audience towards anger in a final effort to sway them to her side. Despite her apparent fragility, the Prioress is very aware of the dichotomy she is creating between the Jews and the Christians, and how her language refuses to leave room for an interpretation that views the Jews in a positive light.

With "The Prioress's Tale" filled with antisemitic language of a narrator bent on furthering her own agenda of perceived persecution of Christians, it is difficult to see where Chaucer as an author stands on these issues. Several critics have said that Chaucer should in no way be compared to any of his narrator's complex and often controversial tales, and I have no intention of making that assertion; there is clearly no way of knowing whether or not Chaucer himself was antisemitic. However, it is important to note the way he writes the tale and the significance of the response, or lack thereof, from other tellers who are listening. Roger Dahood argues that "critics are right to maintain a distinction between poet and Prioress, but there is less reason to claim distinction between the poet's and the Prioress's attitudes towards anti-semtism. The evidence of Hugh of Lincoln suggests that Chaucer felt no need to insulate himself from the Prioress's anti-semitsm. It also suggests that. . . Chaucer himself might well have perceived anti-semitic views as inoffensive, respectable, and even admirable" (Dahood 488-89). Although it is impossible to truly discern what Chaucer felt or thought about any given issue, his attitude towards the issue is apparent because he does not spend time refuting the Prioress's assertions, both within the tale and outside of it. None of the other pilgrims, including the Host, critique "The Prioress's Tale" when it is finished. It could be imagined that the pilgrims and the Host are stunned into silence, but this does not happen anywhere else with the previous teller's tales, suggesting that the silence indicates complicity rather than shock. The silence surrounding "The Prioress's Tale" is indicative that, even if Chaucer did share different beliefs than the Prioress, he clearly did not see any benefit in allowing his work to entertain a conversation against it.

"The Prioress's Tale" is a confusing and uncomfortable tale that leaves its readers with more questions than answers. In "Performing the Prioress: 'Conscience' and Responsibility in Studies of Chaucer's Prioress's Tale," Michael Calabrese discusses the ethics surrounding "The Prioress's Tale" and warns against placing too much weight on our emotional reading of the tale, because we should be focusing on recentering it within Chaucer's context (Calabrese 66-75). While placing a text within its given context is important, and we do need to be aware of our emotional reaction overtaking our analysis, I do believe it is

important to discuss the power of narrative to influence people's actions and belief systems. Although there is no known evidence of Chaucer's work instigating direct violence against Jewish communities, hate speech and antisemitic narrative at the very least perpetuate a misinformed understanding of communities besides our own; however, more often than not, it results in violence. The Prioress's active dehumanization of the Jews from the moment she starts her tale can only be seen as harmful and creates an unrealistic narrative of Christian persecution; the antisemitism in the tale should understandably make us angry. Although the Prioress spends the majority of her tale trying to absolve herself of criticism, her move towards absolving other Christians of their violence is just as harmful and manipulative. Since Christianity has been centered as a major world religion for centuries, it has been given an extreme amount of power. "The Prioress's Tale" reminds readers of how people in power can reconstruct narratives to perpetuate abuse of those who reside outside of the power structure. By weaponizing something as sacred and as influential as religion and martyrdom, the Prioress is securing her place within the power structure that leaves no room for anyone who does not completely submit to her version of reality.

Works Cited

Calabrese, Michael. "Performing the Prioress:'Conscience' and Responsibility in Studies of Chaucer's Prioress's Tale." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2002, pp. 66–91. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40755353.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The General Prologue." *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. Boeing, Robert and Andrew Taylor, 2nd ed., Broadview Editions, 2012, pp. 47-61.

---. "The Prioress's Tale." *The Canterbury Tales*. Ed. Boeing, Robert and Andrew Taylor, 2nd ed., Broadview Editions, 2012, pp. 287-291.

Colley, Dawn F. "Creating a Martyr: Rhetoric, Chaucer's 'The Prioress' Tale,' and the Death of the 'Litel Clergeon.'" *CEA Critic: An Official Journal of the College English Association*, vol. 78, no. 3, Nov. 2016, pp. 292–300. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26574822.

Dahood, Roger. "The Punishment of the Jews, Hugh of Lincoln, and the Question of Satire in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale." *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 36, 2005, pp. 465–91. DOI:10.1484/j.viator.2.300019.

Despres, Denise L. "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's Litel Clergeon." *Modern Philology: Critical and Historical Studies in Literature, Medieval Through Contemporary*, vol. 91, no. 4, May 1994, pp. 413–27. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/438135.

Heffernan, Carol F. "Praying before the Image of Mary: Chaucer's Prioress's Tale, VII 502-12." *The Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2004, pp. 103–16. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25094274.

Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Johnson, Hannah R. "Stories People Tell: The Blood Libel and the History of Antisemitism." *Law and Literature*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2016, pp. 11–26, DOI:10.1080/1535685X.2015. 1110380.

Lampert-Weissig, Lisa. "The Wasps' Nest: Antisemitism, Conspiracy Theory, and The Prioress's Tale." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society*, vol. 43, 2021, pp. 111–49. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/sac.2021.0039.

Patterson, Lee. "'The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption': Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale." *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2001, pp. 507–60. Project MUSE, muse.jhu.edu/article/16497.

Petracca, Eugene Anthony. "Ethics, Antisemitism and The Prioress's Tale: A Reparative Approach." *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2019, pp. 293–314, https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2019.1696058.

Price, Merrall Llewelyn. "Sadism And Sentimentality: Absorbing Antisemitism in Chaucer's Prioress." *The Chaucer Review: A Journal of Medieval Studies and Literary Criticism*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2008, pp. 197–214. EBSCOhost, https://doi-org.csulb.idm.oclc.org/10.1353/cr.0.001

"The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" as Anti-Clerical and Anti-Fraternal Satire

by Andrew A. Leung

"The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" are examples of anti-clerical and anti-fraternal satire from the *Canterbury Tales*. It is within these two tales that each tale-teller *quites*, or competitively responds to, the other, satirizing the other's occupation. They employ the use of associations of religious figures with vices and diabolical entities with the aim of discrediting those same figures' professed rectitude and piety. In "The Friar's Tale," Chaucer demonstrates the iniquitous nature of one particular summoner through positioning him to be on amicable terms with a demon. Chaucer's utilization of the form of the exemplum, this being the Friar's brief narrative told with the intention of demonstrating a moral point, conveys through irony the grating dichotomy between the summoner's religious purpose in his employment to the Archdeacon and the uninhibited avarice which he exhibits. While "The Summoner's Tale" is an example of anti-clerical satire, it is also anti-fraternal satire: it shows a rejection of Franciscan values of poverty and constancy to God. The most striking contrast between the two tales is the employment of fabliaux in "The Summoner's Tale." This scatological humor relates all friars to bodily waste and flatulence, underscoring the ridiculous nature of a friar's hypocrisy and deviance from his professed religious values. I contend that "The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" utilize the genre of anticlerical satire to demonstrate the hypocrisy and abuses that members of the clergy dealt unto parishioners. While the Friar portrays an individual summoner as being deceitful and demonic through an exemplum, the Summoner depicts all friars as corrupt and additionally employs elements of fabliaux to do so.

The Friar, in his tale, depicts a corrupt and wayward summoner. This corruption is clearly visible from the time the Summoner is introduced in the tale. Through an exemplum, the Friar describes the summoner as being avaricious, extorting the faithful of their money:

> This false theef, this somonour, quod the Frere,
> Hadde alwey bawdes redy to his hond . . .

They weren his approwours prively.
He took himself a greet profit therby. (Chaucer, lines 1338–44)

This passage makes readily apparent that the Friar is speaking with reference to one summoner in particular, as is evident by the demonstrative "this" in the first quoted line. It is possible that this summoner is the Summoner of the *Canterbury Tales*, considering "The Friar's Prologue" where the Host asserts, "Telleth youre tale, and lat the Somonour be" (Chaucer 1289). The Friar does not heed the Host's admonition, and even engages in a *quiting* relationship with the Summoner himself as he continues his tale. The squabble between the two religious men conveys that these clerics are more highly invested in proving the others' guilt than caring for the faithful. This argument begins Chaucer's pitting of mendicants and secular clerics against each other, setting the anti-clerical and anti-fraternal background for these tales.

The infantile quarreling between the Summoner and the Friar depicts the moral failings of the summoner in the above-quoted portion from the Friar's exemplum. His tale's summoner is a "false theef" who "took himself a greet profit" of money (Chaucer 1338, 1344). For, while the aim of the medieval summoner would be to summon people before ecclesiastical courts to pay their dues ("Summoner" *OED*), this particular summoner is avaricious and greatly deviates from his purpose through extorting money from people. In addition, the "bawdes," or prostitutes ("Baude"), who are "ready to his hond" (Chaucer 1339) is suggestive of the summoner's licentious nature. This description of the summoner is incongruous with his upstanding position, for the Friar associates the summoner with prostitutes and brothels. Certainly, any cleric's close work with "bawdes" (Chaucer 1339) is scandalous. Chaucer contributes to medieval anti-clerical tradition through his criticism of summoners; he positions "The Friar's Tale," in R. T. Lenaghan's view, in "the sermon tradition of the High Middle Ages" which ultimately reveals the faults of clerics (284). Ironically, instead of the Friar's sermon offering moral edification to its hearers, it is plainly an attack against the Summoner. In addition to discrediting one summoner, the Friar abuses his own clerical position to vent his personal hostility towards summoners in general. Ironically, the Friar exposes himself to be shameful in his motivations, using his exemplum to *quite* the Summoner.

While the Friar's vitriolic tale conveys his opinion that the Summoner is an immoral sinner and a corrupt officer of the ecclesiastical court, the tale itself literally positions its summoner as being a brother of a demon:

Everych in ootheres hand his trouthe leith,
For to be sworne bretheren til they deye . . .
"Brother," quod [the Yeoman], "wiltow that I thee telle?
I am a feend; my dwelling is in helle." (Chaucer 1404–48)

Chaucer's usage of the term "brother" is notable, as it satirizes the cleric and indicates that the summoner has taken up a very close relationship to an evil and demonic figure. The fact that the two pledge their loyalty and faith, "everych in ootheres hand" (Chaucer 1404), shows

a ridiculous image of two evil men holding hands in unity to rob the faithful. This image furthers the text's demonization of summoners and its anti-clerical nature. Before the devil's declaration, the summoner is unaware that the yeoman is truly a fiend, hinting at a natural inclination of summoners to walk beside devils.

The summoner's damnation is of his own doing, furthering the anti-clerical satire of this tale. His actions juxtapose his title, associating this supposedly religious man with eternal punishment as the devil says:

> "Where thou shalt knowen of oure privetee" …
> And with that word this foule feend hym hente;
> Body and soule he with the devel wente
> Where as that somonours han hir heritage. (Chaucer 1636–41)

The summoner's unbridled greed and willingness to prey upon sinners mirrors when the fiend preys upon him, sending him to hell in both "body and soule" (Chaucer 1640). While a majority of "The Friar's Tale" describes the folly of one summoner, the last quoted line uses the plural "somonours" (Chaucer 1641). This suggests that all summoners are inherently corrupt, all ending up with the same fate of eternal damnation. This tale's depiction of the Summoner, however, may convey that it is directed at one summoner in particular, and this quoted line may be the moral message of this exemplum. Certainly, this tale is an excellent example of anti-clerical satire, criticizing "the manifest gap between professed ecclesiastical ideals and the too often sordid realities of religious orders and their detractors" (Dean 31). The reality of ecclesiastical abuse in Chaucer's time likely led Chaucer, among other authors such as Gower (Szittya 288), to engage in writing literature of this genre in order to expose it.

"The Friar's Tale" is immediately followed by "The Summoner's Tale," which is a response to the former's verbal attack. While both of these tales are examples of anti-clerical satire, "The Summoner's Tale" is more specifically an anti-fraternal satire. Penn R. Szittya contends that anti-fraternalism had its start "around the controversy between the friars and the secular clergy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries" ("The Friar as False Apostle: Antifraternal Exegesis and the 'Summoner's Tale'" 20). This tale is an example of this genre because the secular clergy member of the Summoner *quites* the mendicant Friar. The attacks on other clergy members come from within the church hierarchy itself, suggesting these clerics' preoccupation with *quiting* the other through their two tales.

The manners in which the different clerics portray each other differ. While "The Friar's Tale" critiques one individual summoner as being abusive and corrupt, "The Summoner's Tale" deliberately includes a group of friars in the narrative. This reveals a dichotomy in the critique of individuals versus groups between the two texts; the Friar expresses his sentiments on one summoner to indicate his opinions of all summoners, while the Summoner utilizes a group of friars to display his views on them. Nonetheless, the beginning portions of both tales do depict the waywardness of individual clergy members. The Summoner swears that he will respond to the Friar "by God" (Chaucer 1292) through his tale, portraying his inclination to misuse the Lord's name. Contrary to the typical Christian wisdom of loving one's enemies, the Summoner is more interested in winning this tale-telling competition with the Friar,

having little regard for what he will have to do to achieve that. At the beginning of his vitriolic tale, the Summoner uses scatological imagery to question the holiness of friars:

> "Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas!" quod he;
> "Shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se
> Where is the nest of freres in this place!" (Chaucer 25–27)

In contrast to "The Friar's Tale," "The Summoner's Prologue" and following tale employ elements of fabliaux with scatological descriptions of Satan's "ers" and the twenty-thousand friars who exit his rear "as bees out swarmen from an hyve" (Chaucer 29). Marie Borroff makes the contention that the "infernal scatological indignity inflicted on priests" (31) in the Summoner's anti-fraternal satire links it with other fabliaux, which depicts "indecent" subject matter that is "concerned either with sexual or excretory functions" (33). The mention of Satan's "ers" associates friars with excrement, and the insect imagery of thousands of friars swarming out of a hive connects them with pestilence and annoyance. In the Summoner's view, all friars, not simply an individual one, have their true belonging under Satan's tail near his buttocks.

While the entirety of "The Summoner's Tale" does not employ elements of fabliaux, it includes elements of anti-fraternal satire and depicts liturgical abuses by mendicants through the character of Friar John. He claims to fulfill the role he has chosen as a member of a mendicant order, preaching and begging for sustenance and money (Chaucer 1738–39). Friar John reveals himself to be a liar, nonetheless, when he "planed awey the names" (Chaucer 1758) of the donors from the prayer list. Just as the summoner of "The Friar's Tale," Friar John is much more concerned with material possessions than piety. He works for his personal gain as opposed to working for souls to receive salvation. When Friar John visits Thomas's house to beg for donations, he preaches on the vices of gluttony and failing to adhere to Scripture:

> "I am a man of litel sustenaunce;
> My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible.
> The body is ay so redy and penyble
> To wake, that my stomak is destroyed." (Chaucer 1844–1847)

This sermon, taken with the Friar's recent begging for "a bushel whete, malt, or reye" (Chaucer 1746) and his possession of "a peyre of tables al of yvory" (Chaucer 1741) demonstrates his utter hypocrisy. Chaucer satirizes fraternal orders with Friar John's behavior, which is incongruous with his professed abstemious beliefs and lifestyle. Friar John is stating a falsehood in that his stomach is "destroyed," despite the evidence that he is well fed. Indeed, he partakes in lecherous acts as the summoner of "The Friar's Tale" did: "And kiste hire [Thomas's wife] sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe / With his lyppes" (Chaucer 1804–1805). The despicable sexual abuse on the part of both the friar depicted in this tale, and the summoner depicted in the last tale, supports the notion that multiple clerics who hold different ecclesiastical offices are all sexually immoral. The patent irony between friars and secular clergy portrays the anti-clerical and anti-fraternal sentiment in these tales,

both within the narratives themselves and on the level of their tale-tellers. The disharmony between members of the public and clerics, and even between church officials themselves, is far removed from general Christian ideals of good-will and charity. The social institutions that upheld abusive lifestyles of friars are the objects of Chaucer's critique through "The Summoner's Tale," using this anti-fraternal satire to highlight their shortcomings.

Other features of anti-fraternal satire include portraying mendicants' attempts at glossing biblical texts. Szittya argues that, among anti-fraternal Middle-English writings, a notable feature is their "exegetical character" and glosses ("The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature" 290). "The Summoner's Tale" includes passages that exhibit this prominent feature of the genre where Friar John cites figures of the Old Testament to lend credence to his sermon on fasting:

> "Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty nyght
> Fasted, er that the heighe God of myght…
> With empty wombe, fastynge many a day,
> Receyved he the lawe that was writen." (Chaucer 1885-1889)

It is readily apparent that Friar John is knowledgeable about biblical accounts, citing passages which mention Moses, among other prophets, in "The Summoner's Tale." He takes the step to explicate the text himself because of his "auctoritee" as a friar, claiming that fasting is a virtue because Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments. Notably, Friar John uses emotionally charged language such as "empty wombe" (Chaucer 1888) to draw the sympathy of those to whom he sermonizes. In reality, however, Friar John eats quite well with all of the food donations which he receives. He deceitfully positions himself as an exegetical authority to Thomas and his wife, warning them of the wages of sin while committing nearly every vice against which he cautions, such as gluttony and avarice. His hypocritical sermonizing can be construed as what Szittya contends is the "theological dimension" of anti-fraternal satire, where people relied on medieval friars for moral instruction and for interpretation of scripture ("The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature" 290). Figures such as Friar John, who portray themselves as authoritative and worthy of respect and deference, act in highly hypocritical and immoral manners. Chaucer's choice to include Friar John's attempts at glossing scripture while delineating his severe flaws in character, situates this tale in the genre of anti-fraternal satire.

As "The Summoner's Tale" progresses, elements of fabliaux are once again evident. Thomas, who realizes the Friar's duplicity in the dissonance between what he preaches and the manner in which he acts, bestows an amusing and appropriate gift upon the Friar:

> And whan this sike man felte this frere
> Aboute his tuwel grope there and heere,
> Amydde his hand he leet the frere a fart. (Chaucer 2147–49)

As one of the most memorable scenes from this tale, Thomas's fart serves as an indication that this anti-fraternal tale is also in the genre of fabliaux. The bawdy, scatological humor

of this scene underscores the association between friars and bodily waste, insinuating their low value and foulness. The only gift of which Friar John is worthy is a loud fart; he does not deserve the donations for which he pines. Borroff asserts that there is a Christian symbolism to this scene— "farting exemplifies the association of scatology and the stench which is its corollary with the infernal realm" (40). Borroff's contention that this fart is linked to hell connects this scene to the vision where friars escape from the stench of Satan's arse. Elements of fabliaux and anti-fraternal satire come together in "The Summoner's Tale," demonstrating friars to be highly gullible and deserving of foul scatological "gifts" because of their waywardness from their professed religious values. Both this tale and "The Friar's Tale" depict friars and a summoner, respectively, as being foolish and inherently sinful. Though the summoner in "The Friar's Tale" is sent to hell, the less severe fart which Friar John receives in "The Summoner's Tale" is still shameful.

The final scene in "The Summoner's Tale" is a continuation of the bawdy humor from the previous scene with Thomas's fart, but for all friars— "In ars-metrike shal ther no man fynde . . . / That every man sholde have yliche his part" of a fart (Chaucer 2222-25). The text combines mathematical and scientific language with the need to divide a fart equally among friars. This may be a mockery of the Eucharist and the Transubstantiation, underscoring the text's anti-fraternal satire. The "ars-metrike" (Chaucer 2222), which the lord attempts to employ to divide a fart evenly, is arguably akin to the arithmetic and scientific language that is used in theology to describe how physical entities may be transformed into other substances. The young lord's squire resolves this debacle:

> Thanne shal they knele doun, by oon assent,
> And to every spokes ende, in this manere,
> Ful sadly leye his nose shal a frere. (Chaucer 2262-64)

The squire conceives of a mechanical and mathematical manner in which twelve other friars, with Friar John at the center, will share the fart from Thomas. This utterly ridiculous manner of distributing the stench among all friars further demonstrates the anti-fraternal satire and fabliaux in this tale. Again, friars are related to excrement and obscene imagery, sounds, and smells. Amusingly, the lord, lady, and men believe that the squire "Jankyn spak, in this matere, / As wel as Euclide [dide] or Ptholomee" (Chaucer 2288-2289). While the tale satirizes corrupt friars as being deserving of ridiculous gifts of farts, it is also humorous in the equivalence of the intellectual abilities of the young squire and classical thinkers. The mocking solemnity of the squire's genius resolving of the great mathematical problem of division satirizes friars' avarice and preoccupation with hoarding and dividing up amounts of wealth. This scene also depicts a mocking reproduction of the Last Supper, where thirteen people are present at a metaphorical table, sharing farts instead of bread. This interpretation roundly critiques this Christian scene, in addition to individuals and offices of the clergy.

Both "The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" are in the anti-clerical and anti-fraternal satirical tradition of Middle English literature. These tales, as they *quite* each other, offer mocking and some scatological depictions of clergy members, following the tradition of anti-clerical and anti-fraternal writers of the time (Dean 31) in exposing liturgical abuses.

"The Friar's Tale," through associating one summoner with a fiend, primarily focuses on an individual summoner as being a buffoon and demonic himself. Though it is an exemplum, the moral message is absent and appears to only be told with the intention of insulting the Summoner. Similarly, "The Summoner's Tale" portrays friars as being dolts and is meant to be offensive to the Friar. However, differences between the two tales exist in that "The Summoner's Tale" employs the use of scatological elements of fabliaux, and there also exists a condemnation of an entire group of friars at the conclusion. Together, these two texts from the *Canterbury Tales* bemoan the abuses of clergy members, whether secular clergy or friars, in Chaucer's time.

Acknowledgements:
I would like to thank Dr. Anna Kelner and Taylor De Los Angeles for their perceptive feedback on drafts of this essay. Any errors are my own.

Works Cited

"Baude." *University of Michigan Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan, 2023, quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED3810.

Borroff, Marie. "Dimensions of Judgment in the Canterbury Tales: Friar, Summoner, Pardoner, Wife of Bath." *Traditions and Renewals: Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet, and Beyond*, Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 3–49.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*, edited by Jill Mann, Penguin Press, 2005.

Dean, James M. "Anticlerical Poems and Documents: Introduction." *Medieval English Political Writings*, Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2002, pp. 41–61.

Lenaghan, R. T. "The Irony of the 'Friar's Tale.'" *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1973, pp. 281–294.

"Summoner, n." *OED Online*. May 2023. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.csudh.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/183623?redirectedFrom=summoner.

Szittya, Penn R. "The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature." *Speculum*, vol. 52, no. 2, 1977, pp. 287–313. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2850514.

---. "Chaucer and Antifraternal Exegesis: The False Apostle of the Summoner's Tale." *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 231–46, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400854165.231.

Legacy of Empire: The Ladino vs. Indigene Dichotomy in Héctor Tobar's The Tattooed Soldier

by Jesus Felix Jr.

Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* narrativizes and interrogates the effects of the Guatemalan civil war via its characters Antonio Bernal's and Guillermo Longoria's navigation of the Guatemalan diaspora in the United States. Antonio, a former literature student, widower, and victim of state violence in Guatemala, struggles to navigate life in Los Angeles. Not only is he unable to process the brutal murder of his wife and son, but he also finds himself houseless due to the capitalistic economic system of the United States which alienates, marginalizes, and exploits Latine immigrants. Longoria, the conscripted ex-Guatemalan soldier and perpetrator of Antonio's trauma, fares better in his new life in the United States, but also exhibits the traumatic lasting effects of being indoctrinated and forced to kill by the Guatemalan and U.S. armies.

Though these characters are presented as foils to one another, what unites them is their victimhood and propensity for hypermasculinity, murder, and racialized violence that can be traced back to a legacy of colonialism and imperialism in Guatemala. The scholarship examining this legacy and its effects on the central characters spans from readings centered on their experiencing and processing of trauma to Longoria's denial and reclamation of Indigeneity. Other readings examine the alienation, invisibility, and systemic violence experienced by immigrants of the United States and the moral and symbolic implications of Antonio's vengeful murder of Longoria. From this scholarship, it becomes clear that the violence and murder exhibited by both characters are not actions that can be simply and exclusively moralized, read as symbolic acts of resistance, or examined through the lens of justice and redemption. Rather, these characters' identities and actions should be examined through the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism to understand how colonial and neoliberal values of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism breed hypermasculine, anti-Indigenous, and violent subjects. Therefore, this essay will explore how Longoria and Antonio both exist under conditions where psychological and emotional repression, murder, and violence become their most immediate means of mental and physical survival—both in the

context of Guatemala and in Los Angeles. Further, it will trace their propensity for violence to the colonial and neocolonial perpetuation of hypermasculinity and anti-Indigeneity as well as to the alienation and invisibility produced by United States imperialism and the subsequent Guatemalan diaspora. In doing so, the broader objective is to provide an intersectional understanding of the lasting effects of Spanish colonialism and 20th-century United States imperialism as represented through Tobar's characters.

A prudent place to begin would be Tobar's dichotomous representation of Antonio and Longoria. Embedded in their characterization, racialization (of the self and each other), and their subject positioning is a legacy of colonial divide and rule. That is, the two are both emblematic of the racial and class antagonism bred from Spain's colonization of Latin America and its subsequent production of *mestizaje*. Like many Latin American populations, Guatemaltecos are products of colonial and Indigenous miscegenation resulting in a complicated national identity imbued with values of internalized racism, colorism, patriarchy, and erasure of Indigeneity. From this legacy emerges a racial, gendered, and class hierarchy that privileges heteronormativity, proximity to whiteness, and standards and notions of European "civility"—as opposed to the racialized, Indigenous stereotypes of the "uncivilized," "savage," *Indio*.

In attempting to underscore how this complex racialized legacy is bred by Spanish colonialism and perpetuated by American imperialism, Tobar positions both Antonio's and Longoria's identities within the context of a Ladino vs. Indigene dichotomy. That is, both characters are defined by, subjected to, and adhere to or reject colonial notions of race, gender, and class. To complicate this dichotomous representation, Tobar imbues his central characters with opposing—and in some instances ironic—physical and ideological characteristics. For instance, ideologically, Antonio embodies a progressive, intellectual, upper-middle class identity; physically, he presents as Ladino (mestizo). Tobar, through Elena's point of view, describes Antonio as "abnormally tall for a Guatemalan," and "European-complected, with an intellectual air he couldn't seem to shake" (86, 115). References to his height, lighter complexion, and Spanish, European features—in contrast to traditionally Indigenous features—imbue Antonio with a paradoxical position within the Ladino vs. Indigene dichotomy. On the one hand, his physical features and "intellectual air" highlight his privileged position in the Guatemalan racialized class hierarchy established by colonization. The fact that these features are perceived by Elena in a romantic, desirable light, can be read as Tobar underscoring how Guatemalan beauty standards reflect an internalized privileging of Ladino, white, European features over traditionally Indigenous features. On the other hand, Tobar characterizes Antonio as progressive-minded, idealistic, and in direct opposition to colonial and neocolonial values of Indigenous erasure: "'It seems to me that the Quiché language is indispensable to us, that every Guatemalteco should learn it,' Antonio was saying. 'The language of the Maya is in our blood, after all. We can't deny it. It's who we are, where we come from'" (Tobar 87). Characterizing Antonio as someone who both benefits from and opposes colonial values not only highlights the ways in which race is constructed and defined under colonization, but it brings attention to the ways in which colonized subjects—regardless of their political leaning—internalize, benefit, and suffer from colonial values of race and class while simultaneously perpetuating them.

In fact, there are several instances throughout the novel where Antonio, in contrast to his left-leaning ideology, perpetuates the very racist, anti-Indigenous values he seems to oppose as a young, idealistic college student. It is worth noting the ways in which these instances are contextually informed by his sense of masculinity, power, and especially his sense of agency and visibility once he immigrates to Los Angeles. For instance, prior to his life in the states, and perhaps at his most ideologically left, Antonio appears to embody an idealized subversion of colonial hypermasculinity. Elena insists that there "was a gentleness to him; he seemed untouched by the harshness and arrogance that had contaminated the rest of the male species on campus" (Tobar 87). By comparing Antonio's demeanor to her previous revolutionary-minded partners, Elena positions him outside of the hypocritical "Marxist Leninist," "Machismo with a serious face" type of men who fight fascism in the name of the people but perpetuate the gendered colonial subjugation of women by treating them as objects of desire (Tobar 87). Furthermore, this ideologically progressive version of Antonio has yet to be subjected to and become a victim of state and systemic violence—arguably the driving forces in his and Longoria's eventual embodying and perpetuating of racist, classist, and hypermasculine colonial values.

Following the murder of his wife and son at the hands of the state-appointed Lorenzo Amaya Anti-Communist Brigade led by Longoria, Antonio escapes to the United States and finds himself struggling to maintain work and process his trauma—resulting in his eviction. In the opening of the novel, as Antonio and José Juan are being removed from their apartment, we see how Antonio's experience of state violence begets his experience of capitalistic systemic violence in Los Angeles. Culminating from this violence, Antonio shifts from gentle, sensitive, and idealistic-minded to jaded, hypermasculine, and violent for the sake of survival. Despite linking his violent tendencies and temper to his Zacapaneco (Indigenous) heritage, Antonio acknowledges that, prior to his state of houselessness in Los Angeles, "[he] had never hit a man before"; "He had been known to raise his voice, to open his jaws, pantherlike, and scream in rage, but he did not think of himself as a violent person" (Tobar 45). It is not until Antonio experiences wage exploitation, the homogenizing of Latine identity in Los Angeles, and the statelessness and invisibility of Guatemalan refugees that he turns to hypermasculine violence in search of the agency that was stripped away from him. In reaction to the old man who attempts to steal his and José Juan's hotplate, Antonio physically assaults him and thinks, "*We have almost nothing and this man wants to take it away from us*" (Tobar 44). As he proceeds to brutally attack the man, Antonio claims that "for a moment he felt strong and free" and asserts that "fury was a much better drug than self-pity" (Tobar 44). In reaction to José Juan's disgust at his violent rage, Antonio insists that his propensity for rage is inherited from his "peasant ancestors in Zacapa" who "took it seriously when you doubted [their] manhood" (Tobar 45). Then, "he blame[s] his actions on the surroundings" (Tobar 45). He deduces that "the exposed lots and the dirt and the hunger seemed to demand violence of him. Living out here on the street, you had to prove you were a man. To beat someone up had a purpose here. *I must become a Zacapaneco. Only the blood of Zacapa that runs through my veins will protect me now*" (Tobar 45). Here, we witness how hypermasculinity and violence are embraced by Antonio to remedy the powerlessness he endures as a victim of systemic violence in the United States. Rather than rightfully direct his frustration at the

neocolonial capitalist forces that produce his state of powerlessness, he instead conflates his failures with his masculine pride. Antonio's masculine pride is said to be inherited from his peasant ancestors, but his construct of gender and masculinity can be more aptly traced to a legacy of Spanish colonization. Thus, enacting hypermasculine violence on a man who is weaker than him becomes a form of restoring his power and a mirroring of colonial subjugation of vulnerable, Indigenous populations. As we further contextualize Antonio's actions and circumstances, we can also see how neocolonial influences on Central America play a significant role in his experiencing of powerlessness.

Most directly to blame for Antonio's immigration to Los Angeles is the state violence he endures which causes him to flee Guatemala. Preceding this act of violence are 20th-century U.S. imperialist foreign policies that funded the training of Guatemalan soldiers. These soldiers engaged in the genocide of Indigenous populations and communist sympathizers in Central America with the intent of preserving western capitalism under the guise of democracy. Examining the 20th-century U.S. imperialist intervention in Central America that contextualizes Tobar's novel, Dale Pattinson, expanding on historian Stephan Rabe, explains:

> Latin America would become the 'killing zone' of the Cold War. Motivating U.S. intervention were anxieties over Communist-leaning President Arbenz's plan to dismantle the United Fruit Company, a U.S. corporation that 'owned more than a million acres of banana fields in Central America' and kept in place a system of gross inequality among landowners and peasant workers. Arbenz's ostensible Communist leanings gave the U.S. license, in the government's eyes, to pursue military action within the rhetorical framework of the Cold War. In addition to orchestrating the coup and training members of the Guatemalan military, the CIA led bombing campaigns intended to wipe out political resistance in the countryside. Exporting political violence in the name of democracy and the free market, the U.S. would lead Guatemala into a bloody civil war that would last until 1996 and claim roughly two hundred thousand lives. (117)

Framing Antonio's tragic experiences within the context of American neocolonialism in the mid- to-late 20th century, Tobar highlights how American exceptionalism and imperialist values lead to the destabilizing of foreign lives and nations in the name of capital.

Moreover, Pattinson underscores how the violence the United States perpetuates in other countries not only begets more violence, but also manifests a domino effect of displacement that brings the cycle of violence back to its point of origin. As he further explains:

> Antonio's undocumented status—and its attendant modes of social, political, and economic exclusion—results directly from the U.S. refusal to grant refugee status to those escaping political violence in Central America. By keeping migrants in a state of abjection, the U.S. would ironically replicate on the domestic front the neoliberal practices that it exported through its foreign policy, practices that had disastrous effects for the countries in which they were employed. (119)

Pattinson's observation reinforces the notion that the hypermasculine violence Antonio exudes in Los Angeles is a consequence of United States intervention in Guatemala. Furthermore, Antonio's need to reclaim power via hypermasculine violence can be directly connected to the sense of powerlessness produced by his statelessness, undocumented status, the exploitation of his labor.

Upon arriving in Los Angeles, Antonio quickly realizes that his aspirations for redemption, "a new beginning," and the continuation of his education are not feasible (Tobar 52). He discovers "that when you [come] to the United States you move down in social station and professional responsibilities," that "Los Angeles made you less than you were back home," and that Latine immigrants accepted this "because they still made six times more money than they could in El Salvador or México, even though everything was twice as expensive" (Tobar 52). Embedded in Antonio's realization is a critique of the exploitation, degradation, and alienation experienced by Latine immigrants under American capitalism. That is, American capitalism, bolstered by the propagandizing of the American dream, entices immigrants to try their luck in the land of supposed freedom and opportunity. However, as Antonio's observations imply, achieving this dream is only a possibility if you possess the right skin color, speak the correct language, and are willing to debase, commodify, and exploit others in the name of capital. Therefore, for a majority of Latine immigrants either seeking asylum or a better life, the reality of the American dream is far bleaker. For many Central Americans immigrating in the latter half of the 20th century, this dream is instead a nightmare permeated by invisibility, lack of collective and political agency, and powerlessness under the oppressive force of wage slavery.

Author Eric Vázquez further examines the consequences of United States foreign policy in both causing the political unrest that resulted in the Guatemalan diaspora, and then denying the displaced access to legal rights needed to derive agency and security in the U.S. He explains, "Because the U.S. government disowned its role in propelling immigrants northward, it also rendered Central American migrants legally and socially nonexistent but simultaneously exposed and defenseless in the face of economic exploitation" (Vázquez 139). More specifically, Vázquez details how the denying of "resettlements services and legal recourse for injury—as well as [the] threaten[ing] of deportation and death, torture, or slow material degradation" via "U.S. immigration policy excluded Central American immigrants from the country's legal and social bodies" (138). It is worth highlighting the fact that immigrants like Antonio lack the awareness of their subject positioning to be able to a) perceive the U.S. imperialist hand at play in his experiencing of state violence at home and systemic violence in the states and to b) receive any form of legal restitution and justice for the crimes committed against him and his family. Therefore, for Antonio, who experiences powerlessness both in Guatemala and the United States, his reclamation of power and enacting of justice becomes focalized upon his revenge towards Longoria.

Author Crystine Miller explains in her examination of trauma in *The Tattooed Soldier*,

> As is characteristic of trauma, Antonio does not understand the killing [of his wife and son] in the context of the present, but instead sees it as something dislocated from his

> current social order. The way in which he personalizes his traumatic experiences in Guatemala in Longoria suggests that Antonio cannot see how larger forces of empire and racialization have also shaped his experiences of trauma. (378)

For both Vázquez and Miller, Antonio's inability to recognize the U.S. imperialist forces responsible for his and Longoria's victimization results in him mischaracterizing his violent act of murderous revenge towards Longoria as justice and redemption (Miller 378, Vásquez 133). More specifically, for Vázquez, "when read through Antonio's narrative, the murder becomes a fantasy of masculine agency: retaliation against the man responsible for his loss in Guatemala and his degradation in Los Angeles. Put another way, revenge fortifies Antonio's identity just as it commandeers a common project of justice" (133). Within this context, Antonio's "…inescapable sense of having failed Elena, his first and only love; of having failed Carlos, his son; of having allowed them to die alone" becomes gendered, imbued with a desire to redeem himself from the emasculating notion of not being able to protect his loved ones (Tobar 53). As we see in his agonistic positioning against Longoria in the Ladino vs. Indigene dichotomy, his desire for revenge becomes saturated with colonial values of race, class, and anti-Indigeneity.

The once ideal, progressive college student who condemned the use of the term *Indio* as a pejorative becomes empowered by his racialized Ladino identity and his denigration of Longoria's Indigenous features and heritage (Tobar 90). For instance, upon hearing Longoria's voice for the first time at El Pulgarcito Express, Antonio observes that "[his voice] was not a strong voice. Not a confident voice. He had known teenagers who had deeper, throatier voices. The killer spoke like a peasant, in a voice Antonio associated with wooden shacks and men who carried heavy loads of firewood on their backs" (Tobar 166). The realization of Longoria's Indigeneity causes Antonio to feel "something resembling pity for the soldier" (Tobar 166). This pity is described as "the most abstract of emotions, a reflex" (Tobar 166). Antonio's pity is then revealed to be a racialized view of Indigeneity, which he has learned and internalized from growing up in Guatemala's capital. He explains, "you were supposed to feel superior when you heard a peasant speak with this provincial lilt; you were supposed to feel a sort of paternalistic sympathy. It was the way he said 'jefe,' something submissive in the way he said the word" (Tobar 167). Antonio's instinctive and reflexive reaction to Longoria's voice speaks to the colonial anti-Indigeneity embedded in his Ladino identity and culture. His dialectical sense of superiority as resident of the capital, caricaturing of Indigenous rurality, and patriarchal infantilizing of Longoria's voice all speak to his unconscious colonial racism and classism.

Complicating the Ladino vs. Indigene dichotomy further, Antonio proceeds to detach Longoria from his Indigenous and Guatemalan identity and instead focuses on the symbol that, for him, represents the loss of his family, Longoria's propensity for genocidal murder, and an underlying masculine strength unbecoming of a "servile" *campesino*—the jaguar tattoo (Tobar 168). For Antonio, "The tattoo was the key to everything. Because the soldier had that animal on his skin, he had been sent to murder Elena. Because he had that tattoo, he could kill a two-year-old boy and sit down to eat an ice cream as if nothing had happened" (Tobar 168). Of course, what is tragically embedded in Antonio's assessment of Longoria's tattoo is the

fact that he overlooks the neocolonial forces at play in both Longoria's conscription and their shared victimhood. Coincidentally, the jaguar tattoo becomes a catalyst for both characters' perpetuation of hypermasculine violence. For Antonio, the tattoo is a way to dehumanize Longoria and separate him from any sympathy that he may have for a fellow Guatemalteco, and it makes him the focal antagonist and perpetrator of his trauma and victimhood. According to Ana Rodriguez, for Longoria, the tattoo represents "his hyper-heteromasculine trappings—his military training, his violent and destructive behavior, his 'matón' look, and his performance of machismo…signs of masculinity [that] are not inherent features of Longoria's identity but rather learned and internalized" (121). Thus, not only do Longoria and Antonio share learned and internalized colonial values, but they also share a victimhood under American imperialism and state violence—a victimhood that they process through misdirected, hypermasculine, racialized violence and Indigenous erasure.

Of the two central characters, Longoria is the more complicated, ironic, and tragic embodiment of the racialized, gendered, and class antagonism bred from Spanish colonialism and reinforced by U.S. imperialism. Early in the novel we learn that Longoria, formally Guillermo, "had not joined the army by choice" and that he "might have avoided being a soldier altogether if he hadn't gone to the movies on a Sunday afternoon to see *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* at the Lux Theater in Huehuetenango" (Tobar 34). We also learn that when he was conscripted at the theater, he "was seventeen years old and still filled with youthful innocence, the son of a peasant woman who grew corn on two acres of hillside" and that his "life revolved around the soil, the cycles of rain and harvest" (Tobar 35). In this flashback, Tobar establishes three significant details that will define Guillermo's evolution into Longoria. First is his Mayan, Indigenous heritage. The imagery of corn fields, soil, and the cycles of rain and harvest connects Guillermo to his Indigeneity, to Mayan tradition, to nature and its spirituality, and to maternal love—all of which are torn away from him in that theater. Secondly, in this scene we see early glimpses of what Rodríguez terms Longoria's internalization of "the dominant racist Ladino ideology and commonplace neocolonial historicism that reject, demean, and reduce all things Mayan to caricatured national symbols" (122). This internalization is most apparent in his assessment of why E.T. landed in a wealthy, white U.S. suburb and not in Guatemala: "It made sense that the Extra-Terrestrial would go to the United States. He would never come to Guatemala to be cooped up inside a little adobe house with a cement floor like the one where Guillermo lived" (Tobar 35). Not only does Guillermo's commentary on *E.T.* speak to an internalized shame of his Indigenous upbringing, but it also highlights the third defining aspect of Guillermo's evolution—American influence. That is, the sociocultural impact that American media, like *E.T.*, has on global perceptions of American wealth and prosperity is analogous to the American imperialist forces that lead to Guillermo's conscription. In other words, just as Hollywood films embolden the illusion and desire for the American dream and help perpetuate cycles of immigrant labor exploitation, 20th-century American foreign policy aimed to undermine and destabilize collective resistance, democracy, and autonomy in Central America because these ideals posed a threat to its capitalistic, neocolonial, white supremacist and patriarchal policies and values.

Therefore, as we look to establish Longoria as the villain of the novel or make exceptions for Antonio's violence as a reaction to his wickedness, we must first grapple with Longoria's victimhood. For example, in the scene following the violent encounter with the older Guatemalan woman in El Pulgarcito Express, Longoria reflects on her dubbing him a "*matador*" upon seeing his jaguar tattoo. In defense against her and the larger Guatemalan diaspora who would deem him a murderer, he asks, "'What about Sergeant Longoria? If he hadn't killed, he might be dead himself…There were reasons this work had to be done, even though you started to forget the reasons as time passed. When you actually had to do the deed, the reasons were what carried you forward, the speeches the officers made, what you learned about the enemy'" (Tobar 174). To be clear, as readers we are not meant to excuse Longoria's actions, but we are entreated to look at how his experience in the military, American-funded training and indoctrinating, and traumatic separation from his ties to maternal love and Indigeneity all coalesce to make up his victimhood. Thus, as we assign the role of antagonist, we are left with the role the United States plays in the altering, oppressing, and committing of violence in foreign lands for the sake of upholding its political and economic agenda. In turn, we can perceive the divide and rule embedded in a legacy of Spanish colonialism, reinforced by U.S. imperialism, and manifested and embodied by two Guatemaltecos, Antonio and Longoria, who perpetuate the violence thrust upon them. Of course, with Longoria, there is a tragic irony in that, unlike Antonio, he presents as Indigenous and comes from an explicitly Mayan, Indigenous upbringing. Again, unlike Antonio, who at his most idealistic desires to reclaim his Mayan ancestry, Longoria attempts to eradicate it. In doing so, he attaches his identity to the neocolonial, militant, western values of violent hypermasculinity and anti-Indigeneity—donning the jaguar tattoo as a symbolic departure from his former life as Guillermo.

Interestingly, Julie Minich reads Longoria's (and Antonio's) internalized anti-Indigeneity through the lens of disability theory; she examines how the characters perpetuate problematic Ladino ideals of bolstering and viewing *meztizaje* as achievable racial progress via the purging of Indigeneity—ideals present in the work of José Vasconcelos, author of the pro-meztizaje text, *The Cosmic Race* (220). For Minich, the central characters' internalized racism represents a view of Indigeneity as a disability or hindrance towards racial betterment (220). Regarding Longoria's conscription and indoctrination, Minich explains:

> During his training in the United States, the officers explain that Guatemala is 'backward because of the peasants, because of their superstitions and bad habits, like having too many children,' and Longoria is filled with 'shame, remembering his own family.' Although Longoria is not literally killed in the war, he comes to perceive his own identity as a threat to the Guatemalan national body and to seek the erasure of that identity. As a result, Longoria's narrative of his own personal history—from dirt, barefoot peasant to clean, uniformed soldier—reflects Vasconcelos' troubling notion of meztizaje as a narrative of racial progress. (Minich 220)

For Minich, *The Tattooed Soldier* highlights the ways in which Guatemaltecos have internalized colonial values of race in their perception of Indigeneity as a precursor to western standards of civility. She claims that the novel "depicts the destruction of Indigenous lifeways not as an inevitable result of historical progress but as the preventable result of Guatemala's colonial legacy of racialized violence (Minich 217). Further tied to this racialized colonial and neocolonial legacy is the internalized violence and hypermasculinity that perpetuates anti-Indigenous erasure—traits that both Antonio and Longoria embody for the sake of survival. Although Longoria's killing for the Lorenzo Amaya Anti-Communist Brigade is the most obvious example, Antonio's climactic murdering of Longoria, regardless of its justifications, can also be read as an act of anti-Indigenous violence and erasure.

Admittedly, this interpretation of Antonio's revenge and Longoria's murder complicates the depiction of Longoria reclaiming his Maya identity as Guillermo in death. The "burst of light" that precedes a vision of "a dark woman," his mother guiding Guillermo into "rows of corn" as he happily dawns "his dirty toes [with] mud caked in the nails," and his "peasant clothes" represent a rebirth for Longoria—a rebirth of his Indigeneity (Tobar 306). Interestingly, Rodriguez reads Longoria's death through the Maya tradition of bloodletting. She insists that Antonio's act of murder "reinstates an ancient cosmological order in the Americas" and "closes the cycle of war and impunity" (126). More specifically, she states, "Only the bloodletting of Longoria (and other government soldiers and death squad members) could put an end to the rule of impunity and bring a new day to Guatemala and Guatemalans, still carrying the scars of the civil war…[e]nsuring the continuity of the Maya world and other world orders" (Rodriguez 126). In other words, Longoria's death, for Rodriguez, is a justified symbolic act, not only in its restoration of Guillermo's Maya Indigeneity, but also as an act of resistance and healing after the trauma and violence enacted by the state and U.S. neocolonial forces in Guatemala. Pattison shares a similar perspective:

> When Longoria is finally murdered deep in one of these tunnels, his murder represents a symbolic restoration of justice for victims of political violence both in the United States and throughout Latin America, and in situating this climactic scene beneath the city, Tobar seems to suggest that correcting the mistakes of the past involves unearthing and acknowledging the unpleasant truths of our nation's history. (131)

As Pattinson stresses, Tobar's positioning of Longoria's murder within the tunnels of Los Angeles implies that achieving a semblance of justice and healing for Guatemaltecos comes from recognizing and exposing of the legacy of colonialism and American imperialism at the root of Guatemala's civil war. Pattinson's reading can in turn be applied to the idea of Longoria's death as a culmination of colonial divide and rule. That is, extending Pattinson's perspective, we may read Antonio's murdering of Longoria as needed to "unearth" and "acknowledge" the legacy of Spanish colonization and American imperialism that cultivate and bolster the Ladino vs. Indigene dichotomy, which in turn perpetuates the hypermasculine, racialized violence and erasure of Indigenous people.

Other critics' readings of Longoria's murder are less generous in their interpretation of Antonio's action as a symbolic act of justice, resistance, and rebirth. For instance, Susan

Mendez reads Longoria's murder as Antonio's failure to perceive Longoria's victimhood and place himself in Longoria's subject position—an act that stems from "a revolutionary or familial love" in the vein of the Che Guevara quote referenced earlier in the novel (65). For Mendez, and contrary to Pattinson and Rodriguez's views, "Longoria's death reaps no larger, common goal for the wronged people of the Guatemalan civil war" and instead constitutes an act of selfish vengeance (65). Similarly, Vasquez asserts that the revenge Antonio enacts in his murdering of Longoria is "only a fantasy of justice, not of its accomplishment" (135). Though Vazquez does acknowledge a reading of Longoria's death as a restorative act of Indigenous heritage for both characters—in death and rebirth for Longoria and of redemption for Antonio—he also asserts that revenge, within the context of this novel, "brings balance by inverting the role of victim and perpetrator: by redistributing suffering and liberating both parties through the annihilation of one" (149) Understood through this perspective, Longoria's murder and Antonio's act of revenge extend beyond the question of whether the act is justified, revolutionary, or a symbolic act of national resistance. Rather, the act of revenge can be viewed as a necessary step towards healing and addressing the violence and trauma perpetrated by legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

Though some may question whether an act of murderous revenge constitutes a hopeful, revolutionary act of resistance, one must also realize that to reach a point where revolutionary action is possible, one must first take the steps towards processing the trauma produced by legacies of colonialism and imperialism. What Tobar seems to imply in Antonio's final act of revenge is that physical violence becomes necessary to those dispossessed, stateless, houseless, and unsupported by the very legal, systemic, and colonial institutions and nations that oppress and subjugate them. As signified by the Los Angeles Riots at the end of the novel, acts of resistance are often imbued with the very violence that insights them and, on the surface, may not resemble revolutionary action. However, it is from these acts of violence and resistance that we see a potential for collective action and revolution as inspired by those great feelings of love. Longoria's murder and both characters' inevitable perpetuation of anti-Indigenous, hypermasculine, racialized violence is of course not emblematic of resistance or justice. However, our recognition of the Spanish colonial and American imperialist forces that are to blame for their actions and behaviors allows for the possibility. It is only by recognizing legacies of brutality that we can heal from them and transform the future that proceeds us.

Works Cited

Méndez, Susan C. "Love and the revolution: The Potential and Limitations of Love and Differential Consciousness in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*." *CiberLetras: Journal of literary criticism and culture*, vol. 47, 2022, pp. 54-69. *Dialnet*, https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8551103.

Miller, Crystine. "Héctor Tobar's the Tattooed Soldier and the Latino/a Trauma Narrative." *Latino Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2016, pp. 364-383. *ProQuest*, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-016-0010-6.

Minich, Julie Avril. "Mestizaje as National Prosthesis: Corporeal Metaphors in Héctor Tobar's 'The Tattooed Soldier.'" *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, 2013, pp. 211–25. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24582277.

Pattison, Dale. "Born in the USA: Breeding Political Violence in Héctor Tobar's The Tattooed Soldier." Studies in American Fiction, vol. 44, no. 1, May 2017, pp. 113–37. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/saf.2017.0004.

Rodríguez, Ana Patricia. *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures*. E-book, University of Texas Press, 2009.

Tobar, Héctor. *The Tattooed Soldier*. Picador, 2014.

Vazquez, Eric. "Interrogative Justice in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2018, pp. 129–52. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2018.0005.

Contributors

Shannen Escote

Shannen Escote (B.A. English, 2018, UC Berkeley and M.A. English, 2024, CSULB) is from San Jose, CA and works as a research assistant. They are currently interested in postcolonial studies, medieval studies, religious texts, mythology, and queer theory.

Taylor Advincula-De Los Angeles

Taylor Advincula-De Los Angeles is a second-year graduate student focusing on identity in medieval literature.

Jim Gately

Jim Gately is currently an English Literature MA student at California State University, Long Beach. His literary and research interests include digital rhetoric, ecocriticism, postmodernism, narratology, and film and media studies.

Alexandria Costa

Alexandria Costa received her B.A. in English Literature from CSULB in 2020. She is a current graduate student at CSULB, studying English Literature with a concentration in 20th-century American Literature.

Ambar Quintanilla

Ambar Quintanilla is completing her English MA degree this summer at CSULB. Her literary and research interests include (but are not limited to), Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogies, Antiracist Pedagogies, Rhetoric and Composition, Ethnic Studies, and 19th and 20th century American Literature.

Georgie Moy Arend

Georgie Arend is a master's student in the English department at CSULB. Her research interests include Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and 20th-century American Literature. After recently completing the Subject Credential program at CSULB, Georgie now works as an eighth-grade English teacher at Hamilton Middle School in Long Beach.

Sarah Moon

Sarah Moon is in her final semester of the MA in English program at CSULB. Her research interests include medieval and early modern literature, ecocriticism, gender studies, natural philosophy, and science studies.

Celina Cooper

Celina Cooper just earned their English MA degree from CSULB with a focus on 19th Century American Literature. They worked as a composition instructor for CSULB and the Upward Bound Program in Los Angeles. They are also Co-Executive Editor for Watermark Volume 17.

Ray Paramo

Ray Paramo is a graduate student in English Literature at California State University, Long Beach, from which he also received a B.A. in both Literature and Creative Writing. His research interests lie in the queer analysis of modern and contemporary American fiction and theater, mainly regarding the portrayal of gender and masculinity and the exploration of identity.

Cassandra Abigail Amaya

Cassandra Abigail Amaya is an English graduate student who, after five years of declaring she would be going to med school, would like nothing more than to read and write for the rest of her life. As an aspiring professor, she hopes to gain writer's experience in the same way she learned how to do stitches: lots of practice and inflicting the least amount of pain possible upon my readers.

Sarrah Wolfe

Sarrah Wolfe is an English Literature MA student at California State University, Long Beach. She was the recipient of the 2022 Gerald Locklin Endowed Scholarship from CSULB and the 2023 English Department Award in Critical Analysis from Cal Poly Humboldt.

Kim Hu

Kim Hu is a graduate student in the English department at California State University, Long Beach. Her research interests are British Romanticism, animal studies, and critical theory.

Sydney Brazil

Sydney Brazil is a graduate student of English at California State University, Long Beach. Her research interests include religious women, magic and monstrosity, and explorations of the feminine voice in Old and Middle English texts.

Andrew A. Leung

A native of Los Angeles, Andrew A. Leung is a twenty-one-year-old English master's student and teaching credential candidate at California State University, Dominguez Hills. His research interests include the phonological and syntactic processes of African American English, intersectionality, and the cross-fertilization of vernacular cultures as depicted in literature; Leung is also a published composer and author of Spanish poetry.

Jesus Felix Jr.

Jesus Felix Jr. is an English Literature graduate and a secondary school educator. His area of focus is 20th-Century American Literature with interests in class, race, gender, queer, and Latine studies.

Department of English
California State University, Long Beach