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

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

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Editor's Note:

Following the 2012 launch of the California State University, Long Beach Department of English Graduate Student Interdisciplinary Conference, Re/Inventions, we were inspired to try something a little different for *Watermark's* seventh volume. Along with our usual call for papers across a variety of discursive categories, we also solicited submissions designed to coincide with the theme for Re/Inventions 2013: Hysteria. The response was considerable, with more than thirty submissions from across the United States and even across the Pond.

The end result: An eclectic collection of burgeoning scholarship interrogating the canon from Geoffrey Chaucer to Edwidge Danticat and a plethora of stops in between. This year also marks the largest volume of *Watermark* to date, thanks to the exceptional quality of submissions received. It is my sincere hope that 2014 brings with it an even stronger response from the academic community so that, as Managing Editor Mary Sotnick advances to the man the proverbial helm, she and her staff will be quite literally spoilt for choice as they determine the next lineup.

This edition of *Watermark*, like its predecessors, could not have been gone to press without the tireless efforts of our readers and editors who so graciously volunteered their time to make this volume a reality. On behalf of the entire *Watermark* staff, I would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr. George Hart for championing the journal's mission of providing a forum for students to present their scholarship; Dr. Eileen Klink for her visionary departmental leadership; Lisa Behrendt, Janice Young, Doris Pintscher, and Cortney Kimoto for all their hard work behind the scenes; Dean Tsuyuki for breathing life into *Watermark* with his keen eye for design; and all of the English Department faculty and staff, for continually motivating, inspiring, and mentoring students toward continued success.

Lisa Brown
Editor

**“I LIKE NOT THE SMELL OF THIS ‘AUTHORITY’”: THE HYSTERICAL
POWER OF LANGUAGE IN ARTHUR MILLER’S *THE CRUCIBLE*
BY DANILO CAPUTO**

The Crucible (1953), Arthur Miller’s follow-up to the wildly popular *Death of a Salesman* (1949) is a historiographical play centered on the Salem witch trials of 1692. When the play opened, audiences drew obvious parallels to the anti-communist witch-hunts taking place in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s, propagated by Senator Joe McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) at the height of Cold War anxiety. However, Miller’s play is more than an allegory of “the rise of McCarthyism,” as he notes in the introduction to his *Collected Plays*, “but something which seemed much more weird and mysterious ... it was the fact that a political, objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far Right was capable of not only creating a terror, but a new subjective reality” (39). He posits that the terror of evil lurking anywhere—even next door—was engineered, adding that “so interior and subjective an emotion could have been so manifestly created from without was a marvel to [him],” and “underlies every word of *The Crucible*” (40). This insight into Miller’s motives for writing *The*

Crucible is quite illuminating, as it frames Miller's representation of mass hysteria as being primarily concerned with dramatizing how such hysterias are created—how reality can be distorted and contorted to promote the power of a select few. The means by which this collusion is realized can, of course, be found in the discourse. The perceived threat of witchcraft in *The Crucible* is entirely abstract and has no grounding in reality, but the language used by the characters in the play transmogrifies this abstraction¹ into a real and physical threat to the theocratic society of Salem, which warrants the authority figures to exercise their power over the townsfolk. This linguistic transmogrification constitutes a reification fallacy.² Throughout *The Crucible*, characters rhetorically deploy the logical fallacy of reification in order to simultaneously strengthen and conceal their power as an artifice of language. The hysteria portrayed by the Salemites in Miller's play is contingent upon and propagated by this illogical treatment of language.

In the overture that begins the first act of *The Crucible*, the authorial voice (presumably Miller's) claims that "it is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom" (7). Indeed, the first part of this statement rings true: how could it be anything but impossible for organization to occur without repression? The very act of organization brings a preliminary and natural state of disorder (chaos) into a structured order—confines the individual within an artificial system in which a societally-inclined superego is developed in order to repress the pre-linguistic desires³ of the host. In this sense, organization is synonymous with repression—society a pervasive panopticon which confines, surveys, and subjugates the individual perpetually. Therefore, the balance between order and freedom that the narrator desires appears all but unattainable because the individual is incarcerated within the prison of the symbolic order. The conceivable counterbalance to order—chaos—is not

necessarily the opposite of order, but rather is that which has not been ordered and what lies beyond order, beyond description and inscription: outside of the script. It is the negative space of the unknown: unknown books, unknown speech, indescribable actions, or the refusal to describe (muteness). These facets of chaos, if not contained within the order of the symbolic, must be eliminated. The preliminary step towards containing this hysterically conceived but never actually perceived chaos in *The Crucible* is to order it under an umbrella signifier: witchcraft. Those who have allegedly transgressed into witchcraft then have two choices: confess and reify order, or deny their guilt and reveal chaos. The fates of the various players in Miller's work, then, are determined not by whether or not one is a witch, but whether or not one is willing to admit witchcraft exists and participate in hypostatizing a nonexistent threat. The first accused and tried witches, Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn, will serve as a starting point for investigating the genesis of the mob hysteria present in Miller's play.

Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn are the first of the accused after Tituba confesses and affirms the existence of witchcraft in Salem, and their fate depends on how they respond to Abigail's claim, "I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil!" (45). Unlike Tituba, who confesses her guilt before the religious figures Parris and Hale, Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn are arrested and brought to court to confess before Deputy Governor Danforth, who, Elizabeth reports, "promise a hangin' if they'll but confess" (50). Mary Warren, who attends the trial, informs the Proctors that Goody Osburn will hang. "He sentenced her. He must. To ameliorate it: But not Sarah Good. For Sarah Good confessed, y'see" (54). Sarah Good preserves her life by yielding a confession. She sentences her own guilt to bypass the court uttering a more punitive sentence for her—reifying both the threat (witchcraft) and the need for the solution to it (the law). Sarah Osburn, on the other

hand, denies her guilt, refuses to affirm Abigail's proclamation, and even contradicts any evidence of witchcraft committed on her part. And since she does not yield her own sentence of guilt, the court then gives her one. Implicitly, by not complying with the court's demands (i.e. an admittance of witchcraft) Sarah Osburn simultaneously relinquishes her autonomy and empowers the court with the ability to corporally and capitally punish her for her transgressions. According to the OED, to transgress is "to go beyond the bounds or limits prescribed by (a law, command, etc.); to break, violate, infringe, contravene, trespass against." Indeed, to transgress is to go beyond the limits of order; to traverse outside of order **back** into the pre-scribed territory of chaos. This is the nature of the evidence the court levies against Sarah Osburn during her trial: that she has been heard mumbling. Mary Warren recalls Goody Osburn's unintelligible utterances to Proctor, "So many time, Mr. Proctor, she come to this very door, beggin' bread and a cup of cider—and mark this: whenever I turned her away empty, she mumbled" (55). Somehow,⁴ Mary Warren then connects Osburn and her mumbling as responsible for her own ailments. After Mary Warren relays this information to the court, Osburn's guilt is no longer questioned—whatever she is mumbling, it must be bad. The mumbling corresponds to utterances yet unconfined within the langue, and this transgression is interpreted as a subversive threat: Judge Hawthorne's immediate response to the information is "Goody Osburn ... what curse do you mumble that this girl must fall sick after turning you away?" hastily linking the mumbling to Mary Warren's afflictions (55). Sarah Osburn's defense is that she was only reciting her commandments, but that is soon found to be a lie. This is her third in a series of linguistic transgressions—contradicting the court, mumbling, and now lying—and for this she must hang, to ameliorate (a peculiar word which, by the way, Miller uses anachronistically)⁵ her wrongdoings. Sarah Osburn's guilt is not founded upon any real or physical evidence;

rather her guilt is constructed, evidenced, and condemned entirely by and through language. Her punishment, however, is entirely corporeal.

In response to hearing of Sarah Osburn's condemnation by the court, Proctor exclaims "But the proof, the proof!" as he sees that Osburn's guilt has been created *ex nihilo*, that the signifiers that implicate her guilt signify nothing—since "witch" is an empty and artificial signifier in of itself—yet are sufficient enough to warrant the taking of another's life (55). There exists an incongruity between the incorporeal body of language and the corporeal body of a person, yet through hypostatization the corpus of Law has been given the power to make corpses of people. Proctor recognizes and is alarmed by this incongruity, that abstractions are being used to justify the execution of a real body. This is the nature of his call for and questioning of the proof of Sarah Osburn's guilt. What Proctor fails to understand is that language, to those involved in the trial, is actually being treated as corporeal due to the reification fallacy. Mary Warren replies to Proctor with "I told you the proof. It's hard proof, hard as rock the judges said," hypostatizing her evidence; that the proof is hard and rock-like is a distortion of the fact that the proof Mary Warren speaks of is completely intangible, abstract, and situated within the symbolic order (55). But in doing so, she and the court have equated language with reality, and therefore the proof and sentence of her guilt are on equal measure with her execution. Following the fallacy of reification to its fatal consequence, the weight of her hanging body is to be exchanged for the weight of her guilt in order to restore balance to the hypostatized scales of justice.

Often when tension arises in *The Crucible*, the language linguistically transmogrifies to possess physical features, as if to force the symbolic into the real for dramatic effect. Stephen Martin examines this phenomenon with "truth" in his essay "Arthur Miller's 'Weight of Truth,'" as he traces "one of the play's crucial themes: how an individual's struggle for

truth often conflicts with society” (488). There is an epistemological conflict involved when an individual’s search for truth undermines the authoritative truths that govern a society, and Proctor is the prime example of this in *The Crucible*. His skepticism and incredulousness conflict with Mary Warren’s understanding of reality, creating a tension between the two, which subsequently leads her to react illogically via a reification fallacy. He is countered with the truth as being hard and rock-like, implying that it is empirically beyond refute, a solid and intractable fact such that there is no need to question it and no possibility of altering it. Martin goes on in his essay to trace the ways in which weight is a measure of power and authority throughout the play, and how Proctor is one of the few who remains incredulous as to what “weight” really constitutes.

John Proctor is one of the few townspeople inoculated from the witchcraft hysteria afflicting Salem. While others are swept up in the fervor of containing a nonexistent threat to the community—accusing, accosting, and arresting innocent people for crimes impossible to commit—Proctor remains the voice of skeptical reason. Calling for sensible proof and doubting the scrupulousness of the accusers, Proctor undermines the entire enterprise of the court. One of Proctor’s more caustic means for destabilizing the proceedings surrounding the witch hunt derives from the same source through which the witch hunt is being propagated: language. As has already been demonstrated, the abstraction of witchcraft in Salem has been rhetorically transmogrified into a physical reality through reified language—once the abstract evidence is recognized as “weighted” (with authority) and “solid” (proven) as stone, it is interpreted literally, becoming as empirically sensible as recognizing an actual stone. Proctor, however, recognizes that metaphors and similes are used figuratively, and mocks literal interpretation of corporeal language through irony and sarcasm. Some may be convinced that a religious text

is “weighted with authority,” but Proctor knows that the weight and the authority exist in separate dimensions. The perceived weight is of the physical book itself, whereas the authority is symbolic and rooted in abstraction. The pairing of the words “weight” and “authority” is linguistically possible but realistically incongruous, and Proctor subverts pairings such as this with a reified quip of his own, “I like not the *smell* of this ‘Authority’” (29, emphasis mine). Now, this statement does not refer to Hale and his books, but rather is a response to Parris’ paranoid delusion that a faction of the church is colluding to subvert “him and all authority” (29). Yet the sardonic effect remains as Parris believes that as a minister he is an extension of the weighted authority of the word of God (that he is, in fact, the physical body of the text), and therefore should “not be so lightly crossed and contradicted” (28). But Proctor sees, or rather smells, the difference between the body of Parris and the body of text he represents and knows that the two are not one in the same. John Proctor fallaciously pairs the sensation of smelling with the abstraction of authority—the same fallacious language used by the church and the court—but does so ironically. He knows that authority does not have an odor,⁶ but says so to reveal the absurdity of empirically sensing metaphysical concepts. Miller capitalizes “Authority” to emphasize that it is a concept and places it in quotation marks⁷ as if to confine the word within the language by/of which it is constructed. Proctor’s is a sarcastic remark that subverts the power of hypostatized language through its self-conscious and ironic use. By employing the same rhetorical strategy as the authority figures in Salem—but not meaning what he says—Proctor is deconstructing the language of authority in Salem. His awareness of language and power as artificial systems of/for order, however, makes him a threat to order itself.

Proctor’s caustic tongue is reserved not for Parris alone, but for all embodiments of authority, and as an official of the court, Mary Warren

believes she, too, is one such figure. Excusing herself from her duties at the Proctor House to conduct the “weighty work” of the court, she declares “I’m—I am an official of the court, they say, and I—” but Proctor swiftly cuts her off mid-sentence retorting, “I’ll official you!” and prepares to whip her (56). By interrupting Mary and mocking her authority, Proctor shows a disregard for both her and the court. She tries to reestablish the importance of her work saying, “The Devil’s loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor; we must discover where he’s hiding,” to which he again appropriates her language with “I’ll whip the Devil out of you!” (56). Proctor takes the rhetoric Mary employs to establish her authority—describing her work as weighty, declaring herself as an official of the court, and establishing the Devil as a threat to their society—and throws it back at her sardonically. Her work that is inflated with importance through language is promptly deflated by his sarcasm. Then, after being undermined by Proctor twice, Mary Warren shows the weight of her authority when she points at Elizabeth and says “I saved her life today!” stunning Proctor into silence as she informs them that Elizabeth’s name has been mentioned amongst those of other accused witches (56). This statement is more substantially weighted than her previous ones because actual weight is involved—Elizabeth’s. Proctor, temporarily shocked into silence, recognizes that Mary Warren has the authority to condemn or save Elizabeth, and Mary takes the opportunity to add “I only hope you’ll not be so sarcastical [sic] anymore. I—I would have you speak civilly to me, from this out” (57). Elizabeth has become a tool to quell the threat of Proctor’s subversive mocking and enforce submissive and civil behavior.

Proctor is not the only man silenced by the oppressive forces found in Miller’s play. Giles Corey also possesses a sardonic tongue, which gets him in trouble with the authority figures of the town. He and his wife, Martha, first become threats to the reified order of Salem when Giles accidentally implicates Martha in witchcraft. Giles asks Hale “what

signifies the readin' of strange books? ... I have waked at night many a time and found her in a corner, readin' of a book. Now what do you make of that?" (37). Giles' curiosity as to why his wife should feel compelled to read books is less the focus for Hale than concern for what she is reading. What does the reading of strange books signify? It signifies transgression and a possible subversive threat. An unknown text resides beyond the langue of the society; it has not yet been contained and organized within the theocratic order of Salem. Like Sarah Osburn's mumbling, Martha Corey's strange books lie outside of order and, therefore, are inferred as proponents of disorder. Unrecognized paroles are affronts to the dominance of the langue and are affixed with the signifier "witchcraft" in order to contain and eradicate them, which is how Martha's activities are treated. After Martha's reading of strange books becomes the evidence of witchcraft for which she is arrested, Giles Corey realizes his mistake. To clear her name he goes to the court to disprove the absurd notion that witchcraft exists in Salem with evidence of an ulterior intent for some of the accusations: that it is part of Thomas Putnam's plot to seize the property of those condemned by the court. Unlike Proctor, who undermines the law by mocking its language, Giles Corey goes to the court and demonstrates a proficiency in the discourse of the law, actively participating in it as he presents a well-written deposition of Putnam's greed. The structure of his composition is so well argued that the court officials commend him, "It is very well phrased. My compliments," but grow immediately suspicious, even threatened (88). They ask "what lawyer drew this, Corey?" and, "You have no legal training, Mr. Corey?" to which he affirms he wrote the document and knows his rights under (confined within)⁸ the law (88). Giles's deposition demonstrates a deep knowledge of the law, however, his proficiency in the discourse is not rewarded by the officials but rather is treated as a threat to the order and authority of the court. His evidence, though a more rational explanation for what's going

on in Salem, is rejected—weightless and paling in comparison to the reified argument for witchcraft. He is called a liar and is asked to respond to the accusation. Giles, recognizing his attempt to participate in the official discourse is futile, comically lambasts a caustic counter-argument: “A fart on Thomas Putnam, that is what I say to that!” as if to parody the discourse with a hyper-hypostatized language of his own, evoking a flatulent response that is just as weightless, intangible, and inane as “witchcraft.” After countering the not-actually-weighted-but-flatulent language of the officials with some sardonic flatulence of his own, Giles elects to remain mute and to conclude his participation in the language system. He refuses to name names (the means by which the hysteria is perpetuating itself), and becomes an affront to the officials of the court. His removal from the langue is both transgressive and subversive as it proffers an alternative to the normative linguistic confinement utilized by the theocratic system of Salem. Consequently, Giles’s silence leads to his arrest and subsequent execution for contempt of the court.

Giles Corey’s execution is praised by many for its heroism and symbolic reconstitution of “weight.” As Giles is literally crushed to death by the mass of stones placed upon his body he breaks his silence and utters his last words, “more weight” (125). Stephen Marino’s reading of this scene suggests a polysemous interpretation of “weight” here:

In Giles’s last words, ‘weight’ connects with both its literal and figurative meanings as it did with Hale’s books. Obviously, the great weight of the stones literally crushes Giles to death. However ... those great stones represent the power, heaviness, seriousness, and gravity of a Massachusetts theocracy which crushed the life out of Giles. (494)

Indeed, Marino is right in reading the weightiness two ways—Giles does die under the weight placed upon him, and it does symbolically represent the weight of the oppressive theocracy that condemns him to death.

However, the nature of this representation deserves closer inspection, as it is not only the tragic merging of reified language and reality (of making the corpus real). With his last words, Giles, caustic unto death, subverts this reification. If he had not uttered “more weight” during his execution, Marino’s connection between the literal and figurative weight would remain a valid one, but Giles does speak, and his words disrupt Mario’s polysemous interpretation as he reappropriates “weight” (and his fate) through his use of the purely literal sense of the word. His call for more weight signifies only the stones that he asks to be crushed by, eliding the figurative aspect of his death. In other words, Giles simultaneously takes his death in his own hands and repeals the reification fallacy when he uses the abstraction “weight” to signify the weight of the stones that he is already feeling. In this sense his death, albeit tragic and symbolic in its dual weightiness, is also representative of a final and heroic linguistic subversion of the theocratic system through his call for weight—what Marino comes to characterize as the “liberat[ion] of the individual conscience ... from the law of society” (494). Giles’s death, however, is not solely the liberation of an individual conscience, as his was a public death. The reification fallacy performed on a stage for all to see (the abstract weight of the law transmogrifying itself as the weight of stones that crushes Giles Corey) becomes its own undoing as people bear witness to what real weight is (via Giles’s reappropriation and sacrifice) and, more importantly, witness what it is not.

Proctor’s death, I believe, differs from Giles’s as a redeeming sacrifice to repeal the hypostatization of authority and witchcraft. Unlike Giles, who demonstrates the fallacy of reification through differentiating between the logical (real) and illogical (abstract) weights under which he dies (to argue that he was crushed by the weight of authority is—logically speaking—fallacious), Proctor sacrifices his body for his name, giving precedence to the abstract (the name) over the real (his body)—in turn

sacrificing the signified for the signifier. At the apotheosis of Proctor's individuality recoiling against the demands of society, he refuses to allow his confession to be made—and used in—public. When Danforth asks for an explanation for this behavior, Proctor, “with a cry of his whole soul,” responds “Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!” (133). This desperate clinging to his name, Marino asserts, is the sacrifice Proctor makes to relieve himself from an ontological and epistemological struggle: “Proctor comes to understand not the weightiness of his name for the village, but the weightiness of it for himself ... His name is the only truth Proctor knows; it is the only item that he knows still bears weight, as Parris has indicated” (495). Indeed, Proctor's sacrifice does nothing for the society; nothing to cure the mob hysteria afflicting Salem or to rectify the reification fallacy by which it has been propagated.¹⁰ For Proctor, Marino believes, the matter is personal.

Penelope Curtis takes a similar stance in her essay “Setting, Language, and the Force of Evil in *The Crucible*,” in which she specifies that “the moment when Elizabeth lies and condemns Proctor marks a further shift of attention: from John's relationship with his wife to his relationship with himself” (75). After Elizabeth, Proctor's standard of truth¹¹—the basis of which he depends on to prove his evidence against Abigail—fails him, Proctor is left physically (through incarceration) and metaphysically (through debasement) lost. He has only his name, and it becomes both the only thing he knows to be true and the only thing by which he validates his existence—the cure for his epistemological and ontological uncertainty. This is solipsism.¹² He asks, “How may I live without my name?” and concludes that he cannot. “John Proctor” becomes more important to him than the body it signifies, which is “not

worth the dust on the feet of them that hang,” and he dies for his name in order to preserve its truthiness. The cause for which Proctor sacrifices himself is not just different than Giles’s; it is the opposite of it. In death, Giles undermines the faulty logic of reification, separating weight from its hypostatized use. Proctor, on the other hand, in solipsistic fashion succumbs to the reification fallacy as he treats his name paradoxically as something he cannot live without yet dies for, and—in even greater contrast to Giles—goes so far as to use overtly hypostatized language in his last words in the play when he commands Elizabeth to “Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it!” (133). The tragedy of John Proctor then, evident in the action of the play, also subtly occurs in his language as it transitions from sardonic and logical to solipsistic, fallacious, and hysterical.

Another contrasting figure to Proctor in *The Crucible* is Hale. Proctor’s logical deterioration is inverted in the figure of Hale, who enters the play as perhaps the most influential propagator of the fallacy of reification but develops an awareness of its detrimental effects on reality and grows to subvert it. Even before he speaks, Hale first appears in the play as the emblematic logophile, “loaded down with half a dozen loaded books”¹³ when he arrives in Salem (34). After distributing a portion of the weight to Parris (not un-coincidentally another authority figure), who remarks on how heavy they are, Hale responds “they must be; they are weighted with authority,” an example of reification fallacy at its best (34).¹⁴ As an authority figure in the theocratic system of New England, Hale insinuates that his authority derives from the authoritative books, which he possesses and reads. Also, the physical weight of the books is hypostatized to be analogous to the weight of his power (and to the theocratic system of which he is an extension), which is perceivably heavy to those around him. This reification also suggests that the heavier a book is, the more authority it will yield, as if to latently suggest the insatiable

desire for power to amass more power via the containment of more subjects to its power. In other words, the more pages of text one amasses by linguistically containing more subjects within its symbolic order, the heavier the text and therefore one's authority will be. This insatiability is alluded to in Hale's countenance as he explains the contents of his books "with a tasty love of intellectual pursuit" (37). And what is contained within the text? Hale says:

Here is all the invisible world, caught, defined, and calculated. In these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises. Here are all your familiar spirits—your incubi and succubi; your witches that go by land, by air, and by sea; your wizards of the night and of the day. Have no fear now—we shall find him out if he has come among us, and I mean to crush him utterly if he has shown his face! (37)

Hale's statement reinforces the notion that power is attained by what it can contain, listing-off the spectrum of the transgressive anomalies now caught and defined within the organizing system of language.¹⁵ However, Hale's statement also reveals an underlying anxiety of order: the need to contain the "invisible world" refers back to that oppositional and unknown realm that exists outside of order; the disorder that threatens the abstract and artificial structure of order itself. This negative capability that (paranoically) threatens order, then, is affixed with arbitrary signifiers such as "succubi," "witches," and "devils" to render the invisible linguistically visible, and it becomes Tituba's job to help reify what is linguistically conceivable as empirically perceivable. Hale tells her "You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents against us ... speak utterly," and as an instrument of power Tituba utters those first names, initiating the reification fallacy that develops into the mass hysteria that the audience watches unfold through the course of *The Crucible* (44). This illogical foundation for the following action of the

play is described by Stephen Fender in “Precision and Pseudo Precision in *The Crucible*,” as “establishing the rather complex ironic structure” of the play (94). The irony for Hale is that he, arguably the most well-read and knowledgeable person in Salem, has been reading books that have little to do with reality, and thus his knowledge of the real world is inadequate. His false knowledge instigates the regression into bad logic and superstition that follows. Fender characterizes this when he says “what makes Hale so vulnerable to the witch-hunt is not—as with the other townspeople—his repressed emotions, but his love of abstraction” (95). Hale’s perpetuation of the witch-hunt hysteria is driven not by irrational superstition, but by what he supposes are the books of knowledge, truth, and power which he possesses. It’s when Hale finally comes to recognize the difference between the text and the real that he realizes his mistake.

Hale begins to cast doubts on the court proceedings as Proctor and Giles present their counter-evidence to the existence of witchcraft but are disregarded and even arrested for their subversiveness. Seeing the injustice in their being arrested and convinced by the supposition that unscrupulousness¹⁶ rather than witchcraft is afflicting Salem, Hale pleads with Danforth to stop the proceedings, “I beg you, stop now before another is condemned! I may shut my conscience to it no more—private vengeance is working through this testimony!” (105). But his plea is immediately quelled by the most powerful and absurd reification fallacy in the play—when Abigail and the other girls who initiated the witch-hunt hysteria act like they see a yellow bird perched on a beam in the courtroom. Abigail looks at and talks to the bird, and Danforth is frightened by what he does not see. Everyone pretending to see or looking for the hypostatized bird overwhelms the rationalism of Proctor, Giles, and now Hale, enveloping the courtroom in the hysteria. Mary Warren turns on Proctor and accuses him of summoning the bird. He is then arrested for collecting names in the Devil’s book and colluding to

subvert the theocratic system. It is at this point that Hale declares (twice), “I denounce these proceedings!” and leaves the court (111).

The next time Hale is seen in the play he is described as “more direct than ever,” as if his lost love for abstraction shows in his countenance and speech (119). The subject of his concern is no longer the books he carried into Salem, but what is happening to Salem as a result of the reification fallacy initiated by him and the corrosive texts he has since denounced. He informs Danforth that the reality around them is in detriment, “there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting cops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlot’s cry will end his life,” and his work now is to repeal the reification of the “invisible world” at the cost of the real world (121). What he does he calls “the Devil’s work,” which is “to counsel Christians they should belie themselves,” advising prisoners to sign confessions of their guilt—even though they are not guilty of witchcraft (since that is impossible)—so that they may be released and can get back to their lives (121). He has abandoned the logos and is able to distinguish between the corpus and the corporeal. One’s name is not as important to preserve as the body it signifies, and Hale encourages lying in order to do so, which in turn becomes subversive in its performativity as a parody of power relations.

Walter J. Meserve notes Hale’s transformation, stating that “The Reverend Hale is one of the most substantial figures in *The Crucible* and can easily absorb the interest of the audience measuring the parallel action of the ‘fall’ of John Hale with the ‘rise’ to glory of John Proctor” (16). But Meserve is mistaken—the parallel he suggests should be inverted. Proctor begins as the skeptical and cynical figure that openly mocks the fallacious language of the theocratic society around him, but falls into solipsism and ingloriously sacrifices his body for the logos that is his name. Hale, on the other hand, enters *The Crucible* with a love for abstraction and textuality

and little regard for or understanding of the real world around him, but rises beyond the text as he comes to realize how caustic language is when treated literally—hypostatized through the fallacy of reification—and in turn works to preserve the real from being lost to the symbolic. In an attempt to preserve John Proctor's life, Hale tells Elizabeth "cleave to no faith when faith brings blood. It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it," which is the true apotheosis of *The Crucible* (122). There is no victory in death, and Arthur Miller himself writes of the tragic-victory that "one makes nonsense of this if a 'victory' means that the hero makes us feel some certain joy when, for instance, he sacrifices himself for a 'cause,' ... a man's death is and ought to be an essentially terrifying thing and ought to make nobody happy" (*Collected Plays* 33). No principle, whether societal or personal, bears more weight than that of a living body. Preservation of an abstraction—whether it is a religious or political ideology or name—in exchange for life is the fallacy of reification at its most utterly tragic and despairing.

NOTES

- ¹ You can also substitute “Witchcraft” with “Authority,” “Order,” “Law,” “God,” or “the Devil” here. They are all reified in the play.
- ² A simple definition from Madsen Pirie’s *The Book of Fallacy: A Training Guide for Intellectual Subversives*: “The fallacy of reification, also called hypostatization, consists of the supposition that words must denote real things” (148).
- ³ That id stuff à la Lacanian psychoanalysis.
- ⁴ Hysterically.
- ⁵ According to the OED, the earliest recorded use of ameliorate was in 1767—seventy-five years *after* the Salem witch trials. Its use is typically in relation to the body. Miller’s intentional use, and the stress placed upon “ameliorate” cannot be missed as an allusion to the scheme of things (e.g. reification).
- ⁶ We’ll get to odors later.
- ⁷ The ironic-hipster equivalent of using air-quotes.
- ⁸ Thomas E. Porter’s essay “The Long Shadow of the Law: *The Crucible*” illustrates the paradoxical status of the law: “The individual in the democracy must be free, yet the rules laid down by society constrain him; a permanent unyielding code must be enforced without respect to persons, yet justice can never ignore persons; the majority must rule, yet minorities are entitled to their rights” (77).
- ⁹ Marino is referring to Parris’ statement to Danforth on the value of a signed confession from Proctor: “It is a great service, sir. It is a weighty name; it will strike the village that Proctor confess [sic]. I beg you, let him sign it” (131).
- ¹⁰ I must add that by this time in the play it has already been made clear that the hysteria is dying down; in fact, people are turning against the authority that had allowed—or instigated—such a myth to be reified in the first place, e.g. the rebellion against the court in Andover (117).
- ¹¹ As Elizabeth is summoned into the courtroom, Proctor declares she is “such a woman that never lied, and cannot, and the world knows she cannot!” (65).
- ¹² As defined by the OED solipsism is “the view or theory that self is the only object of real knowledge or the only thing really existent.”
- ¹³ The imagery here is later parodied as Giles shows what it’s really like to be weighed down.
- ¹⁴ Or worst?

¹⁵ The counterpart to this list of nonexistent, textually confined bodies is Parris's record of church attendees. The names in that book signify the real bodies subject to his power. Proctor's noticeable absence from the record—"In the book of record that Mr. Parris keeps, I [Hale] note that you are rarely in church on Sabbath Day"—counts against his credibility and is a cause for authoritative anxiety (61).

¹⁶ Including Putnam's plan to buy cheap land, Parris's greed for power, Abigail's lust for Proctor, or Danforth's obstinance.

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RE-THINKING “MELODRAMATIC SIMPLIFICATION”¹: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE DEATHBED TABLEAU ARRANGEMENTS IN
CHARLES DICKENS’S *BLEAK HOUSE*
BY KACIE WILLS

The connection between Charles Dickens’s fiction and nineteenth-century melodrama is crucial to the interpretation of *Bleak House*. Not only would Dickens have been familiar with popular melodramas of the period, but it is clear that melodrama played an important role in the construction and reading of his fiction. In melodrama, as Dickens understood,² spatial constructions were used to elicit a response from the audience. Literary critic Peter Brooks calls the study of melodrama the study of “excess,” of “a mode of heightened dramatization inextricably bound up with the modern novel’s effort to signify” (ix). He states:

In considering melodrama, we are in a sense talking about a form of theatricality which will underlie novelistic efforts at representation—which will provide a model for the making of meaning in fictional dramatizations of existence. The nineteenth-century novel needs such a theatricality, as we shall see, to get its meaning across, to invest in its renderings of life a

sense of memorability and significance. (13)

Looking closely at the function of one particular aspect of melodrama—the tableau—can shed light on the interpretation of several of the death scenes in *Bleak House*. Tableaus were a key aspect of melodrama, providing moral and ethical arrangements by which to judge the characters. Brooks defines the tableau as a moment in which “the characters’ attitudes and gestures, compositionally arranged and frozen for a moment, give, like an illustrative painting, a visual summary of the emotional situation” (48). Though tableaus are rooted in gesture and posture as a form of emotional expression, Brooks also notes that “scenes constructed of words” also “tend toward a terminal wordlessness in the fixed gestures of the tableau” (61). In these particular tableaus, the last sentence spoken gives the viewer the chance to read the characters’ states and motives in a moment of reflection (Brooks 62). Though tableaus were a staple of the melodramatic stage, their function and construction must change when applied to the novel. Examining Dickens’ use of the tableau in *Bleak House* provides an opportunity to examine the unique role of melodrama in the novel. In this sense, then, melodrama can be seen as a “mode,” an adjectival type that describes a work with the particular features of melodrama (Hultgren 12).

While Dickens utilizes the tableau aspect of Victorian melodrama in *Bleak House*, the tableaus he creates in the novel are figurative. In the accepted or traditional mode of melodrama in the Victorian period, the tableau would consist of the literal spatial arrangement created at the close of each scene to reveal the various characters’ motivations and roles (i.e. the villain, the hero, etc.). The tableau in the death scenes of *Bleak House* involves the description of the characters’ spatial arrangements in relation to the dying or, as is the case with Nemo, the body of the dead character. This tableau, therefore, relies heavily on the part of the narrator to create the descriptions and arrangements of the characters, creating

a construction of melodrama that is unique to the novel. Not adhering to the tableaux' ordinary function and the audience's expectation of being objectively presented with the moral and ethical motivations of the characters through their spatial arrangements, the tableau-inspired figurations of the characters in the death scenes of Jo and Nemo undermine the expectations of the readers. Readers are drawn into the scene as the third-person narrator not only turns on the reader at Jo's death, but also reveals the third-person narrative's unreliability when faced with the overwhelming power of the object upon the discovery of Nemo's corpse. In contrast, Esther's first-person narration of Richard's death creates a figurative tableau of the characters in a way that breaks down the wall between the reader and the novel through subjectivity. The tableau in the novel can be seen, then, to use the role of both third- and first-person narrators to draw on the melodramatic tradition in order to complicate and subvert the expected role of the reader as objective observer of the scene.

While the theatrical familiarity of the Victorian reading public is acknowledged in Dickens's creation of figurative tableaux in the death scenes of Jo, Nemo, and Richard, these tableaux do not function in the traditional melodramatic manner. Literary critic Juliet John contends that melodrama is a genre of simplification, a genre "in which surfaces are synonymous with depths" (111). Such a transparency, therefore, leads to an art form that is constructed around the audience's shaping of character, around the audience's "attribution of depths to surfaces" (John 111). For critic Sally Ledger, the humanity inherent in the melodrama within *Bleak House* exhibits an agency that the inhuman Chancery lacks (201). She reads Jo's deathbed scene in the novel as a moment in which Dickens is able to build upon the traditional structure of the tableau to "extraordinary emotional and moral effect" (201). In this scene, Ledger views the tableau as forcing upon the reader "Jo's humanity" (202).

Ledger contends, ultimately, that the narrator's intervention at the close of Jo's death scene "removes the reader from the tableau, reminding us that it is a tableau, an effect, a rhetorical set piece" (204).

Building upon John's reading of audience involvement, I contend that reading the spatial constructions of the way the characters are situated in the death scenes in *Bleak House* as tableaux reveals the reader as an active participant in the "humanity" of the scene. Rather than removing the audience from the scene as Ledger suggests, the theatricality of the tableau and the third-person narrator's intervention actually make the reader a part of the scene. While the Victorian reading public would expect the tableau to provide an illustration of the emotional dynamics and motivations of the scene, the tableaux created by both narrators in *Bleak House* ultimately break down the boundary between the reader and the novel, making any objective observation of the scene impossible for the audience and stripping the readers of any sense of objective power over the perception of the novel. By looking at the role of the narrator-constructed tableaux surrounding Jo's death scene, the discovery of Nemo's corpse, and Richard's death, the use of the melodramatic tableau in the novel can be seen to reveal the power of the narrators in obliterating the expected objectivity of the audience. This is accomplished through the third-person narrator's indictment of the reader at Jo's death, the narrative confusion resulting from the presence of the abject upon finding Nemo's corpse, and, finally, through the subjectivity of Esther's first-person narration that can be seen to unite the purpose of the tableau in the novel despite the difference in narrative voice.³

Prior to delving into the tableau arrangements in *Bleak House*, it is necessary to address the role of the Victorian reading public's particular relationship to the theater and its influence on the act of novel reading. Arguing for the fluidity between theater and the novel in the Victorian period, Deborah Vlock contends that the Victorian novel should be read

as a “tableau vivant,” that the Victorian readers would have read Dickens’s characters “with an acute awareness of theatrical presence; they witnessed characters from the contemporary stage materializing, as it were, from the page” (165). For Vlock, the Victorian readers’ experiences of the stage were continuous with their experience of the novel. Beyond “structural similarities,” Vlock sees a reciprocal relationship between the novel and the stage in the Victorian period, arguing that such a relationship would have a profound impact upon the Victorian readers’ understanding of the novel and its characters, and that novel reading created an “intergeneric process” that was richly and “explicitly theatrical” (166). Vlock’s discussion of the Victorian reading public provides the lens through which I will approach the theatrical spatial arrangement surrounding the deaths of Nemo, and, especially, Jo. Building upon Dickens’s reciprocal relationship with the theater, both as writer and performer of his work, it is not only viable to view the spatial relationships set up around the deaths of these characters as tableau-like scenes, but it is also possible to incorporate the readers’ understandings of the theatrical nature of the text into the analysis of the scenes. Approaching the text as both reader and actor, as Dickens himself did in his public readings of his novels, and taking into account the Victorian reader’s knowledge of the characters popular to the stage, we can “complete the picture” of *Bleak House* (Vlock 167). By entering into the text as reader and actor, we are building a framework through which to understand the complex relationship between the reader and the novel, between the novel’s structure and its characters.

II. JO’S DEATH AND THE READER’S VILLAINY

The distance between the reader and the novel is broken down most clearly in the figurative tableau of Jo’s death scene. The careful positioning of the characters around Jo’s deathbed cannot be ignored when constructing an analysis of their roles in the novel. Juliet John discusses

the role of melodrama in “simplifying” the audience’s understanding of character. She contends that, in melodrama, “The audience cannot fail to understand immediately ... a character’s destined role in the play or his or her ethical substance” (27). In this scene, however, the spatial arrangements of the characters are phased out as the narrator draws the audience into the tableau, subverting the expected structure of the melodramatic scene. Rather than ending with the audience’s observation and assessment of the characters as a result of their position in the tableau, the scene of Jo’s death ends with the focus directed entirely away from the characters and on the audience itself. The narrator begins by constructing spatial setting for Jo’s death:

Phil Squod, with his smoky gunpowder visage, at once acts as nurse and works as armourer at his little table in the corner; often looking round, and saying with a nod of his baize cap, and an encouraging elevation of his eyebrows, ‘Hold up, my boy! Hold up!’ There, too, is Mr. Jarndyce many a time, and Allan Woodcourt almost always; both thinking much, how strangely Fate has entangled this rough outcast in the web of very different lives. There, too, the trooper is a frequent visitor; filling the doorway with his athletic figure, and, from his superfluity of life and strength, seeming to shed down temporary vigor upon Jo, who never fails to speak more robustly in answer to his cheerful words.

Jo is in a sleep or in a stupor today, and Allan Woodcourt, newly arrived, stands by him, looking down upon his wasted form. After a while, he softly seats himself upon the bedside with his face towards him—just as he sat in the law-writer’s room—and touches his chest and heart. The cart had very nearly given up, but labors on a little more.

The trooper stands in the doorway, still and silent. (573)

Here, the narrator spatially arranges the scene to demonstrate the role of each of these figures in this portion of the novel. Phil occupies a table in the corner and has been acting as a nurse to Jo, occasionally crying out a word or two of mild encouragement. His distance from Jo's side and indirect attempts at easing his suffering demonstrate Phil's minimal involvement and his role as a kind-hearted but ineffectual character in this sequence of events. Jarndyce is the only character not given a location within the room. This, as well as his movement in and out of the scene, characterize Jarndyce's role as transient benefactor. Jarndyce's position outside of the room, and both within and outside of the scene, fit both with his character's generosity and with his violent resistance to recognition. George's position, "filling the doorway," "still and silent," signals his role as an observant and protective presence in this part of the story. Lastly, Woodcourt's position on the bed, touching Jo's "chest and heart," presents him as the most constant and intimate participator in the scene.

Oddly, following this creation of the spatial order of the scene, all descriptions of the characters cease. The scene becomes almost entirely dominated by dialogue, seemingly suspending the characters in their positions around Jo's death bed. Then, without another glance at the characters, the narrator falls into a tone of ominous warning: "Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentleman. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day" (575). Addressing the reader directly, the narrator, here, draws the audience into the tableau. We as readers are collected around this boy—we are the "us" in the sequence. Substituting successive groups for characters around Jo's death bed, the narrator indicts all for the death of Jo and, in so doing, breaks down the boundary that keeps the reader at a safe distance from the narrative itself. The reader loses the position

of authority or surveillance over the text, and reality and the novel are combined.⁴ Unlike Ledger's notion that the theatricality of the scene removes the reader from the tableau, here, the narrator's direct address of the various groups listed at the end of the chapter moves the tableau into the world in which others like Jo are "dying thus around us every day."

The narrator's ominous message to the reading public at the end of the scene not only succeeds in breaking down the "fourth wall" between the audience and the narrative, but it also succeeds in placing the reader in the tableau position of the villain. In her discussion of the melodramatic villain, Juliet John writes:

The villain is a villain in any genre because he poses a threat to the dominant ethical and dramaturgic order. Melodrama is an anti-intellectual genre which eschews subject-centered, psychological models of identity. In melodrama, the villain is a threat because he is individualistic, valuing self before society. (49)

The missing figure in the spatial relationship surrounding Jo's deathbed is the villain. The reader is met with the kindly aspect of Phil, the transient, yet influential, presence of Jarndyce, the protective power of George, and the intimate compassion of Woodcourt; however, the final character, the guilty party, is missing from the initial construction of the scene. Fitting with John's description of the melodramatic villain, the identity of the guilty party addressed by the narrator and included in the tableau before the scene comes to a close is constructed as unconcerned with society as a whole. The villainous subjects, "your Majesty," "lords and gentleman," Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends," and "men and women born with heavenly compassion," cover the spectrum of social classes and religious institutions whose power, place in society, or even humanity places them in a position in which society, particularly the down-trodden in society like Jo, should be valued before the self. The villain indicted with Jo's death encompasses a range of types: the disconnected royalty and

aristocracy, the well-meaning and the hypocritical religious leaders, and, finally, all of humanity capable of feeling compassion. The essence of the villainy lies in the villain's obliviousness to the ills of society, particularly to those like Jo who are "dying thus around us every day" (575). This is fitting, also, with Ledger's claim that what Dickens valued above all was the knowledge "of people's feelings and of their sufferings, an intuitive moral sensibility" (203). Such a sensibility Ledger sees as demonstrated most fully in Jo's death scene and the creation of Jo's will (202). Jo's death serves as a reminder of what can happen when people fail to be affected by Jo's plight and the plight of others like him. Those who have failed to do anything about Jo and the others "dying thus around us every day" represent the most treacherous villainy: that which reaches beyond the boundaries of the novel, hardening hearts to the individual concern and empathy that are at the core of Dickens's ideal construction of humanity.

In those convicted with the crime of Jo's death, one can see the essence of the melodramatic genre as it is described by John who states, "As melodrama is an art of the surface, it can equally suggest transcendence or meaninglessness. Much depends on one's angle of vision" (111). However, it is not so much the result and meaning of the audience's interpretation that I would like to focus on here as much as on the fact that melodrama in the novel specifically elicits and relies upon the audience's participation in the narrative. Beyond asking the audience to interpret the melodramatic types as "apocalyptic" or "utopian vehicles" (John 112), Dickens forces the reading audience into the very structure of the melodrama. Audience participation becomes about more than interpretation; the audience is able to identify with one of the types that Dickens's narrator presents in the scene. In the case of Jo's death, the audience becomes the melodramatic villain, and, in doing so, completes the tableau in a way that demonstrates Dickens's mastery of the melodramatic form.

III. THE DISCOVERY OF NEMO'S CORPSE AND THE ABJECT

The discovery of Nemo's corpse draws the audience in to the tableau, subjecting them to the same horror and confusion to which the characters and the narrator are subjected.⁵ Like Jo's death scene, the tableau-esque scene surrounding Nemo's corpse is subversive to the traditional tableau structure of the melodrama. In the case of Nemo, however, the subversion is accomplished through the unbounded death and putrefaction of the scene. Unlike Jo's death, the overwhelming presence of the abject in the scene where Nemo's corpse is discovered prevents the tableau from functioning on the simple level which traditional melodrama decrees. Literary theorist Julia Kristeva defines the experience of the *abject* as "The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck" (2). The abject, thus, entails what is putrid, what inspires repugnance, particularly the presence of a corpse, which Kristeva describes as "death infecting life" (4). More complicated than a feeling of disgust, however, the abject is so horrifying because it reminds us of death and the fragility of the border by which our concept of self is constructed. Kristeva states, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order" (4). The putrid smells and the eyes of Nemo's corpse break down the border between the reader and the novel and draw the reader into the horror of the scene. The reader becomes a character as the putrescence and the corpse elicit a response to the haunting threat they pose to both the characters' and the readers' concepts of identity.

The title of the chapter that includes the discovery of Nemo's corpse, "Our Dear Brother," bears a similar tone to the narrative intrusion that addresses the audience at Jo's death. The direct address of "our" includes reader, character, and narrator in the scene. The pathos of the quote, eliciting emotions similar to those evoked by the opening words of a eulogy, simultaneously includes the audience in the act of mourning

and indicts the audience with the responsibility of Nemo's death. The opening words signify that the audience should have prevented the fate of "our dear brother." Just as in the case of Jo's death, the audience is accused, albeit in a subtler way, of being ignorant to the sufferings of those "dying thus around us every day."

Prior to the chapter title, the ending description of the previous chapter sets the scene of putrefaction and horror that overwhelms the discovery of the corpse. All things, the corpse included, seem mingled together, indistinguishable in the general filth. The narrator writes that "it is not easy to perceive what fumes those are which most oppress the senses" in the air; "but through the general sickliness and faintness, and the odor of stale tobacco, there comes into the lawyer's mouth the bitter, vapid taste of opium" (172). The putrid smell of the opium, mingled with the foulness infecting the room, overwhelms the senses, entering even the mouth of Tulkinghorn. It blurs the narrator's and even the characters' ability to distinguish life from death, to determine that, in fact, Nemo is a corpse. Ultimately, the putrid smell affects the readers' perceptions of the scene which, unique to the novel, are dependent upon the narrator. The narrator describes Nemo's body on the bed:

He lies there, dressed in shirt and trousers, with bare feet. He has a yellow look, in the spectral darkness of a candle that has guttered down, until the whole length of its wick (still burning) has doubled over, and left a tower of winding sheet above it. His hair is ragged, mingling with his whiskers and his beard—the latter, ragged too, and grown, like the scum and mist around him, in neglect. (172)

Tulkinghorn is positioned in the entrance of the room, standing in the dark and staring at the body whose eyes are described as "surely open" (172). The scene closes with the spatial arrangement of Nemo's body on the bed, Tulkinghorn looking on in the dark, and the "gaunt eyes in the

shutters staring down upon the bed” (172).

While the “eyes” of the shutters “seem to close” when the light hits them and overpowers the obscuring darkness, “the eyes upon the bed,” Nemo’s eyes, do not close (173). It is the stare from these eyes that leaves Tulkinghorn and Krook in a speechless state of horror as they realize that the body they had been beholding is, in reality, Nemo’s corpse. Just as the putrid smells in the room confuse and blur the narrator’s and, thus, the readers’ perceptions of the objects, so Nemo’s open eyes stare and penetrate from beyond the grave, leaving both characters in a state of shock and confusion as they look upon the staring eyes which transgress the boundary between animate and inanimate, between life and death. The characters are only able to “look at one another for a moment” in a speechless state of horror (173). Julia Kristeva writes:

Refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. (3)

The inability of Krook and Tulkinghorn to speak when initially confronted with the corpse demonstrates the power of the corpse to collapse meaning. The corpse, uncanny in its essence as, at once, familiar and strange, in itself blurs the border between subject and object. The first action Krook takes, in fact, is to call for a doctor in order to confirm that Nemo is indeed dead, is indeed a corpse, and is, therefore, other than what he and Tulkinghorn are. This being done, the figurative tableau of the scene is thus constructed with Tulkinghorn, “standing by the old portmanteau” in the corner, and Krook and Mrs. Flite near the bed. Woodcourt, “the dark young surgeon” enters and positions himself near Nemo’s corpse, examining his face. At the center of the other bodies in the scene is the

staring corpse of Nemo.

The presence of Nemo's corpse in this scene, staring and mingling with the putrid smells that permeate the page, subverts the simplicity of the melodramatic tableau. Because the reader of the novel is subject to the narrator's interpretation of the scene, the confusion of the narrator becomes the confusion of the reader. Through reading the scene as it is depicted by the narrator, the reader, therefore, loses the objective view of the tableau that the theater audience would have enjoyed. The reader, instead, becomes a participant in the scene, subject to the chaos that the characters are subject to. Rather than being able to observe the moral and ethical positioning of the characters, our perspective is affected by the putrid smells and the staring corpse in the same way that the narrator and the characters' perspectives are affected. Kristeva writes that, in the corpse, "I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders" (4). Without such borders, the characters are thrown into a state of speechlessness that results in the desire to prove the factual reality of Nemo's death. This is followed by a spatial positioning which creates a tableau in relation to the corpse. In this figurative tableau each character retreats into his or her own concept of "I," his or her own "safe" identity:

Mr. Tulkinghorn has stood aloof by the old portmanteau, with his hand behind him, equally removed, to all appearance, from all three kinds of interest exhibited near the bed- from the young surgeon's professional interest in death, noticeable as being quite apart from his remarks on the deceased as an individual; from the old man's unction; and the little crazy woman's awe. (174)

In a desire to protect against the infecting power of the corpse, each of the characters in this tableau has assumed a fixed state of identity. Tulkinghorn has adopted his usual aloofness, Woodcourt his professional manner, Krook a false earnestness, and Flite a fixed state of wonder. Each, by securing a fixed reaction to the corpse, protects him or herself from

the threat of the unknown that is present in the center of the tableau: Nemo's dead body.

As participator in the scene, the reader, again, must enter into the tableau surrounding the corpse. Faced with the power of the abject that reaches beyond the page, we must, like the characters, secure a reaction appropriate to our own concepts of self. While we are indicted with the crime of Jo's death in his death scene, it is the abject that is the villain in the tableau surrounding Nemo's corpse. As Kristeva writes, "Abjection, on the other hand, is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you" (4). The abject assumes the part of villain in this scene, posing a threat "to the dominant ethical and dramaturgic order" (John 49). The abject in the putrid smell, the lifeless stare, and the presence of Nemo's corpse threatens and confuses the characters', the narrator's and the readers' ordered perceptions of the scene, as well as their concepts of self as defined against the chaos of the unknown. Each character assumes a fixed state that carries with it traces of the dominant societal identity structures, whether it be Flite's adoption of the role of the "crazy little woman" or Woodcourt's professionalism. The narrator, falling victim to the villainy of the abject which confuses the depiction of the scene, again, subverts any expectations the reader may have of objectively viewing the melodramatic tableau. Subject to the same confusion that permeates the scene, the reader becomes the victim of the abject, a power whose villainy threatens beyond the pages of the novel.

IV. RICHARD'S DEATH AND ESTHER'S SUBJECTIVITY

Because *Bleak House* is a novel divided between the third-person and first-person narratives, it is important to look at examples from both types of narration before coming to a conclusion about the role of the

figurative tableau in this novel. Therefore, examining the tableau which Esther creates through her descriptions of the characters surrounding Richard at his death is essential to understanding the function of the tableau in the novel from both narrative perspectives. In this scene, Esther depicts herself as “sitting beside” Richard. She places Ada as “leaning upon his pillow, holding his head upon her arm.” Similar to Jo’s death scene, Woodcourt is present, but he is depicted here as “standing behind” Richard and “watching him gravely.” Unlike Jo’s death scene, Jarndyce does not occupy a space distant from the dying character; instead, Esther states that he “sat down in my place, keeping his hand on Richard’s.” As he dies, Esther describes Richard with his arms around Ada’s neck and his face “down upon her bosom” (744-46). Fitting with the third person narrator’s description of the way the characters are situated, Esther clearly describes the place each character occupies in the room in relation to Richard. The two characters that were also present at Jo’s death are figured differently here, however. Rather than at the bedside touching the dying character as he was at Jo’s death, Woodcourt maintains a more distant position, never assuming a seat by his side as he did with Jo. It is, instead, Esther, and then Jarndyce who occupy the position by Richard’s side. If, as with the earlier tableau configuration surrounding Jo’s death, the figures’ positions demonstrate their character, then we must assume a change in the character of Woodcourt and Jarndyce. Woodcourt’s position in the room signifies a distance and gravity in his character that was not present at Jo’s death. On the other hand, Jarndyce, who at Jo’s death was a figure of transient generosity, has become an integral part of the scene, closely connected with the situation, invested to the point of taking Richard’s hand.

Whether or not these figurations represent significant changes in the characters themselves, what needs to be noted here is Esther’s perspective as the narrator and the role of her perception in constructing the spatial

arrangement of the characters. Ada would most certainly be holding Richard in this case, as Esther had perceived her figuratively holding him close to her heart throughout the novel. Esther would be by Richard's side, only to make room for Jarndyce to take her place so that he and Richard could reconcile their differences and Jarndyce could assume the role that he had possessed in Esther's eyes the whole time: that of Richard's guardian and protector. Finally, Woodcourt would have been more removed from this scene because, though her future husband, he was not part of the family unit that Jarndyce had created for Esther, Richard, Ada, and himself. Looking at the way the characters are situated at Richard's death, then, can be seen to confirm not only Esther's role, but also, specifically, the role of the first person narrator in creating the figurative tableau. What Esther's narration brings to this scene is subjectivity. She is able to construct the spatial relationships of the characters in the scene in a way that mirrors her character's concept of their relationship to Richard. Because, as it has been with each of the tableaux I have discussed, the reader's understanding is dependent upon the narrator's depiction of the scene, the reader is, again, removed from his or her place of objective observation. The subjectivity of Esther's narrative, constructing the only view of the scene which the reader experiences, breaks down the boundary of objectivity that the audience of a staged melodrama would expect. The role of the first person narrator, unique to the novel, succeeds, again, in breaking down that "fourth wall" that exists between the reader and the novel by depicting a purely subjective tableau structure that denies the reader an opportunity to objectively view the characters. In the tableau Esther creates at Richard's death, the only view we are allowed of the characters is the view that she holds of each of them, and that view is the determining factor for her organization of the scene.

The complex nature of the melodramatic tableau as it is constructed in Dickens's *Bleak House* calls into question any assumed "melodramatic

simplicity” in the novel. The surfaces in *Bleak House* created by the third person narrator only serve to draw the audience into the scene. We, as readers, are both indicted as the villain and subjected to the power of a villainy that oozes beyond the borders of the novel itself. The tableau created by Esther’s first person narration serves to affirm the purpose of the tableau across a novel separated by two narrative voices. The reader is removed from a comfortable place of objectivity and is made subject to the scrutiny, the confusion, and the affected perceptions of the narrator.

NOTES

- ¹ Juliet, John. *Dickens's Villains*.
- ² Dickens wrote "The Amusements of the People," testifying to his own observations and appreciation of the melodramatic stage.
- ³ Audrey Jaffe writes on the subject of the first-person narrator in Dickens's work: "First-person narrative thus makes explicit what omniscient narration obscures: that the subject of narrative is also a potential object of it." She argues for the power of the first-person narrative to complete the third-person "omniscient" perspective and contends, "These narratives are not, of course, omniscient in any ordinary sense of the term. But their narrators locate in other characters qualities that demonstrably belong to the narrators themselves." Esther's narrative subjectivity can, therefore, be seen as reflected in her constructions of other characters. See "David Copperfield and Bleak House: On Dividing the Responsibility of Knowing" (in *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience*, pp. 114-15).
- ⁴ D.A. Miller writes on the subject of surveillance in the novel, as well as the novel's phenomenological inclusion of interruptions in the reading process. Such interruptions blend the novel with our lives beyond the text. See "Discipline in Different Voices: Beureaucracy, Police, Family, and *Bleak House*" (in *The Novel and the Police*, pp. 82-83).
- ⁵ One can also read the abject into the narrative confusion that accompanies Esther's discovery of Lady Dedlock's corpse. The "fearful wet" of the place where Lady Dedlock is found, lying just outside the cemetery gates, "oozed and splashed down everywhere" (700). Esther's inability to recognize her mother, in this instance, testifies to both the power of the abject in the presence of her mother's corpse and the "oozing" wet of the burial ground, and the subjectivity of her narrative; Esther's own feelings, compounded by the abject, permeate the first-person narrative, preventing the audience from recognizing Lady Dedlock's corpse in this tableau until the very last moment.

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THY FALSE BROTHER: DOMESTIC AND MONARCHICAL LOYALTY IN
SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST*

BY KIKI SHAVER

When contemporary critics examine William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a "new historical" reading often prevails, viewing Prospero as the symbol of the oppressor/colonizer and both Caliban and Ariel as oppressed/colonized subjects. These are valuable and readied arguments given the proliferation of early Renaissance travel literature, particularly the Bermuda papers and the writings of William Strachey. These travel narratives, widely circulated among the British reading class, validate such colonial readings and make a strong case for those who wish to link the author's colonial intent to the themes of empire in *The Tempest*. However, while much work has been produced to link Strachey's accounts of the Bermuda expeditions with the "fiction" of *The Tempest*, the obvious themes of loyalty and allegiance seem to have been neglected by scholars, particularly those in contemporary literature.

Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed—performed in front of and with the British royal class in mind. Taking this into account, it is not unlikely that Shakespeare's would intentionally bare

representations to historical themes under the cloak of pretense so as not to be offensive to British kings and queens. Indeed, Shakespeare wrote his Histories as a re-imagining of history just as new-historicist readings re-read texts imagining the point-of-view of the oppressed. But perhaps, Shakespeare's Histories were not the sole genre of choice for conferring history. While most critics categorize *The Tempest*, one of Shakespeare's final plays, in the romance genre, the lighter side of comedy allows Shakespeare to illuminate the themes of loyalty and rebellion in order to revisit the long legacy of plot, supplantation, and allegiance in British royal history. Written a mere seven years into the newly ushered reign of James I of England, the themes and characters of *The Tempest* bear historical resemblances to the then-King of England and the concerns governing his reign, including the loyalty of filial relationships and religious supporters. If we consider that the intended viewing audience was James I and his court, a close reading of *The Tempest* reveals how England's long legacy of treason is addressed and treated in Shakespeare's work. Linking the themes of treason and plot to the reign of James I, the play's historical and political context, neglected by many modern critics, allows for a fresh perspective on traditional, historical readings with regard to the play's early audience.

Scholars hold the original debut date of *The Tempest* in some contention. In "Duke Uses Magic to Conjure Storm at Sea: Strands Old Enemies," Dick Riley and Pam McAllister assert that *The Tempest* was first performed privately for King James I and his court in 1611. Elliott Visconsi affirms that the play was first performed on "Hallowmas Eve [31 October] 1611" (2), yet, John B. Bender distinguishes between the date of the earliest recorded performance (royal performances were routinely recorded) for the King on 1 November 1611 while discerning that this may not have been the play's debut. Corroborating 1 November production date for the King, Ernest Law affirms that it has been

“conclusively established for us the exact date and place of production before King James and his Court” that the King’s Players ... first “presented at Whithall, before ye Kinges Matie, a play called ‘*The Tempest*’ [sic]” on “Hallowmans Nyght” 1611 [sic] in Shakespeare’s presence and likely under his direct supervision (152). However, Law insists that dramas of the time were traditionally expected to undergo a “perfecting process” before being performed at court, making it highly probable that the play was first enacted in the spring or summer of 1611 at Blackfriars before a “higher class of playgoers” (153-4). Law’s argument seems to find little substantiation among his peers: however, many concede as does Bender that the 1611 show was certainly an early performance and may indeed have been entirely composed or altered, as was routine, for the audience of the King. Law, himself, also affirms that the masque scene was either added later or enhanced in its “topical interest” for its second royal viewing in 1613 before the King and his daughter Elizabeth during festivities in honor of her marriage to Ferdinand. More than a decade would pass before the play became accessible to the public with its first publication in the 1623 First Folio (Riley and McAllister 21).

Skepticism and controversy certainly surround Shakespeare’s authorial intent. However, if we survey the long line of Shakespearean history plays written in the 1590s in conjunction with Jacobean royal patronage in the early decades of the seventeenth century, a convincing argument can be made for the premeditated writing of *The Tempest* as a treatment of personal and political issues surrounding James I’s reign. Of the ten English historical dramas penned by Shakespeare, nine were written in the final decade of the sixteenth century. In these dramas, Shakespeare makes history come to life not by merely grounding his plays in historical facts but by creating larger-than-life, memorable characters. In *The Actor in History*, David Grene claims that

In the English historical plays there is an outer area and an

inner. The inner is vividly illuminated. It offers us characters, beliefs, ideals; all sorts of potentialities, likelihoods, hopes and fears. The outer area is murky and solid. This is where “history” is. (83)

Just as many Christians know what they know about “The Fall” based on the detailed imagery and characterization created in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Shakespearean audiences, readers, and students owe much of what they know about British royal history to the vivid characters in Shakespeare’s histories. Grene argues that “history within the play is a kind of pageant ... compress[ing] ... action into a satisfying imaginative coherence” (84). Thus, if Shakespeare can ground history with elements of fantasy, *The Tempest* can certainly ground fantasy, render it believable, by suspending disbelief with elements of history.

In addition to Shakespeare’s predilection of documenting history, when we examine *The Tempest*, we should also consider the issue of royal patronage and its influence on the production of art. In *Shakespeare, The King’s Playwright*, Alvin Kernan emphasizes that

Shakespeare’s patronage theater never contradicted the views of his royal patron. ... His work in the court was legitimation, not revolution, and in his service to the king, he grounded his patron’s history and politics in the materialistic view of nature and the depth psychology that were becoming a part of consciousness in the seventeenth century. (185)

The small literate population of the age made it difficult for poets and playwrights to make a living at their craft without patronage. The aristocracy and the nobility exacted artistic recognition in return for their pensions, demanding their histories and likenesses be immortalized in the works of those they supported. Palaces, portraits, statues, ballads, fashions, and poetry all reflected divine-right ideology. Kernan states that “the arts flourished in the Renaissance, not as ‘art for art’s sake,’

but as a part of the process of legitimating the state and its monarchs” (169). Ben Jonson wrote in his “Workes” that “the poet is not merely an adornment but an index to the greatness of a kingdom” (Kernan 175). For Shakespeare, the tensions created between patronly necessity and artistic freedom found relief in his sonnets which Kernan asserts are love poems to his aristocratic young patron: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee” (Sonnet 18) yet many of “His love stor[ies are] a description of failed patronage relationship[s]” (180). But for all his conflicted feelings toward patronage art, Shakespeare was no rebel. He “obliquely and tactfully ... [portrayed] issues that most seriously engaged the court” (Kernan 82) including documenting the rule of six of the ten, male monarchs before James I. As many critics affirm, this engagement with the court included themes of empire in *The Tempest*. However, beyond these new-historicist readings, *The Tempest*’s plot points, dialogue, and concerns appear to be a confrontation with the legal and social themes in which James and his courtiers would certainly have identified as representative of their epoch. James I inherited his throne from Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII. At the time of his inheritance, James had been the seated king of Scotland (James VI) for nineteen years. His English predecessor, Elizabeth I, had no heirs, dying a “virgin queen,” and the laws of succession entitled James to inherit the crown through the Stuart line. James, a foreign king, would have been relatively alienated from the English historical violence and plotting over his newly earned seat. For generations before him, the War of the Roses ensued over the battle for royal power as the Tudor and Stuart lines fought amongst themselves and each other for the right and guarantee of seating a king. In the years following Henry VIII’s reign, brothers, sisters, and cousins would be used as political pawns by those close to power, turning against one another for a claim to the throne. Henry VIII’s own father, Henry VII usurped the throne by killing

Richard III. When the young prince regent Edward VI died at the age of fifteen, Lady Jane Grey's supporters instigated a revolt, seizing the throne for nine days before she was subsequently removed and executed. The sisters, Mary and Elizabeth fought each other for power—Mary even imprisoning her sibling in The Tower, and Elizabeth order the executing of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, under suspicions of treason.

Additionally, critics have even suggested that James I's relationship with his own son, Prince Henry, was so contentious, that when Henry became gravely ill, the doctors did not know whether they were under more threat from King James to cure him or to kill him.¹ The themes in *The Tempest* bring attention to not merely the obvious plots such as loyalty and treason, but also highlight a tale plagued with insecurity where no one is above suspicion. For instance, in 1.2, as Prospero begins to reveal the initial plot which unseated him as duke, his sole audience, Miranda, asks him "Sir, are not you my father?" (1.2.55). Prospero's reply,

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father
Was Duke of Milan, and his only heir
And princess no worse issued, (1.2.56-59)

affirms the fidelity of his wife; however, in the same vein which he utters this affirmation, the text also asks us to consider the question of fidelity when he qualifies his answer with the words "she said." Miranda's questioning of her paternity could have easily been answered by a simple yes or no, something along the lines of: "I am your father and was also Duke of Milan"; however, Prospero's protracted view of paternity provides Miranda with a concrete albeit ambiguous answer. By adding the words "she said," Shakespeare draws attention to the fact that absolute paternity was nearly indeterminable save for the perceived virtue and say-so of the mother. Prospero's address of his wife to answer Miranda's question punctuates for the audience the theme of fidelity and regal paternity.

The shadow of doubt posed in these lines certainly echoes a concern which would have resonated with the English court: royal paternity was often questioned, especially in the case of James I's predecessor, Elizabeth. Queen Elizabeth I was born to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Henry's second wife. When Henry tired of Anne (as he did with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and two subsequent wives) he divorced Anne and had her beheaded on grounds of infidelity, claiming she had slept with several men, including her own brother. Infidelity carried with it the added crime of treason against the king, a statute which implies that disloyalty against the man himself automatically constituted a revolt against the crown. Anne Boleyn's arrest, trial, and execution allowed opposing factions of Parliament, and Henry himself, to question not only Elizabeth's paternity but her legal right to the throne of England. At one time denounced, disowned, and even imprisoned, Elizabeth eventually inherited her seat as Queen of England after her half-sister Mary I (daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon) died in 1558. Despite her elevation to the highest sovereign in the land, the legacy of infidelity followed Elizabeth, as she was often referred to by many in her early reign as "The Bastard Queen."

This questioning of the female loyalty rises again in *The Tempest* when Prospero reflects on his brother Antonio's plot against him and rhetorically asks Miranda, "Mark his condition and th' event, then tell me / If this might be a brother" (1.2.118). This time it is Miranda who must affirm the female virtue, stating, "I should sin / To think but nobly of my grandmother. / Good wombs have borne bad sons" (1.2.119). Thus, within the space of a single scene, some seventy lines of dialogue, female fidelity and virtue has been brought to the fore twice.

These themes of loyalty and virtue work to supplement the larger plot of treason and the supplantation of Prospero's Dukedom. Prospero's tale suggests that brotherly loyalty was an assumed privilege as he placed

all his “trust...which had indeed no limit, / A confidence sans bound” in Antonio (1.2. 96-97). The fracture of kinly allegiance, the background of Prospero’s motivation for inciting the tempest, is paralleled by the two other conspiracies occurring simultaneously on the island—Antonio and Sebastian’s plot to kill Alonso, and the insurrection Caliban raises with Trinculo and Stephano. Yet, Caliban’s plot distinguishes itself if we view the conspiracy under the lens of filial loyalty, mirroring Antonio’s original plot against Prospero. Caliban, considered first and foremost as Prospero’s slave, is also regarded by William J. Martz as a son-like figure. Martz contends that “Caliban, ... as Prospero’s ‘son’ is the familial comedy link to everything that Prospero ... does (106). Shakespeare establishes this filial connection between “monster” and eventual master early in the play when Caliban relives their initial interactions:

When thou cam’st first,
Thou strok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in’t, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night; and then I loved thee. (1.2.335-39)

Prospero affirms a kind of parental nurturing over Caliban in this scene reciprocating, “I have used thee, / ... with human care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell” (1.2.348-49). Near the end of the play, he affirms his connection to Caliban, stating, “This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine” (5.1.278-79). Given the paternal-like bonds once held between Prospero and Caliban, the treasonous plot to kill him, to “possess his books,” and to take over the island parallels Antonio’s historical plot of supplanting not only a king, but a family member. In this way, Shakespeare again scripts fractures in the loyalty between family members.

Yet Caliban is not the only “family member” to cause a bit of insurrection toward Prospero. One need only look to Miranda to see how Shakespeare’s work uses her as a disloyal subject. Miranda, Prospero’s

only “issued” heir (1.2.58-59) challenges filial allegiance in her first adult meeting with another man on the island. When meeting Ferdinand for the first time, it is clear that she is instantly smitten, calling him “a thing divine” (1.2.421) and Prospero admits the Duke of Milan and his daughter have “At the first sight / ... exchanged eyes” (1.2.445). Miranda, in love for a mere matter of minutes if not seconds with the man she first believes to be a spirit or apparition, comes to Ferdinand’s defense against her father:

Why speaks my father so ungently? This
Is the third man that e’er I saw, the first
That e’er I sighed for. Pity move my father
To be inclined my way. (1.2.448-51)

Miranda emphasizes the relationship of father twice in these four lines of pentameter and punctuates, for the audience (for Prospero certainly needs no reminding,) that Ferdinand is the only other man she’s ever had contact with besides Caliban and her father. This proclamation of Miranda’s, that her father is being too harsh with her new love, demonstrates Miranda’s instantaneous deference from Prospero to Ferdinand. True, she is falling into the plot which Prospero helped devise, to fall in love with Ferdinand, but no spells or charms were worked over Miranda that she might challenge her father’s wisdom and authority so emphatically in favor of a newcomer. When Prospero believes the prize will be too easily won, he makes a mock gesture of attacking Ferdinand, calling him a “usurper,” accusing him of being a spy put on the island “to win it / From me the lord on’t” (1.2.458-59). Ferdinand barely defends himself when Miranda, once more, rushes to his aid: “There’s nothing ill can dwell in such a temple. / If the ill spirit have so fair a house. / Good things will strive to dwell with’t” (1.2.461-63). To this, Prospero retorts, “Speak not you for him; he’s a traitor” (1.2.464). Undeterred, Miranda continues to come to Ferdinand’s defense three more times before Prospero finally declares:

Silence! One word more
Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee. What,
An advocate for an imposter? Hush!
Thou think'st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban, Foolish wench!" (1.2.479-83)

Despite his commands and threat of withdrawing fatherly affection, Miranda continues to speak in favor of Ferdinand: "I have no ambition / To see a goodlier man" (1.2.486-87). While the audience may initially read this as Prospero's art or at least his manipulation working on a love struck teen, it certainly frustrates notions of familial as well as regal loyalty. The reiteration which places emphasis on Ferdinand being the first new face Miranda has ever seen since she was a toddler seems to be no accident but a Shakespearian rhetorical strategy which reminds the audience of the permeable boundaries of not just allegiance, but filial and princely allegiance. Miranda, Prospero's only born child, is willing to cast aside her father's love in favor of a man she's met mere moments ago. These familial infidelities share in common the infidelity of queens in that they are enacted on not just brothers, fathers, and husbands, but against kings. In this way, the treachery is created against the man himself and against the crown.

The play, with Prospero at its center, concerned with reclaiming his former sovereignty and positioning Miranda as a future queen, continuously disrupts this intended goal with its attention to themes of allegiance exemplified above (as well as the parallel plot of Antonio and Sebastian's to kill Alonso and claim the throne of Milan). Critics have often pointed to this disruption particularly in the masque scene, as Prospero is a character often diverted from his course, interrupted by his own thoughts, and quelling of the rebellions in others. Bergeron states that the "royal families in the play owe part of their inspiration ... to the text of the Jacobean royal family in which the dramatist could see for himself the

interrelationship between the life of that family and the political issues of the kingdom” (178). Bergeron goes on to say James demonstrated serious inattention to the political issues of his realm, deferring matters of state to Robert Cecil, indulging in hunting and personal pursuits (198), which mimic Prospero’s devotion to his art—the vehicle for princely usurpation.

If the reference isn’t made directly with James’ party-boy antics in mind, this fractured attention parallels the true nature of kings--their many responsibilities burdening their mind and forcing a pluralistic pattern of thought at all times, unable to be attentive to a single cause, action, or faction. Threats of plots and usurpation rose up from not only those closest to power, but religious and political factions as well. A Jacobean real-world plot to overthrow the king was acted out on 5 November 1605, just two years after James took office. In what was known as “The Gunpowder Plot,” Guy Fawkes and his band of conspirators, unhappy with the anti-Catholic views of James I’s regime, were found underneath Parliament with nearly a ton of dynamite. It was their intent to blow up the King, his progeny, and all of Parliament. This is the most famous case of treason acted out upon King James, and perhaps in all of British history. Today, the plot lives on in British historical memory as “Bonfire Night” (Prior 4). Declared by Parliament in 1606 as a day of thanksgiving, November 5th [sic] is an annual celebration of the foiling of Fawke’s plan to annihilate British royal tradition.

Shakespeare, familiar with this plot on King James, seems to give historical resonance to the event through Ariel’s celebration of his fiery antics during the tempest:

in every cabin,
I flamed amazement. Sometimes I’d divide,
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards, and bowspirit, would I flame distinctly;
Then meet and join. Joves’ lightning, the precursors

O'th' dreadful thunderclaps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not. The fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble. (1.2.198-206)

Ariel sounds as if he's retelling his experience at a Fourth of July event. One should think of Ariel as celebrating the success of Prospero's plan without incident, just as Britain continues to celebrate the foiling of Fawkes' plot without any casualties, for both spirit and government celebrate their victories with a fantastic light show. The plot to shipwreck Alonso, Antonio and their crew, is carried out successfully by Ariel with "not a hair perished" (1.2.218). The shipwreck plot, where no king, boatswain or crewmember was harmed, parallels the Gunpowder Plot in that no one died. While Glenn Wickham has suggested that in Caliban's plot, one may see a reference to the Gunpowder treason (Bergeron 185), there is textual evidence in Ariel's speech to suggest that the Gunpowder plot was being referenced. According to Bergeron, Lancelot Andrews preached in a sermon at Whitehall on 5 November 1606, the one year anniversary of the plot, that: "all...not a hair of any of their heads perished; not so much as 'the smell of fire' on any their garments" (185). This reference to garments parallels the travelers who abandoned the ship, jumping into the water, and are said to have "On their sustaining garments not a blemish, / But fresher than before" (1.2.219-20). The garments are analogous to the hopes and renewed spirits of the people and the body politic who survived the Gunpowder Plot and reclaimed the day with a "fresh" appreciation and thanksgiving. Ariel's boasting of his dazzling fireworks display reflects his celebration of the light show and the fact that the travelers are unharmed. Britain, too, today as well as in the very era of the plot, celebrates the light show as a symbol of the survival of their people and their political system.

In the same way that themes of religious tensions between

Catholicism and Protestant views are linked to James I's rule, we can extend the metaphor of Catholicism as being linked with magic during a Jacobean court. In "The Royal Touch," Stephen Brogan focuses on the uses of the King's use of Royal Touch. English Kings were often thought to be endowed with the touch of spiritual healing, often touching for scrofula (a type of tuberculosis). James' resistance to this type of healing corresponded to the Protestant ideas that kings were not able to act out "miracles" and such archaic beliefs of "magic" belonged to the Catholic Church. James declared, "the age of miracles is past, and God alone can work them" (46). Healing by touch, James held, constituted "an imitation of Christ" and "was a superstitious conceite [sic]" (48). For James and the Protestant church, the age of miracles, performed by "Old Testament prophets, Christ and his disciples...[ended] soon after the Apostolic Age" around 600 A.D. (48). Just as James believed that these healings were mere superstitions, he maintained that the spoken word of the liturgy had "no operative value" (48). Language and the recitation of lines of prayer equated to little more than a spell or incantation, paralleling a magical utterance. These concerns echo those raised by Puritans during Elizabeth I's reign. Brogan maintains that James I's eventual touching for scrofula was adopted for its implicit political value over any faith in its efficacy and that he found a way to Protestanize the ceremony.

Given James' stance on superstitious behavior and magical acts performed by the Catholic Church, a Jacobean audience would have found a resonance of truth in the comedic parallels of a banished king of Naples dabbling in the liberal arts. Naples would have closely been linked to papal authority and Catholic religious beliefs—their kings, aligned to Gods, seen as little more than sorcerers themselves. In the same way in which *The Tempest* brings to the fore fractured allegiances which would have been real-world concerns for James I, it, too, touches on the divisive forces of religion through the depictions of sorcery. As

in Prospero's happy ending of princely restoration, where the rightful king regains his throne, Prospero's symbolic burying of his staff (a pre-Christian symbol of Moses' staff which was used to part the Red Sea) and his drowning of his book (the symbol of the Great Bible) is a denouncement of his magic (Catholicism) and a reconciliation with true religion (Puritanical ideology), for the hero in a Jacobean audience cannot remain committed to a Catholic king/god. Prospero as much as affirms this in the epilogue: "Now my charms are all o'erthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own," (1-2). In the years following Henry VIII's reign, the British translated the English Bible three times, believing their first and second versions contained faulty transmissions based on Latin ideology and not textual accuracy. The King James Version of the bible, often referenced as the "Authorized Version," was published due to James' beliefs that the former versions of Latin influence needed to be rectified. Thus, in anticipation of returning to his Dukedom, Prospero sets his religious wrongs aright. While Shakespeare chose to depict Naples and Milan as the sites of these monarchs in *The Tempest*, and Prospero's return to Naples may seem problematic, this is a work of Romance. As one, it treats problems with possibilities. Shakespeare, while highlighting the superstitious magic of the Catholic Church, may also be providing hope for its reformation.

The magical elements of *The Tempest* as a parody of religious Catholic tradition, reinforce the notion that the play should be considered as a comedy as well as a romance. Furthermore, the loyalty of religious affiliations suggests a symmetry with the themes of loyalty visited earlier in this essay, especially with regard to Caliban—the "savage." We have already established that Caliban abandons any semblance of familial loyalty toward Prospero when he unites with Stephano and Trinculo. His familial loyalty ended with his attempted rape of Miranda and "excommunication" from the family into "this hard rock" (1.2.346).

Considering Jacobean anti-Catholic beliefs, Caliban's pagan beliefs, and his treatment as a family member, Caliban can be read as a representation of Mary, the once banished, disinherited daughter of Henry VIII who feverently stuck by her Catholic traditions, torturing many of her subjects as to earn her the title "Bloody Mary." But as familial loyalty in this instance is synonymous with princely loyalty, and by extension, godly loyalty, Caliban abandons not only his "father" but his "God." Likewise, Mary's absolute faith would have removed her from the divine right of her father. Like Miranda's instantaneous devotion to Ferdinand, Caliban, too, abandons any allegiance to Prospero at the first sight of meeting Stephano. While Miranda is falling in love, and Caliban is lured, at first, by alcohol, both characters are "intoxicated" with the idea of a new master. This reference to loyalty is made much more overt in Caliban's case as the treasonous plot unfolds; however, initially, Caliban only wants to follow Stephano for his liquor; therefore, both Miranda and Caliban are operating on altered states of consciousness with the assumption of something better to come. In Miranda's case, the disloyalty is much more subtle. A playgoer might not pick up on this disloyalty especially under the guise of Prospero's manipulation, but none-the-less, Miranda is easily divided between her father's allegiance to that of a new love. If Caliban is as lowly and dim-witted a character as Miranda and Prospero make him out to be, isn't he much more vulnerable and therefore less responsible for a bit of insurrection than the wondrous Miranda? Her loyalty is subtly tested, and she, too, initially fails to submit to Prospero.

If we examine Caliban's religious evolution, we find that his trajectory moves from the worship of Setebos, a pagan god, to that of Prospero, a "Catholic" god, to that of Stephano, a "drunk" or "fool" god. When Caliban calls Stephano a god and swears to be loyal, Stephano extends the bottle and tells Caliban to "kiss the book" (2.2.21). This act of "kissing the book," was an oath of allegiance as the worshiper would normally

kiss the Bible in a show of fidelity to a Christian god. The book in this instance is transplanted for a bottle of liquor, reflecting Caliban's worship of the bottle or false god. A Jacobean audience would understand Mary as worshipping a false god. Shakespeare seems to be articulating, through the character of Caliban, that the fickleness of allegiance extends not only to kings, but to gods as well. Given the licentiousness and lascivious nature of the Elizabethan era (and that of Henry VIII) as well as James I's propensity to party, Shakespeare seems to be tracking, through Caliban, the evolution of religious affinities. If read as a comedy, kissing the bottle may be a prediction of the new Jacobean era of affluence and indulgence.

Additionally, Caliban's worship of Stephano causes an added faction in the pre-existing friendship between Stephano and Trinculo. Stephano, now endowed with the admiration of a loyal subject, abandons his long-time comrade, Trinculo, in favor of the "mooncalf's" adoration. Stephano is not unlike Miranda and Caliban who abandon their long-time master/father for a newcomer. As Trinculo takes issue with Caliban, hurling insults at him, Stephano threatens his "friend" with hanging, knocking out his teeth, and turning him into a "stock fish" (3.2.67). Only partly to blame for this stage-made misunderstanding, Trinculo suffers the rejection of his "friend" who has found new favor with Caliban. The whisperings of Ariel, which Stephano and Caliban take to be the voice of Trinculo, is a reciprocal interference, a recycled element of Greek comedic tradition which revels in the follies of miscommunication. The humor, exacted on Trinculo, would not be lost on the audience. The themes of fractured loyalty and the worship of a "fool god" would prove comedic to an audience now inundated by plots, misplaced trust, and the constant exchange of allegiances. The Jacobean royal audience would have been familiar with plots, treason, the break with the Catholic Church, the reformation of Catholicism under the throne of "Bloody Mary," and the reversal of traditional doctrine in favor of Elizabeth's Protestant

restoration. The tested religious, political, and filial affinities within the play would have resonated with Shakespeare's first audience.

In examining the historical events surrounding James' reign, it is easy to identify the parallel themes of loyalty throughout *The Tempest*. But, why does the theme of loyalty run so deeply through this play? Like a river which splits, channels its flow in another direction and then rejoins its main source, Shakespeare's use of allegiance in the minor plot points of the play seem all to empty into the ocean of allegiance.

By examining the historical underpinnings of allegiance, religion, and magic, it becomes evident that *The Tempest*, through comedic expression, delves into themes which surrounded and threatened the king's throne. Our earliest recordings of the play's enactment for James' court, coupled with contemporary themes which a then king would have found both important to and reflective of his reign, suggest that Shakespeare's *Tempest* was written or altered pre-dominantly for a Jacobean-sensibility. Those who read the colonial underpinnings in the work seem to make far more of the William Strachey accounts than the text suggests. According to David Scott Kastan, "*The Tempest* has almost inescapably become [Shakespeare's] play of Europe's engagement with the New World" (91) but that the play is set in the Old World and rather than laying any real claims to the island, Prospero and by comparison, the other royals, only wish to get back to the old country and govern it. They do not speak of future conquests—only usurping themselves for power over the dominions which already belong to their own brothers. Kastan tells us that

we should look more closely at the Old World than the New, at the wedding of Elizabeth and Frederick rather than of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, at James's own writings rather than the writings from Jamestown. ... *The Tempest* effectively stages and manages these anxieties about European politics and England's role within them (101).

Indeed, there are many parallels between the kings of England, Milan and Naples. Alonso mourns the loss of a son, fearing Ferdinand drowned, just as James' had recently lost Prince Henry. With the impending wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Frederick, King James, just like Prospero and Alonso is about to lose a daughter to a distant land; however, this marriage, like the one at Tunis and between Miranda and Ferdinand, will prove to enrich the royal lineage with future kings. We also cannot help but compare the likeness of the groom's names, Frederick and Ferdinand, as well as the etymology of the bride's names, Miranda's meaning "wondrous, worthy of admiration" and Elizabeth meaning "God's promise," to see that Shakespeare's 1613 version would have resonated with the impending royal couple.

Royal weddings aside, the ending of the play also resonates with Jacobean sensibilities. If we consider the usurpation of the Stuart royal legacy by Henry VII, a bit of Jacobean biography reveals itself in the line Alonso utters regarding Prospero's banishment from Milan, "Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue / Should become kings of Naples?" (5.1.208-10). This would certainly have brought a smile to James' face as he realized the supplantation of his greatgrandfather may have been divinely ordained to rendered him King of England, Ireland, and Scotland.

So, when he wrote it, was Shakespeare's *The Tempest* a cautionary tale to King James, or was it a comedy of treasonous errors to allay the fears of the seated king, affirming divine right and Godly justice and reveling in the celebration and princely alliances formed with Elizabeth's marriage? Given royal patronage, we can surmise the latter. Given what we know of Shakespeare's brilliance with language and his affinity for historical documentation, we have a duty to consider the former.

NOTES

¹ Every effort has been made to retrace my steps and find this reference, but unfortunately, to no avail at the present time.

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“LOW SPIRITS AND MELANCHOLY FOREBODINGS”:

CONTACTING SILENCE IN *WALDEN*

BY ANDREW DAVID STUART

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) has elicited a wide range of academic criticism. Lawrence Buell considers Thoreau the “patron saint of American environmental writing” (115), and similarly Philip Cafaro argues that “Thoreau provides a detailed discussion of what recognizing nature’s intrinsic value demands from us and practical suggestions for how we can live up to those demands” (17). Conversely, Ira Brooker accuses Thoreau of “an arrogance and myopia that results in [his] unwitting complicity” in the “destruction” (138) of American wilderness spaces through the “superiority and self-centeredness [of] intellectual imperialism” (139). What Buell and Cafaro see as restorative moments in communion with Nature (always with the honorific capital letter) Brooker sees as self-serving inculcation of consumerist values. One of Brooker’s attacks revolves around the way in which Nature-worshipping Thoreau should be “humbled in the presence of such a massive force as Nature” (139). Instead, “he and his surroundings form a strange kind of peer group” such that “locating himself in excellent surroundings somehow

conveys excellence to Thoreau himself, a position that seems fallacious at best” (139). Buell and Cafaro essentialize nature (its restorative properties, its inherent purity, its life-lessons), while Brooker assumes an interesting (though tenuous, at best) reading of Thoreau himself, through *Walden*, but not a convincing reading of *Walden* itself.

What all three critics do share, however, is the assumption that *Walden* is a how-to guide on living, that it contains central tenets for an ecologically aware movement that begins with the individual, either successfully for Buell and Cafaro, or unsuccessfully for Brooker. Although *Walden* in many ways bills itself as this type of text (i.e. the repeated mantra “Simplify! Simplify!” or the Edenic qualities of the pond itself beckoning people to its shores for a reconnection with Nature) reading the text ecocritically does not need to focus on Thoreau’s reverence toward Nature or his advocacy of a solitary, improbable lifestyle. Operating within and around the field of literary ecocriticism there are as many different approaches to texts as there are approaches to *Walden*, and among these are theories that offer a middle way out of revering or dissenting against the text as edict.

Although he does not deal directly with *Walden*, Robert Kern takes as a central issue of ecocriticism Jonathan Bate’s statement in *The Song of the Earth* that “[t]he impossible task of the eco-poet is to speak the silence of the place” (qtd. in Kern 429). For Kern, the task at hand is “almost painfully paradoxical” because of the “sheer lack of resemblance, between human language and the natural world” (429). He deems it impossible to “bring over to us the largely alien and nonlinguistic reality of nature ... in terms that somehow remain faithful (so to speak) to nature’s own ‘language,’ its silence” (429). Kern’s goal is a shift from an exclusively anthropocentric view to one that attempts to include the impossibility of complete ecocentrism (443), and his argument hinges on the assumption that human access to the physical world through language is inherently

flawed. Though the poems he examines are crafted works, Kern takes as obvious that each event, place, or description has (or had) its correlate in the physical world. And as a result, this correlate can be, to some degree, tested—a visit to Tintern Abbey can give a reader a way to weigh the poem against the (exclusively physical) reality of the place. The accuracy of a poem, then, restores a reader's sense of connection to place.

The privileging of the physical world centers on the ecopoet's task in presenting a perfect correlate of the physical in a poem. This assumption, then, strips the world, the environment, ecology, of any existence beyond the physical. I argue that *Walden* does not attempt to take up the banner of Bate and Kern's impossible (and somewhat misguided) task of representing the physical world, and only the physical world, through language. *Walden* is not bogged down by the impossible task of making every detail of the text correlate with the physical world and instead celebrates its own textuality. This reading is also not a reading of *Walden* as ecocritical manifesto—an assumption that Buell, Cafaro, and Brooker all have in common. Instead, this essay proposes applications of ecocritical theory that range beyond the above-mentioned critics' assumptions about nature, an application which could extend itself to any other text. In order to explore a text's interaction between language and "reality" I will deploy Timothy Morton's analysis of object-oriented rhetoric, his categories of ambient poetics, and Graham Harman's arguments for an object-oriented philosophy, leveling subject-object interactions into flat object-object encounters. Both theorists (whose philosophical backgrounds stem from radical readings of phenomenology) argue for an understanding of objects as shadowy and withdrawn, by which I mean that humans' contact with these aspects (shadowy and withdrawn) manifests in a sense of strangeness.

Speaking more directly to Kern, I argue that *Walden* gives the reader an experience of reading and not an experience of Walden Pond directly.

This strangeness that readers encounter in the text is akin to the strangeness of simply experiencing the supposed “silence of the place.” In other words, I agree with Kern that since our experiences of physical reality (before or in spite of language) are never holistic, fully encompassing, or “objective,” language (and human perception) can never completely domesticate the objects it attempts to convey. But since language itself will be considered one of those objects that can never be completely domesticated and experienced, the shadowy and strange encounter between reader and text is no different, in essence, from the encounters at Walden Pond that Thoreau describes. Both Harman and Morton agree that confronting the strange, encountering objects in their objectness, are the primary modes of beginning to experience what the ecocritical field terms ecocentrism. This approach to the text will examine moments that can easily be seen as anthropocentric as well as those that appear much more ecocentric, specifically in the chapters “Sounds,” “Solitude,” and “Spring.”

I begin with “Sounds” because it embodies the dominant mood of subject-object interactions, melancholy. Along with its typical connotations—sadness, anger, brooding, introspection—“Sounds” embeds within itself a melancholy operation that Morton argues “is precisely a mode of intimacy with strange objects that can’t be digested by the subject” (*Here Comes Everything* 175). From an object-oriented perspective, one that opposes the Heideggerian necessity of *Dasein* to make meaning of the world, subjectivity is just one mode of being and “melancholia” is “an object-like coexistence [experienced within the subject] with other objects and the otherness of objects” (176). As Thoreau listens to the sounds of the birds through the long hours of the night he touches this “otherness of objects” and encounters his own existence as object, one among many. Thoreau seems to have intuited what Morton calls the “irreducible dark side” of objects, that “we can never see the whole of [an object], and nothing else can either” (165).

Dodging Kern and Bate's insistence on a correlative representation of the physical reality of the birds or their calls, Thoreau emphasizes the poetry of the sound and the poetry of his own text. Though Thoreau employs onomatopoeia in the last third of the chapter, it is dedicated to nighttime sounds that are each conveyed in poetic language reaching beyond merely physical or phenomenological description. Morton celebrates the literary and the poetic, asserting that an object-oriented rhetoric "amplifies imagination rather than trying to upstage it, and revels in dislocation, not location" (169). Thoreau's treatment of the screech owl call does just that: "a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves" (*Walden* 87). In place of an "objective," factual description of screech owl calls, Thoreau sings the song of suicidal lovers, compelling the reader to ponder "the pangs and the delights" that constitute the melancholy of both lovers' plight and the reader's own empathy with an entirely fictional circumstance. As the reader is confronted with this "graveyard ditty" of text, not direct representation of sound, he or she comes to know this form of melancholy coexistence. The comfortable subject position is jostled out of safe locality by the instantaneous movement between "supernal love" and the "infernal groves," simultaneously linked on the one hand by the assonance and consonance between "supernal" and "infernal" and flung about on the other by the move from the unimaginable heavens to the depths of the realm of the dead.

These melancholic songs point to the shadowy side of objects, where the "dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs that would fain be sung" (*Walden* 87) make their presence known. One might argue, however, that Thoreau's anthropomorphism of the owls does not encourage coexistence; it hampers coexistence, throws the reader's reflection back into the human world, makes familiar the unfamiliar. A critic like Kern

would argue that anthropomorphizing owls and employing assonance, consonance, and complex sentence structures moves away from physical reality. However, tracing through Thoreau's paragraph on screech owls is an increasingly ambiguous use of the pronouns "their" and "they." "They are spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls" (87-88) could just as easily be indicative of the sounds themselves, for as long as Thoreau is making profuse and extended metaphors, why not embody the sound itself as a walking spirit? Or the phrase could as easily be attributed to the owls, as if the corporeal being known as the owl lived a dual life as an ethereal spirit. This kind of reading, one embracing both ambiguity and metaphor, is antithetical to one that Kern would deem ecocentric. Morton, however, is *less* cautious about embracing metaphor, in part because he is *more* cautious about writing off the world and creatures as merely physical. Morton has a term for creatures, objects, the world and its myriad facets that accounts for the ambiguity of our encounters with those things: "*Strange stranger* names an uncanny, radically unpredictable quality of life-forms" and the concept of withdrawn objects "extends [this term] to nonliving entities" (165). So when Thoreau pensively ruminates that "[t]hey give me a new sense of the variety and capacity of that nature which is our common dwelling" (88), and it is unclear whether or not "they" refers to screech owls, the call of the owls, or the metaphoric wandering souls, the uncanny quality of the strange stranger is eminently present and applies equally to each and all. Instead of domestication, drawing the owl and its call into the human world, metaphor and ambiguity disperse comfortable subject positions, acting in conjunction with the melancholia of a subject seeing itself as one object among many, to produce the kind of awareness of coexistence that is not hampered by the dualism of anthropocentric/ecocentric.

This kind of coexistence is foregrounded in "Solitude" by both the content of the chapter and in the very form—the writing and the

physicality of the text itself. Solitude, for Thoreau, is not simply a state of lone-ness or alone-ness. Instead, the chapter muddles the boundaries/borders between reader and text, or subject and object, or ecowriter and place (to channel Kern), by employing Timothy Morton's notion of "the medial," one of his "six main elements" of "ambient poetics" (*Ecology without Nature* 34).¹ Though other aspects of Morton's ambient poetics are present throughout the chapter, I will focus on the medial, or "*Contact as Content*" (36) within "Solitude" in order to show that the climax of the chapter, the enigmatic tenth paragraph that many read as anthropocentric separation from the world and Thoreau's Nature, stands as a declaration of both coexistence and of speaking (to) the silence of environment. The chapter begins: "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself" (90); and it ends with an image of Hebe: "The only thoroughly sound-conditioned, healthy, and robust young lady that ever walked the globe, and wherever she came it was spring" (97). The individual, human-bodied act of strolling through the woods, his entire physical body partaking of the environment, is mirrored by Hebe's traversing the globe, extending the range of Thoreau's steps and associating them with a perpetual spring—his favorite season for the renewal of the earth. The strength that Thoreau imparts to Hebe is prefigured by his "imbib[ing] delight through every pore," and the shedding of boundaries and infinite openness that allows for communion with his surroundings makes him "a part of [Nature]."

Morton's notion of "contact as content" is directed toward the medium of the text as the content of the message (37), and Thoreau's walking, which is prefaced by this infinite-open contact, sincerely evokes the telling of his travel as the content of his message. Thoreau opts for the more immediate sounding "As I walk" (90) indicator of his experience, though Morton identifies "As I write" (and similar variants) as statements

in which “Literally ... the dimension is the page we are reading” (38). Thoreau’s notion of what it means to experience “the whole body as one sense” is embodied in the very writing he presents his reader, not in trying to evoke a presence of physical reality outside the text. In order for us to be touched by Hebe’s walking, to be in perpetual spring, we must be made aware of the dimension of the page, the medium of contact—as if the whole of our perceptions were held against the text itself such that “[o]ur awareness of this dimension [of the page] is available precisely because its transparency has been impeded by the addition of the exuberant, exorbitant ecomimesis to the argument” (*Ecology without Nature* 38). The contact between medium and reader is figured as the contact the narrator makes with environment. When in the woods “the elements are unusually congenial” and the sound as the “bullfrogs trump” accompanies a “[s]ympathy with the flutter alder and poplar leaves” (Thoreau 90). These moments imply company, connection, and a sense of camaraderie—contact with the environment cannot be directly handed to the reader through writing, so Thoreau highlights the very nature of writing and the medium in which the message travels. Readers must recognize through the writing on solitude that there is no moment (in writing or otherwise) of no-contact, no true solitude cut off from objects, in the same way that the woods greet Thoreau as he walks, alone but never alone.

The text itself delivers this to the reader—the perpetual contact of medium is encoded in the very form of the text and the act of reading. The book that I read from (my own ecomimetic move, “As I read”), with my cell phone propped across the pages to hold them open, is a unique text. The *Walden* present in this Norton Critical Edition has its very own medial elements that appear only in it, not in the original manuscript or a Barnes and Noble edition. The pagination in any of these unique texts makes us aware of moments in which we must change and turn pages,

and the twelve footnotes for “Solitude” make tangible the medial elements of the text: “When the medium of communication becomes impeded or thickened, we become aware of it, just as snow makes us painfully aware of walking” (Morton 37). Though certainly scanning from one line to the next, turning pages, being made aware of outside sources by Thoreau’s quotes, and perhaps to some degree glancing at footnotes, seem like second nature acts of reading, to differing degrees they thicken the act of reading—it is not a transparent, solitary act; reading the text itself becomes the content of the message in each of these brief interruptions. On this view, even reading alone in a shack by the shore of Walden Pond is not a solitary act.

Solitude as outlined in the chapter, then, expands upon dictionary definitions, pushing readers toward the celebrated “*Extra vagance!*” (218) from *Walden’s* conclusion. Solitude may be considered a “[l]oneliness (of places); remoteness from habitations; absence of life or stir” (solitude def. 2). This particular intersection of space and solitude is complicated when Thoreau asserts that “[t]he thick wood is not just at our door, nor the pond, but somewhat is always clearing, familiar and worn by us, appropriated and fenced in some way, and reclaimed from Nature” (91). Our notions of presence and space are incorrectly “appropriated and fenced”: the spaces which feel safe and civilized are contrasted with the relative wilderness of Walden Pond where fishermen avoid the night because “men are generally still a little afraid of the dark, though witches are all hung, and Christianity and candles have been introduced” (91). The jesting is designed to cut through the cultural, technological, and spatial defenses that he envisions his readers have set up.

This definition only partly captures what Thoreau might be hinting at in the chapter, but Morton’s characterization of ambient poetics in general helps to refine this intersection between solitude and space. The term “ambience” itself “suggests something material and physical, though

somewhat intangible, as if space itself had a material aspect” (Morton 33). Solitude defined in terms of space is necessarily a meeting of things—there is no solitude. The physicality of space, the ambience perceived in our “appropriated and fenced” areas, necessarily confronts us as an other, making us very aware, as aware as the fearful visitors to Walden Pond at night, of the presence of something that cannot be turned into the nothing of negation. Paradoxically, the immediacy of the somethingness of space and writing is “clearing, familiar and worn by us,” such that encountering the sheer otherness of space and solitude is an affirmation of no-separation from the other, the unfamiliar, the nothing.

Lawrence Buell’s chapter “The Aesthetics of Relinquishment” argues that ecocentric texts “must be a literature that abandons, or at least questions, what would seem to be literature’s basic foci: character, persona, narrative consciousness” (145). This kind of abandonment in convention can also be mirrored in the text by a form of “self-relinquishment” that stems from abandoning material goods and wants: “In avowing the relinquishment of goods, the literature of voluntary simplicity promises to restore the attenuated bond with nature. ... Thoreau experiences the spring. ... The experiencer is refreshed and purified” (156). Coinciding with Buell’s relinquishment is a second sense of solitude with ecocritical currency, presenting a restorative solitude as a “lonely, unfrequented, or uninhabited place” (solitude def. 3). Buell offers a Romantic transcendence of the divide between human and nature, reaching outside both the human, cultured world and the individual perspective. Reaching this place would, then, truly be lonely.

But Thoreau makes no such claims to this Romantic sense of transcendence; instead, he “experience[s] sometimes that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object” (91). I will take the liberty here of extending this sense of the “natural object” to simply the “object,” such that subject-

object encounters generate an experience that does not transcend the divide between human and nature, but delves into it, becoming more intimate with the contact between the two. Instead of textual medial contact, Thoreau highlights the medial contact between himself and objects. Morton asserts that “[m]edial statements pertain to perception” (37), and Thoreau advocates throughout the chapter an attendance to perception and imbibing stimulus. Readers familiar with Morton’s sense of the medial become more aware, attuned to the objects in front of us: the text, the pages, the book in our hands or on our desks. I openly admit to my own ecomimesis here as mode of example—it is nearly impossible for a text *not* to make us aware of itself as soon as we know what to look for, both in the text and in our own perceptions and experience of the text.

Although I have been resisting Buell’s Romantic transcendence, a strong case can be made for it in regards to the tenth paragraph of the chapter. Thoreau plainly asserts that “[w]ith thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense” (94). From Buell’s perspective this could be seen as a privileging of thought and the human mind as transcendent object, an attempt to escape the medial in what Morton terms (in typical deconstructive parlance) as the “exuberant, exorbitant” trajectory of writing trying to overcome writing. This passage, however, only serves to highlight and dote on the very gravitational pull of writing always falling back on itself. Though “we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences,” this requires a “conscious effort of the mind” (94), implying at once both a transcendence (an aloof relinquishment) and a continuous involvement with phenomena and Nature. Instead of providing an escape from “character, persona, and narrative consciousness,” the effort of mind that might lead to transcendence is enacting the medial element—the contact (and effort) of the mind is the content of the message, and hence we are not “aloof” in the sense of being apart from.

We do not need to abandon narrative consciousness in *Walden* to be made aware of what Buell calls a “radical relinquishment [of] individual autonomy itself, to forgo the illusion of mental and even bodily apartness from one’s environment” (144). Thoreau makes sure of that when he asserts that “[w]e are not wholly involved in Nature” (94), which Buell would condemn as self-centered anthropocentrism incarnate. Certainly not, because in order for there to be a medial there must be separation. I will borrow, briefly, a rather poetic phrase from particle physicist Frank Wilczek, not to argue for some scientific reading of Thoreau, but because the phrase is truly indicative of the medial element I am aiming at here: “*you have a distinction without a difference*” (58). There would be no communication to be impeded if text and reader were one entity; no medial would be possible if we were truly “wholly involved” in Nature, or objects, or transcendence. Though Thoreau may not be ready to go this far, I would argue that even Nature is not wholly involved in Nature—there must always be a distinction without a difference for interactions to take place between and among objects and subjects. Ecology and environmental studies necessarily resist the monism of all-one and the dualism of all-separate (Morton 48); there must be a middle way between the two where the medial contact happens. That space is “Solitude,” reading and experiencing the fluctuations between in-here and out-there, reader and text.

What may appear as paradox here is continued throughout the passage: Thoreau “may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it” (*Walden* 94), a statement I take as both literal and figurative, though the literal element seems more emphatic. The contact between self and driftwood, the moment of medial intersection, is the entire content of the message. In such a moment, there is no Henry-David-Thoreau-looking-at and driftwood-being-seen: there is Henry-David-Thoreau-driftwood. This intersection can be understood

through Morton's analysis of the timbral, where the "timbral and the medial are two ways of describing the same thing" (40)—perhaps its own distinction without difference: Thoreau's encounter with driftwood-being or Indra-being "keeps collapsing either into subjectivity or into objectivity. It is very hard, perhaps impossible, to keep nature just where it appears—somewhere in between" (Morton 41). The medial point of contact or the timbral membrane "between" subject and object is highlighted as "know[ing] myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections" (Thoreau 94). The contact of "knowing" resists individualized subject, transcending humanity and Nature, and becomes more reminiscent of the "somewhere in between" that may be impossible to completely convey—getting above it only reinforces the distance within human/nature binaries, but diving into that contact consistently bumps us into our own "illusion of mental and bodily apartness." "Solitude" must tread the line between these positions, falling off the track on the one side as "not wholly involved" and the other side as Thoreau-as-driftwood.

Further undercutting the Romantic transcendence of the passage is Thoreau's final statement regarding this "doubleness [which] may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes" (94). Though Thoreau is very emphatic about how "wholesome [it is] to be alone the greater part of the time" (94) his goal is certainly not to be a poor neighbor or friend to anyone. Ecological thinking and attendance to the environment should extend to human-human interactions as much as they should human-nature (or Nature, if you like) interactions. This doubleness, then, is not a transcendent moment where the fallenness of humanity is ameliorated or overcome—it is simply the condition of being, equally applicable to object-object relationships. Where there is the medial there is necessarily two, possibly conflicting, sets of interests: the contact, the interaction, "is no more I than it is you" (94). That point of contact, the medial or

timbral in Morton's terms, is disinterested and ambiguous, but thickened and made tangible, such that each party bumps into it and is not solitary; contact is ubiquitous and the medial pervasive.

To say that the medial is ubiquitous is to say that coexistence is ubiquitous. Awareness of this ubiquity, leading to responsible interactions that sustain humans' tenuous position in the equation, is one of the most compelling facets of an object-oriented philosophy. If *Walden* has one thing to teach, one life-lesson abstracted from many of the impracticalities of attempting to replicate Thoreau's pleasurable, privileged journey into the not-so-wild spectator-friendly countryside of Concord, it can be summed up by two authors operating outside nineteenth-century American studies. The first half can be supplied by a comment Morton makes regarding a correlate to the medial, the "remark": "I am suggesting here that subjectivity and objectivity are just a hair's breadth (if that) away from each other" (*Ecology without Nature* 49). As outlined above, encountering the medial amounts to bumping into this less-than-hair's-breadth that sustains "subjectivity" on the one side and "objectivity" on the other. To extend the metaphor of dimensions, I draw on Graham Harman's critique and expansion of Heidegger's account of tool and broken-tool: "To become aware of these tool-beings is not to rise above them, but to make oneself ever more vulnerable to them, increasing the surface area of our being that can come into contact with them" (*Tool-Being* 226). This access to objects through increased surface area—including but not limited to rational, imaginative, and technological access—gives us a way to "actually burrow beneath [objects]" (226). This is not to say that our access, or any other object's access, can completely exhaust (know, understand, fulfill) another object: "It [an object's tool-being] is the enactment of a reality that other objects may hope to test or measure, but which they can never aspire to *replace*, however intimately they may stroke its contours" (224).

Walden, not necessarily more or less so than any other text or object or encounter, can give its experiencer a sense of the minute divide between subject and object. Particular to Thoreau's argument is his foregrounding of a mode which does increase vulnerability and surface area: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front out the essential facts of life ... to drive life into a corner ... if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it" (65). His entire thesis can be read through Harman's lens. Similarly, Thoreau could be channeling Heidegger or Harman in a proto-phenomenological rumination on the metaphysics of Nature and natural laws: they are like a mountain which "has an infinite number of profiles, though absolutely but one form. Even when cleft or bored through it is not comprehended in its entirety" (195-96). Part of the reason for ecocriticism's avoidance of this particular aspect of phenomenology has been Heidegger's (and his greatest proponents') unwavering adherence to the notion of human *Dasein* as the paramount in ontological existence, a downfall that Harman convincingly liberates tool-analysis from.

Kern's "silence of a place" begins to illustrate the problem of human consciousness and access to the world, a sentiment that Harman, at least partially, agrees with: "No object ever unlocks the *entirety* of a second object, ever translates it completely literally into its own native tongue" (223). Although Kern and Harman converge in their rhetoric, they diverge significantly in methods for contacting and translating a second object. Among Kern's issues with language is an attack on metaphor and poetic description. In examining Richard Wilbur's sonnet "Praise in Summer" Kern finds "rather fanciful metaphors that finally strike the speaker as perverse redefinitions, and thus misrepresentations, of what has been seen" (435). The speaker goes on to embrace "the possibility of a more direct naming of things, a language that hews more closely to physical reality" (435), and Kern later makes a case for Ezra Pound's

notion that “avoidance of predication” (436) brings a reader closer to the physically real.

Conversely, in *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, Harman’s explication of José Ortega y Gasset and Max Black emphasizes the way in which “[a]rt is granted a sort of special power, allowing us to confront the impossible depth of objects. Or rather, art is only granted the power of *seeming* to be able to do this, since even Van Gogh cannot *really* put the internal executant being of shoes onto a piece of canvas” (105 emphasis in original). Although “we are trapped in a literal language from the start through our fixation on tangible properties” (121), Harman melds object-oriented philosophy and Ortega’s and Black’s theories of metaphor to address the issue of directly conveying physical reality with language. The physicality of the world does not trump language’s access to it, because we “can escape into living metaphor by bringing unified objects into play as shadowy wholes [and] the distinction between the dead determinations of literal speech and the living force of metaphor that points to a systematic underground is very real indeed” (121).

During the climactic reemergence of plant and animal life in “Spring” this divide between literal speech and living metaphor becomes especially apparent. Thoreau observes that as the frost thaws around Walden Pond “this sandy overflow is something such a foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body” (205). The metaphor here is compounded, first from “sandy overflow is foliaceous mass” and then in simile to “foliaceous mass as vitals of the animal body.” To begin with, this can be simplified to just the metaphor “sandy overflow is foliaceous mass.” In Harman’s terms this is a “new object [which is] created [...] a vaporous hybrid of both [objects in a metaphor]: one that cannot even be described in terms of definite tangible properties” (107). This definition of metaphor extends beyond a simple tally of possible descriptions of each object, comparing which qualities correlate from a rush of sandy water to a leafy mass. So a reading

of *Walden* which insists on explicating exactly how a sandy mush takes on either the shape or movement or color of an amorphous leafy blob only serves to abstract away from the experience of the metaphor, “sandy overflow is foliaceous mass.” Instead, our reading must celebrate that “[t]he mind of the reader resists this [literal, and confined to surface qualities] identity” (*Guerrilla Metaphysics* 106) and must dote on metaphor that “de-create[s] the external images that normally identify [each object], reshaping the plasma of their qualities into a hybrid structure” (109-10). The new object, born of the mingled plasma of sandy overflow and foliaceous mass, is instantaneously compounded by the comparison to the “vitals of the animal body,” placing the reader in the presence of a new object that combines the non-living world with both flora and fauna.

To reiterate the above warning about the *Walden*-manifesto, it is important to note that the text is encouraging reading and reflection (as any good metaphor would) and that one need not “return” to nature (or Nature) to experience coexistence. From Harman’s perspective, this metaphor is “compelling us to live executantly a new object born in our midst in the very moment that it is named [...] a new *feeling-thing*” (109). This technique is far superior to simply naming things, as Kern proposes; naming them, while perhaps a less ornamented representation of “reality,” can never fully live them. No matter how directly a red, ballpoint pen is named, its executant reality is its own—I can never occupy its personal reality, its own “I” (*Guerrilla Metaphysics* 104). But, as Thoreau insists, the feeling-thing created by the metaphor of the conscious, language wielding Nature can be lived: “*Internally*, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick *lobe*, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the *leaves* of fat” (*Walden* 206). Metaphorically, the inner life of a speaking earth is transported into our midst, and the word “lobe” gives metaphoric birth to a host of other words, “*labor*, *lapsus*, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; ... *globus*, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words” (206). The power of the passage does not just lie in

word play. Though each word—named alone as Kern would like—can be its own literal atom, its place in Thoreau’s extended earth metaphor cracks the egg of each object and scrambles the mixture together to be served as a unique executant reality that a reader must hold in his or her mind and experience, for no correlate exists otherwise. The act of reading is championed; literal and figurative mingle; coexistence takes place between reader and text.

The human as a “mass of thawing clay” (206) dominates Thoreau’s contemplation of renewal in “Spring” and offers an extended metaphor that points out the uncanny, object-like quality of human existence. The figurative quality of “the hand a spreading *palm* leaf with its lobes and veins” (206 emphasis added) twists about the metaphor of “palm of the hand is palm leaf.” The new feeling-thing that is created from the plasma of palm and palm leaf recalls the apparent reason for similarity in name (the shape of the hand, the shape of the leaf), and upsets the causality of the naming. The “lobes and veins” of each are mixed to the point that distinguishing between the two in the new metaphor-object is fruitless, imparting to the experiencer a moment through which to live radical coexistence. As one lives through the metaphor in which “[t]he nose is a manifest congealed drop or stalactite” (206) the extensions of the new felt-object broaden beyond similarity in shape to include congealed time, where the imperceptibly slow formation of the one object collides with the human experience of corporeal being. Harman grants that “some metaphors *do* fail—and the way they fail is by never pushing us toward the world of unified things, remaining frozen instead on the layer of inert qualities” (124). Although Thoreau is hampered by his reverence for Nature and the biosphere, his statement that “[t]here is nothing inorganic” (207) takes on the metaphoric quality of melting “frozen, inert qualities” and asks readers to experience an underground reality. The literal physical world, necessarily imbricated in coexistence, cannot be replaced or provided by language, but coexistence is no less present when a reader encounters a text than when Thoreau sees Spring.

NOTES

¹ Morton defines these as tools that offer “a materialist way of reading texts with a view to how they encode the literal space of their inscriptions ... the spaces between the words, the margins of the page, the physical and social environment of the reader” (3).

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**“I COULD NOT CONCEAL MY DISORDER”: ROXANA’S MIND-READING IN
THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE**
BY DORIN SMITH

When the eponymous character in Daniel Defoe’s *Roxana* (1724) unexpectedly meets her estranged daughter Susan aboard a merchant-ship en route to Rotterdam, an older Roxana, functioning as the narrator, grounds the experience in terms of two competing interior states: “secret Horror” and “secret inconceivable Pleasure” (323). For the Roxana present in this meeting, the experience is described as an onslaught of bodily sensations threatening to make visible her inner “Disorder” to those around her: “the Disorder had almost discovered itself. ... I could not conceal my Disorder without the utmost difficulty” (324). Wherein “Disorder” signifies a lapse in control over one’s body, Roxana’s financial success through means of seduction necessitates in her an absolute control of her bodily expression. Though this moment of inversion, where the body attempts to speak, has been the focus of substantial criticism, it has never been analyzed through the lens of cognitive studies. A cognitive account will provide an explanatory frame for the shifting social views of, and anxieties about, female consciousness in the novel.¹

Between Roxana's "secret Horror" and her "secret inconceivable Pleasure" that her "Disorder" will be revealed, the language of this passage and the majority of the novel attempts to negotiate what the essential connection is between interior states and bodily expressions by an appeal to mind-reading practices. The use of mind-reading in narrative theory and the history of the novel have emerged in literary criticism over the last decade as an increasingly manifold and complex topic of research. Side-stepping many of these nuanced developments, this essay will focus on three aspects of mind-reading, derived from Lisa Zunshine's work on the role of cognitive processes in the formal development of the early novel, to demonstrate that mind-reading practices in *Roxana* are utilized as a means of articulating and resolving a specific social anxiety present in the 1720s following the South Sea Bubble, that capitalism might indelibly change the very nature of female consciousness.

First, mind-reading is "promiscuous, voracious, and proactive" ("Lying Bodies of the Enlightenment" 119). This means that mind-reading practices are not just conscious events; rather these practices undergird every perception of human actions, such that these actions will invariably be perceived as the product of unobservable mental states. The mind is always active in this process of mind-reading. In effect, mind-reading is a constant of human experience, whether or not it is consciously employed or apparent. Second, there is paradox inherent to mind-reading practices. Mind-reading maintains that the body physically manifests the interior states of an individual (thoughts, emotions, etc.), such that to correctly read a person's body provides the reader with access into that person's interior state. Correspondingly, this produces in the reader a self-conscious anxiety that her body, in turn, reveals her interior state to others. Thus the rise in mind-reading practice coincides with a paradoxical attempt to separate the link between mind and body in one's own bodily expressions.² The corresponding suppression

of bodily expression produces an awareness of this process of deceptive bodies occurring in others. Although the first aspect of mind-reading is constantly scanning and applying interior states to individuals, the second aspect affirms that this process is imperfect, because a bodily expression need not be a sincere expression of an interior state.

These first two aspects of mind-reading are, as I have argued, utterly ubiquitous—both in everyday life and in fiction.³ For example, Roxana reads the expression of the Jew who has come to appraise and potentially buy her jewels that have been left to her by her late lover, the Landlord. Though she is incapable of understanding the Jew's language, she can read his body: "the *Jew* held up his Hands, look'd at me with some Horrour ... and put himself into a thousand Shapes, twisting his Body, and wringing up his Face this way, and that Way, in his Discourse" (150-51). The novel makes it very clear that the Jew's bodily distortions reveal his anger at finding what he believes is stolen property and, moreover, reveal the ugliness of his inner character. In contrast, Roxana understands in the bearing of the Dutch Merchant, who is the broker of this deal, that he is "an honest man himself" and, as consequence, he "believ'd every thing [she] said" (153). What is striking is that Roxana's initial appraisal of the Jew and the Dutch Merchant, what she has read of their interior states from their bodily expressions, is continually shown to be correct throughout the novel. Therefore, in *Roxana*, reading the relationship between bodily expression and interior state is shown to reveal something deeply essential to the character being read; the process of mind-reading, however problematic it might be rendered, is on some level taken to be an accurate means of gauging character in the novel.

Of course Roxana, herself, is the caveat to any claims about the necessary link between bodily expressions and interior states. Her financial success is built upon the ability to fully separate her actual interior state from her bodily expression, which is usually tailored specifically to entice

someone. When she receives the German prince for the second time, she decides to seduce him and states, “I prepar’d not my Rooms only, but myself ... I fell down at his Feet, before he could come to salute me, and with Words that I had prepar’d, full of Duty and Respect, thank’d him for his Bounty and Goodness to a poor desolate woman” (96-7). This entire meeting is designed to play into what Roxana believes will entice the prince; her design proves apt because the prince reads her expression of “Duty and Respect” as a sincere depiction of her interior state. A very peculiar logic emerges around Roxana’s mind-reading: she can accurately read the bodily expressions of others and gauge their thoughts, but her body isn’t bound to reveal her interior state. Other characters like the prince will read in Roxana what she wants them to read: she can make herself appear to the prince dutiful and respectful, as she knows this is what he wants. In the majority of instances Roxana can bypass the common paradox that mind-reading is a flawed assumption. It is only when she confronts her daughter that this unilateral mastery of mind-reading is suspended.

These two aspects of mind-reading only articulate the universal nature of mind-reading among humans and are, to a degree, trivial. For example, one would be hard pressed to find any novel that doesn’t employ these first two aspects in depicting character. But the third, and most important aspect of mind-reading, is that there is no such thing as mind-reading that is “free floating ‘out there’ in isolation from its human embodiment and historically and culturally concrete expression” (*Why We Read Fiction* 37). Or to use noted cognitive literary theorist Patrick Colm Hogan’s expression for literary universals, mind-reading is “instantiated variously, particularized in specific circumstances” (40), by which Hogan means that any cognitive process or universal, like mind-reading, appears within a culture by way of its unique cultural circumstances. Thus, any instance of mind-reading will always be informed by, and expressed

through, materially and culturally concrete expressions. Two unique types of instantiated mind-reading which appear in *Roxana* are what I call the body of capital and body as feeling. Both concepts of the body depend on the essential structure of mind-reading as a link between bodily expression and interior state. These two instantiations provide insight into how the social context of *Roxana* shapes the description of mind-reading in order to articulate anxiety about capitalism.

The previous two examples of Roxana's ability for mind-reading reveal the method to be a static process. In both scenes, Roxana is capable of fully ascertaining the interior states of others by appealing to the necessary link between bodily expression and interior state while she simultaneously severs herself from this link. However, these two examples ignore the impetus compelling Roxana's dynamic development: capitalism. Specifically, this is her need to survive in a capitalistic society, signified by the context of the South Sea Bubble crash as the driving motivation for Roxana's transformation.

It is difficult to exaggerate the anxiety that capitalism represented to many—Defoe included—about fundamental changes to the structure of society at this time. Socially, this crash has long been perceived as a monument to human greed and folly. As literary critic Max Novak notes, “the mania over the buying and selling of stocks seemed to signal to Defoe a revolution in British life—a lurch toward the secular and toward a form of greed that seemed to be sanctioned by the state itself” (47). Adam Anderson, a near contemporary of the crash writing in 1764, denounced the South Sea Bubble as “a perpetual memento to the legislators and ministers ... never to leave it in the power of any, hereafter, to hoodwink mankind into so shameful and baneful an imposition on the credulity of the people” (91-92). Or, as the contemporary economist Larry D. Neal has characterized this perception, the South Sea Bubble appears as “a swindle of the stock buying public ... a tale about the perpetual

folly of mankind” (34). The sense of the South Sea Bubble in the 1720s was monumental, and for many it marked a shift in how society would function in a capitalist system.

As is so often the case, the reaction to this perceived social upheaval brought about “intensified attacks on traditional targets of abuse: Jews, usurers (updated as stock-jobbers), and women” (Cleary 67). As scapegoats for a financial disaster, Jewish people and usurers were an unsurprising object of social outrage. But what is surprising is the inclusion of women into this list of financial transgressors. While it is usually true that traditional objects of social abuse will be attacked in any upheaval—regardless of the logic—the relationship of women to the economy in the 1710s and 1720s had dramatically changed. Women were associated with fashionable practices, like the masquerade, and became increasingly associated with capitalistic excess upon which fashion and masquerades were taken to depend.

Rising to social prominence in London at roughly the same time as the South Sea Bubble appeared in the 1710s, masquerades were denounced by the 1720s as “the symbol and cause of an alarming decline in morals” (Blewett 125). The link was swiftly made between the rise and convergence of capitalism and masquerades to the degeneration of culture. What is often denounced in the assaults on masquerades is a new capacity among women to conceal their thoughts behind a mask. An early critic, quoted in Terry Castle’s *Masquerade and Civilization*, contends that “the mask secures the Ladies from Detraction” but rather “encourages a Liberty, the Guilt of which their Blushes would betray when barefac’d, tell by Degrees they are innured to that which out of their Virtue to restrain” (39). The attention given to the female face, and the glimpsing of real interiority in that face, is a common thread among the many criticisms of the masquerade in this period. Moreover, the ability of women to conceal their face, such that the mask “encourages a Liberty”

among the participating ladies reveals a concern deeper than simple morality: female agency. Set in opposition to morality, female agency is born from the ability to conceal “Blushes.” In effect, female consciousness and its capacity for controlled expression become immured within this larger discourse of the masquerade. As a consequence, the masquerade signifies that female consciousness is altered in capitalism.

Given the reactionary period in which *Roxana* was written and published, it is only logical to read the novel accordingly. As such, it is little wonder that so much critical attention is paid to Roxana’s Turkish dress at the London masquerade and to her ability to generate wealth by rigidly controlling her appearance in society.⁴ In attempting to gain agency within a capitalistic system, Roxana, by putting on the Turkish dress, merely transforms herself into a commodity for desiring men and strips herself of the possibility of agency. For example, Clair Hughes—a modern feminist cultural critic—argues that “for Roxana, her Turkish dress is a desirable, intimately familiar object, but when wearing it, she takes on another identity” (12), such that the dress becomes a second body, supplanting the primacy of her own. Like the aforementioned criticism of the masquerade, the Turkish dress becomes a duplicitous second body that, in concealing a woman’s natural reaction (i.e. her blushing), produces a type of agency. But, as Hughes points out, the agency produced is necessarily bitted to the male gaze. In effect, “[Roxana] is deluded in her belief that the role of mistress buys a life of freedom: her appetite for wealth (and therefore men) and need for secrecy, build prison walls” (Hughes 22). The reactionary message of *Roxana*, as Hughes interprets it, is that the novel’s depiction of the masquerade and Roxana seek to demonstrate how, in being the object of a commodifying gaze, the possibility of female agency is subverted.

What this approach and other criticism fail to account for is the distinction present throughout so much of the text between Roxana

and her body. In Hughes's analysis, the second body of the Turkish dress becomes a means by which Roxana mistakenly believes herself in control, and it is this Turkish dress-body that produces her identity: "Roxana." But in the text, a great deal of attention is given to the degree that the Turkish dress is a tool for manipulation. While costumed as a Turkish princess, Roxana seeks out the attention of all the participants of the masquerade by way of her exotic dress and appearance. She notes, "the Company were under the greatest Surprise imaginable; the very Musik stopp'd a-while to gaze; for the Dress was indeed, exceedingly surprising, perfectly new, very agreeable, and wonderful rich" (216). Roxana cultivates the gaze of those in the masquerade, such that the Turkish dress does not seem to stymie her agency, but rather extends it. Using one of her servants to direct the musicians to play something in keeping with a Turkish theme, her dance becomes an exercise not in exoticism, but in deception, as "[she] danc'd by [herself] a figure which [she] learnt in *France*, when the Prince *de*—desir'd [she] wou'd dance for his diversion." For the unknowing Londoners the dance is perfectly exotic, such that "they all thought it had been *Turkish*; nay, one Gentlemen had the Folly to expose himself so much, as to say, *and I think swore too*, that he had seen it danc'd at *Constantinople*; which was ridiculous enough" (217). By turning to the gullibility of her London audience, Roxana asserts her agency through her ability to represent herself in whatever manner she deems useful.

Of course, Hughes's analysis is more concerned with the foundation of Roxana's agency: namely, that her agency is undercut by its dependence on patriarchal forces, like capitalism. With this claim it is important to keep in mind two points. First, *Roxana* seems interested in keeping track of how excessive capitalism corrupts, so the notion that Roxana's abnormal agency is normalized by the capitalistic, normative gaze is questionable. In order to understand the normative state that Roxana deviates from, it is necessary to track Roxana's development to the state witnessed in the

masquerade scene. Second, Roxana distinguishes her bodily presentation from her identity throughout the novel, and she does so to real success. In making this distinction, she gains access to her body as a source of capital, which provides her with a level of freedom otherwise impossible. Following her nominally Turkish dance, Roxana asserts her success: “now things began to work as I wou’d have then, and I began to be very popular, as much as I cou’d desire” (217). It is at this point that the language of mind-reading practice becomes useful as Roxana’s ability to use her body as an object of male desire does not necessitate her objectification. Though *Roxana* clearly utilizes the masquerade as a metaphor for the effect of capitalism on female consciousness, the masquerade scene is the triumphant zenith of Roxana’s capitalistic abilities in that she can fully control the gaze of her audience.

Mind-reading as the measure of Roxana’s consciousness reveals that her psychology is dynamic, by which I mean that she moves from early naiveté to the sophistication witnessed in the masquerade scene: importantly, her mind-reading practice changes over the course of the novel, and with it so does her consciousness. The sophistication of Roxana’s mind-reading and her ability to disassociate herself from her body are notably absent in her early presentation in the novel. For example, when Roxana returns from the precipice of poverty with the assistance of the Landlord, she observes in his beneficence that “he came oftner to see me, look’d kinder upon me, and spoke more friendly to me, than he us’d to do” (58). Though Roxana cannot deduce the motivating thoughts behind the Landlord’s actions, she can observe a change in his physical behavior and infer a likely change in his thoughts. At this point, she can distinguish between different bodily expressions as indicating distinct interior states. In addition, the younger Roxana is unaware of how her body might be the source of the Landlord’s interest, whereas the older Roxana implies this interest by referring to the Landlord’s changing bodily expressions:

he is moving from distanced “Compassion” to the closer intimacy of “Friendship and Kindness.” The older Roxana’s extensive experience with mind-reading allows her the ability to perceive herself as a body of interest to the Landlord, where the lack of sophistication of the young Roxana limits her ability to perceive this change of bodily expressions.

The shift in Roxana’s mind-reading practice taps into the social anxieties borne out of the South Sea Bubble. Importantly, her mind-reading practice changes over the course of the novel, and with it so does her consciousness. What has developed in Roxana’s consciousness is a social instantiation of mind-reading, in this case an understanding of the body as the body of capital. The use of the term ‘body of capital’ indicates the peculiarity of Roxana’s mind-reading, in that she can maintain the benefits of asserting a link between bodily expression and interior states while maintaining a rigid control over what her body expresses. The effect is a gradual distancing of her identity from her body for financial gain: Roxana “will be both capital and capitalist” (Kibbie 1032).

The development in Roxana’s consciousness, wherein her body is increasingly viewed as capital distinct from her interior state, provides a corollary to the influence of capitalism on society. The impetus for Roxana to become a sophisticated mind reader is therefore by external, rather than essential, factors: her environment (poverty) and experience (Amy’s instruction). Roxana’s development from innocence is first motivated by the contingent fact of her poverty, which provides the environment in which mind-reading for personal gain becomes a necessity. In the language of mind-reading, this creates two variations: a naïve mind-reading and a capitalistic mind-reading. The effect of the latter is the rigid control over bodily expression. But the change in Roxana’s economic environment only produces the possibility for Roxana’s development by introducing her need to understand the Landlord’s bodily expression; she still requires an interpreter to reveal the meaning of bodily signs. Amy fills this role.

When the Landlord propositions Roxana, he realizes the impossibility of bringing up his interest in her body directly and must rely on her servant, Amy:

While he found me change Colour, and look surpriz'd at his Discourse, for so I did to be sure, he turns to my Main *Amy*, and looking at her, he says to me, I say all this Madam, before your Maid, because both she and you shall know that I have no ill Design. ... *Amy* made him a Curtsie, and the poor Girl look'd so confounded with Joy. (60)

Although the meaning of this passage is lost on Roxana, Amy comprehends what the Landlord desires and is there to interpret this meaning. In respect to Roxana's further development, this process hinges upon a teacher who is versed in mind-reading and the body of capital: Amy. That Roxana requires such a teacher in order to understand the Landlord's advances underscores that Roxana's development is an addition to her nature, rather than a revelation of it.

Nevertheless, Amy's ability to understand the Landlord's suggestion initiates an educational lesson for Roxana concerning body language. Amy attempts to convince Roxana of the Landlord's interest, to which Roxana tells Amy, "I cannot be of your Opinion; I don't see any thing in him yet that look like it" (61). For Roxana, that she cannot "see any thing" lurid in the Landlord's intentions frames her perception very clearly in terms of a lack of experience. Though she disagrees with Amy's opinion, it shapes how she understands her next meeting with the Landlord in which the Landlord drops all pretense and proceeds to take her in his arms and kiss her "vehemently" (70), such that Roxana is forced to agree with Amy's earlier insight: "I made no question but he intended to do every thing else that *Amy* had talk'd of" (70). Roxana not only realizes the Landlord's intentions, but she comes to this realization through Amy's reading of his bodily expressions. This resituates Roxana's understanding of her own

body very closely within the context of other people's thoughts; Roxana's consciousness of her body is, thus, being doubled as it takes on an essential role in mind-reading and also as the cathexis of mind-reading practice.

Roxana is now able to understand the extent to which bodily expression reveals interior states and the economic value of this knowledge. This understanding deeply complicates Roxana's relationship with her body because her body is not simply the site of possible financial gain, it is also the means through which others will read her thoughts and feelings. From this moment onward in the novel, Roxana attempts to rigidly control her body. In one of the novel's most memorable passages, Roxana strips Amy and forces her and the Landlord to have intercourse. Upon viewing the act Roxana states, "had I look'd upon myself as a Wife, you cannot suppose I would have been willing to have let my Husband lye with my Maid, much less before my Face, for I stood-by all the while" (81). Though she frames her disinterest by an appeal to her purely financial relationship to the Landlord, her actions reveal the extent to which she has disassociated herself from her body. Thus, she can have a financially induced relationship with the Landlord without her interior state being affected. Watching the Landlord and Amy have intercourse is her proof that her body is a controllable capital asset. Though the Landlord is "quite alter'd" after the experience and states his desire to kill Amy, Roxana manages with "utmost Skill to get [the Landlord's feelings] alter'd" (82). Controlling the Landlord, Roxana brings him "to lye with [Amy] again several times after that" (82). So, not only has Roxana succeeded in separating her interior state from her body, she has also succeeded in using her body to produce a specific interior state in the Landlord. Thus, it is this Roxana who comes to dominate the rest of the novel, as it is this Roxana's dual usage of mind-reading and of her body of capital which outlines the problems capitalism produces on female consciousness.

What makes Roxana so dangerous is her apparent ability to escape this relationship, as she can order her interior states and bodily expressions to suit her needs. It would be difficult in the context of this woman, who can read minds and introduce thoughts into others, to overstate the potential social anxiety being revealed in the novel about the impact of capitalism. At a deeper level, this draws all of human nature into question, as Roxana seems to exemplify a new type of woman who can sever the link between body and mind. But in the formulation of this anxiety, *Roxana* introduces a solution by reaffirming the reality of the relationship between interior states and bodily expression: body as feeling. The structure of mind-reading is not merely an affirmation that the bodily expressions of other people can be read; mind-reading demands this link to be present. However, the functioning of Roxana's sophisticated mind-reading requires that she also be an example of the link. As much as her mind-reading may develop, mind-reading, itself, tethers her mind to her body such that she can never fully separate the two. Body as feeling is this reassertion of the link of bodily expression and interior state in the individual. In recalling Roxana's claim that she can impassively watch the Landlord and Amy copulate because the Landlord is not her husband, what is really being claimed is that the Landlord is not *sufficient* to affect a response from her body to her interior state. Essentially, as long as Roxana is not truly connected to the individual in question, she can separate her bodily expression from her interior state. It is for this reason that her daughter, and to a lesser extent the Dutch Merchant, become the means by which her careful separation of bodily expression and interior state is disordered.

It is telling that the only times Roxana uses the word "Disorder" about herself is when she is in close contact with either Susan or the Dutch Merchant. "Disorder" is particularly apt in describing Susan because Roxana is disordered by her, and Susan, herself, is in a constant

state of disorder. Unlike Roxana, the daughter jettisons all control over her bodily expressions once her interior state erupts. For example, when Amy attempts to dissuade Roxana's daughter from searching after her mother, the girl's emotions explode onto her body: "this put the Girl into Fits, and she cry'd ready to kill herself" (314). At the sight of this, Amy is completely dumfounded. Though she is well versed in manufacturing emotional breakdowns as it suits her purposes (125 and 235), the impact of the daughter's real feelings of sorrow, presented in the real relationship between interior state and bodily expression, is of an entirely different magnitude. It doesn't even enter into either Amy's or Roxana's highly perceptive mind that the girl might be manufacturing this bodily expression of emotional anguish. As with Roxana's ability to read the Jew and the Dutch Merchant, there is something in the daughter's bodily expression which is taken to transcend the possibility of deception.

The implication of being confronted with this real link between the daughter's interior state and bodily expression should, according to the logic which Roxana has used up to this point, allow her to control Susan. But this is far from the case. Roxana's reaction to Susan alternates between being perplexed and being terrified, suggesting that the daughter's expression lacks all concern for how it is perceived. In the logic of *Roxana*, this puts the daughter in a type of a-capitalistic state: "she was so obstinately bent upon the Search after me, that she ventur'd to forfeit all she had in view" (320). Susan's absolute adherence to finding her mother coincides with her willingness to destroy herself in the process: "she was resolv'd she wou'd take so much *Knight-Erranty* upon her, that she wou'd visit all the Airing Places in the nation, and even the Kingdom over, ay, and *Holland* too" (356). The appearance of Susan threatens Roxana's carefully constructed social image, which she has parlayed into a relationship with the Dutch Merchant. The return of Susan, signifying Roxana's past marriages and abandoned children, threatens to overwhelm

Roxana's economic security, signified by a marriage to the Dutch Merchant. Susan's desire to meet her mother is thus placed at a level well above the interests represented by capitalism. For this reason, when Roxana sees the real feeling in Susan, she is perplexed and terrified because Susan signifies the essentialness of the mother-daughter relationship.

The signification of the mother-daughter bond through the daughter's bodily expression produces a sympathetic response in Roxana. Until this meeting, Roxana has been perfectly willing to sacrifice relationships and people in order to gain financial advantage. Yet when Amy, "began to think it would be absolutely necessary to murder her," Roxana is swiftly overtaken by a bodily expression of devotion to her daughter:

that Expression fill'd me with Horror; all my Blood ran chill
in my Veins, and a Fir of Trembling seized me, that I could not
speak a good-while. ... I, *says I in a Rage*, as well as I love you,
would be the first that should put the Halter about your Neck,
and see you hang'd. (316)

Like her daughter, Roxana is bound by the essentialness of the mother-daughter bond. Whatever control Roxana has over her body, the mother-daughter bond can circumvent. In the course of her development, Roxana may have learned how to exploit the interaction of interior states and bodily expression in order to survive in a capitalistic world, but at this point the essential relationship between interior state and bodily expression is powerfully reasserted. As manifested in Roxana, the essential assertion about female consciousness is the reality of the mother-child relationship. Whatever change capitalism might effect, this essential relationship cannot be obviated, at least as far as *Roxana* is concerned. So whatever control Roxana has over her body as a source of capital, this pales in comparison to the affective power of the mother-child bond.

The daughter's murder is reminiscent of how Amy first eased Roxana's transition into capitalism by teaching her about her body's

potential as capital. In both scenes, Amy is the external impetus that makes possible Roxana's integration into capitalism. But this apparent victory of capitalism should not obscure the potency of the daughter's presence on her mother. Discovering her daughter's murder, Roxana states, "I was struck as with a Blast from Heaven, at the reading her letter [sic]; I feel into a Fit of trembling, from Head to Foot; and I ran raving about the Room like a Mad-Woman; I had nobody to speak a Word to, to give Vent to my Passion" (372). It is tempting to say that Amy does what Roxana could not, but this sidesteps Roxana's recognition that she isn't willing to sacrifice her daughter for financial security. The bodily perception of the mother-daughter relationship lingers in Roxana's mind after the daughter's death: "as for the poor Girl herself, she was ever before my Eyes; I saw her by-Night, and by-Day; she haunted my Imagination, if she did not haunt the House" (374). Susan and the mother-daughter bond reveal a side of Roxana's bodily nature that she thought that she had mastered: Roxana's reaction is a bodily fit of trembling, wherein the disorder of her interior state and bodily expression is visible to everyone. The impact of the daughter is the indelible assertion that Roxana can never completely control her bodily expression. As a consequence, her ability to use her body of capital, which relies on her ability to control her body, is also in question. Thus, it is little wonder that Roxana's fortune appears to decline following her daughter's death (379). In essence, the body as feeling reasserts the primacy of Roxana's identity to her bodily state, disregarding the developments of capitalism on her consciousness.

As a baseline for Roxana's development in capitalism, the instantiation of mind-reading in the novel provides a gauge and solution to the anxiety that female consciousness is radically altered following the South Sea Bubble. As a means of addressing a rapidly changing society and the place of women in that society, the link in mind-reading between bodily expression and interior state binds female consciousness to a very specific

body as feeling. The capitalist Roxana represents the anxiety located in women in masquerades, who can hide their emotions behind masks. The danger of Roxana is that she has this power outside the masquerade, such that her ability to mask herself is seen to pervade all levels of society. However, the novel grounds this possibility in mind-reading practice, and, by doing so, registers the solution to this “Disorder” in the body as feeling. The structure of mind-reading which pervades the novel necessitates that any development towards the body of capital coincides with a return to the body as feeling. Whatever sophistication Roxana may gain in mind-reading, she is still bound by the universal principles of mind-reading practice. For this reason, Roxana can never fully rid herself of her “Disorder.” Roxana’s problem is not simply her daughter, but that she is bound to show her interior states on her body and, in doing so, she loses absolute control of her body which is necessary to be both capitalist and capital. In the wake of the South Sea Bubble, *Roxana* argues that female nature can never be fundamentally changed by capitalism. Whatever changes Roxana might appear to undergo, the novel suggests they are ultimately the product of, and beholden to, essential structures within her consciousness, like the mother-daughter bond.

NOTES

- ¹ See Cleary (69), Cohan (416), Gabbard (247), Kibbie (1031), and Sill (267).
- ² As Zunshine writes in “Lying Bodies of the Enlightenment,” “this double perspective is fundamental and inescapable, and it informs all of our social life and cultural representations” (119).
- ³ See Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction* (75-77).
- ⁴ See Blewett (125), Cleary (69), Cohan (411), Gabbard (241), and Hughes (12).

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“THE FRAILTY OF EVERYTHING”:

POST-APOCALYPTIC DWELLING IN MCCARTHY’S *THE ROAD*

BY COREY LEIS

What many of the critical interpretations of Cormac McCarthy’s 2006 novel *The Road* have in common is their treatment of the style and language of the novel. Indeed, many critics point out the mirroring effects the grammatical incorrectness and the sparse punctuation have on the story: fragmented sentences to reflect a fragmented world. Andrew Hoberek and Ashley Kunsu are among these critics. Ben De Bruyn, however, pays especially close attention to the function of language and style in *The Road*. In “Borrowed Time, Borrowed World and Borrowed Eyes,” Bruyn uses ideas from Robert Pogue Harrison’s work to describe the “dislexification” of *The Road*’s world. That is, as language deteriorates, so does the world as it is known: “When nature and culture are devastated ... the meanings we have attached to space and time dissolve” (782). Bruyn’s use of Harrison’s ideas is indeed provocative, but his reading of *The Road* can be extended with still more from Harrison. Harrison’s notions of dwelling, in conjunction with Heidegger’s notions of dwelling, are ones that lend themselves particularly well to *The Road*, and with these notions

at the fore, a post-apocalyptic form of dwelling begins to surface in McCarthy's novel. Traditional understandings of what it means to dwell do not suffice in a world overcome by hysteria, a world where tradition no longer exists. Rather, post-apocalyptic dwelling requires a new tradition, one based upon an ethic of transience manifested metaphorically in the fire that burns within the little boy.

In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger explicates two essential questions: what is it to dwell, and how does building belong to dwelling? (145). Through an etymological parsing of words in Old English, High German, ancient Greek, and Latin, Heidegger reaches a definition of dwelling: "The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell" (147). Taking this definition even further, Heidegger adds that in order for humans to dwell truly, there must be a preservation of what he terms the *fourfold*: to be on the earth, under the sky, before the divinities, and among mortals (149). Heidegger writes: "Mortals *are* in the fourfold by *dwelling*. But the basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve. Mortals dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing" (150). His last emendation to dwelling is that we must stay with things: "Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things" (151). In the second section of the essay, using a bridge as an example, Heidegger attends to the second question: How does building belong to dwelling? For our purposes, we'll use only part of his exploration of that question. Buildings, in the realm of dwelling, must present a site where the oneness of the fourfold can be experienced.

Let's complicate Heidegger's definition of dwelling by introducing Harrison's definition. In *Forests*, Harrison explains that it is in language that humans dwell on earth; it is the "ultimate 'place' of human habitation" (200). *Logos*, or language, is what defines our relationship

to nature, for it is through language that we are able to distinguish any relationship at all. “We dwell not in nature,” Harrison writes, “but in the relation to nature” (201). In Heideggerian fashion, Harrison looks at the etymological components of *logos*, observing that *logos* is what “opens the human abode on the earth” and ecology is what names this abode (200). He determines that “the word ‘ecology’ names far more than the science that studies ecosystems; it names the universal manner of being in the world” (201). So, then, dwelling in a Heideggerian-Harrisonian sense, must include a preserving of the fourfold as well as a dwelling in the *logos*. Perhaps more accurately, though, there must be a preserving of the fourfold *in the logos*. Heidegger and Harrison, however, are discussing dwelling in a specific context. What happens when there can be no oneness of the fourfold, or when language begins to fall apart?

According to Harrison, a separation from the past ultimately leads to a separation or detachment from the earth. An increased emphasis placed on “institutions of dislocation” has obscured what it means for humans “to dwell on the earth” (198-99). We dwell “in oblivion,” Harrison writes, “of the meaning of dwelling” (199). Our notion of what it means to dwell must be perpetuated, as Harrison explains, must “[embed] itself in habit, ritual, and repetition” (199). These regular practices secure the understanding of dwelling in oblivion, not to be consciously thought of. However, he continues, “when its meaning has disintegrated or lost its basis ... when it has suffered fundamental traumas, then oblivion becomes a force of destruction rather than of preservation” (199).

The narrator of *The Road* gives us a glimpse into the man’s thoughts in many instances throughout the novel. This is one of the more telling glimpses:

He’d had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into

oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. Drawing down like something trying to preserve heat. In time to wink out forever. (88-89)

In *The Road*, the “fundamental trauma” that Harrison speaks of is the catastrophic event, the “long shear of light and ... series of low concussions” (52) that left the world a scorched shadow of its former self. As the narrator observes several times, “[e]verything [is] uncoupled from its shoring” (11), language is “shorn of its referents” in this post-apocalyptic existence. Oblivion, then, works toward “shrinking” the world, not preserving it.

The “dislexification” that Bruyn invokes in his argument is spelled out, quite literally, in the above passage. As he notes, “lexification” is what links the dead with the living world. Harrison writes:

Lexification is a retentive relating or binding by which the human mind, like our basic words, continuously accesses the priority into and out of which it is born. In its temporal and historical schematizing, it enables human directedness in the verbal, institutional, and cognitive domains through its synthesis of the law of legacy. (84-85)

Memories and conceptions of the past are a part of the realm of lexification. It is the infrastructure of cultural memory. As the link is destroyed, so too is the relationship between the living and the dead (Bruyn 783), and the infrastructure thus collapses. In such a case there is a process of dislexification: “We could call it the ‘dislexification’ of the order of institutions, the primary symptom of which is a corruption of the world’s historical, signifying power” (Harrison, *Dominion* 87). If we are to synthesize Harrison’s ideas, we could recognize dislexification as a

degenerative process spawned from the “fundamental trauma” suffered by oblivion.

Signified and signifier, in the world of *The Road*, do not have any connection to each other: “The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality.” Because the new world is so utterly different than the one the man remembers, and is quickly forgetting, he is realizing what used to connect him to the past no longer does; it has suffered a fundamental trauma. Consider the episode with the man and his billfold: “He spread everything out on the blacktop. Like gambling cards. He pitched the sweatblackened piece of leather into the woods and sat holding the photograph [of his wife]. Then he laid it down in the road also and then he stood and they went on” (51). Without the institutions that give a wallet its purpose, the contents of the man’s billfold are empty signifiers.

If, according to Harrison, the *logos* is the relation between humanity and forests, that is, nature (200-1), and this relation, this *in between*, is where humanity dwells, then what happens to our ability to dwell when “[e]verything [is] uncoupled from its shoring”? Likewise, what happens to cultural memory? Memory is an integral aspect of dwelling in both the Heideggerian and Harrisonian senses. These questions are especially important when considering the role of buildings and places in *The Road*. Bruyn makes many keen assertions regarding memory, or rather “the ruins of memory” (781), in “Borrowed Time.” He invokes Dylan Trigg to help him with his discussion: “[F]unctional buildings and meaningful places ... [yoke] ... our past and present to the space that surrounds it” (781). This is why, according to Trigg, the “sight of ruins ... fractures our sense of ‘self, memory and place’” (781). This fracture, Bruyn notes, is most apparent when the man and the boy visit the man’s childhood home, as the house provokes different reactions from each character. The man views the ruins of his childhood home and has feelings of nostalgia: “This is where we used to have Christmas when I was a boy” (26); the boy,

however, just has feelings of fear: “I’m really scared” (27).

For the man, buildings serve as reminders of the old world and the way of dwelling in that world, of things that no longer are. Take the exchange the boy and the man have about the dam for example:

What is that, Papa?

It’s a dam.

.....

Will the dam be there for a long time?

I think so. It’s made out of concrete. It will probably be there for hundreds of years. Thousands, even.

Do you think there could be fish in the lake?

No. There’s nothing in the lake. (19-20)

The juxtaposition between the concrete structure and the fish is telling. The man is optimistic about the future of the dam, but pessimistic about the possibility of life in the lake. A structure that has no purpose in the new world will outlast all things that do have a purpose yet are nowhere to be found.

To reiterate, Harrison characterizes *ecology* as the human abode opened by the *logos*. More specifically, “it names the universal human manner of being in the world.” What does this mean for the “universal human manner of being” in the world of *The Road*? An examination of the ways in which different people exist in the novel should provide a clear picture of what this might mean. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *abode* as: “The action of dwelling or living permanently in a place; habitual residence”; and “A place of ordinary residence; a dwelling place; a house or home.” The only people within the novel who live in fixed houses or shelters are the “bloodcults” in their communes and the small group of cannibals with their pantry of people. The few shelters the man and the boy stay in are for short, temporary intervals: dilapidated sheds and barns, crumbling houses, and even an abandoned fallout shelter. The

various abodes included in the novel hardly name a universal manner of being in the world for the characters of *The Road*, especially for the man and the boy who “wouldnt [sic] ever eat anybody” (128).

Using Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Fallingwater* as a prime example, Harrison argues that “A house is that which gathers the horizon around itself” (*Forests* 233), and “that the earth cannot become a shelter unless it is *unfolded*, or disclosed, by human appropriation” (235). In *Dominion of the Dead*, Harrison has a more in-depth discussion about houses in the chapter entitled “What Is a House?” He explains that houses, in their primal state, were enclosures for the dead (38). In Greek and Roman history, houses were also places of abode for ancestral gods and spirits, which are the origins of the hearth (38). Harrison traces the etymology of *lares*, *manes*, and *penates*, the different words that describe these ancestral gods and spirits, all the way to *penus*: “the cellar or cupboard inside of which perishable provisions and victuals were stored and preserved” (38).

By these definitions of *house*, we can see that the only true structural abode featured in *The Road*, at least by post-apocalyptic standards, is the abandoned fallout shelter. A house in the traditional sense is not designed for a world without ecology. A fallout shelter, on the other hand, is very much designed for such a world, one that has suffered a fundamental trauma. The subterranean shelter hearkens back to the origin of houses—a place to contain the dead: “The faintly lit hatchway lay in the dark of the yard like a grave yawning at judgment day in some old apocalyptic painting” (155). The boy is afraid of it at first because he thinks someone might be buried in it (135), or worse, because it “looks like the other door” (137) with the naked prisoners in it. Despite its resemblance to a grave, however, the shelter contains “everything” (139) needed to support life: “[The man had] been ready to die and now he wasnt [sic] going to and he had to think about that” (144). It is essentially a well-stocked pantry, “inside of which perishable provisions and victuals [are] stored

and preserved.” Not only this, but it is contained within the earth; the earth has been *unfolded* in a more dramatic way than Harrison imagines in *Forests*.

What distinguishes the fallout shelter from the other houses in the novel is its purpose. More specifically, what it is used for. While it is true that the other houses in the novel contain the traditional features of a house (i.e., kitchen, pantry, hearth, bedrooms, et cetera), the purposes to which they are put reflect the zeitgeist of the “feverland” (28), making them structures contrary to dwelling. Perhaps the most contrary of these structures is the “once grand house ... tall and stately with white doric columns across the front” (105). One of the necessary features of a house, according to Harrison, is that it must preserve the link between the living and the dead: “A house is a place of insideness in the openness of nature where the dead, through the care of the living, perpetuate their afterlives and promote the interests of the unborn” (40). Part of this is historicity: a house must contain memories or relics from the past to affirm the link between the dead and the living. This particular house does contain a distinct historicity. The narrator reveals that “[c]hattel slaves had once trod those boards bearing food and drink on silver trays” (106) as the man and the boy walk across the porch.

Historicity is one of the ways in which to “promote the interests of the unborn”; however, this is where this project ends for this particular house. The “four bearded men and two women” (111) who inhabit the house labor to destroy the interests of the unborn. The repurposing of the basement pantry, the fireplace, and the “forty gallon castiron cauldron ... once used for rendering hogs” (109) for the small gang’s cannibalistic proclivities makes any sort of preservation impossible. Although they are able to maintain their own preservation, in order to dwell there must be a harmonious connection among the dead, the living, and the unborn. Granted, this particular gang of cannibals isn’t guilty of the most extreme

form of denying the unborn. Consider what the man and the boy find in the abandoned campfire: “What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit” (198). This connection is part of the oneness of the fourfold outlined by Heidegger: “Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own nature—their being capable of death as death—into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death” (151). To be among mortals in this sense requires the preservation of others.

In “Cormac McCarthy and the Aesthetics of Exhaustion,” Andrew Hoberek observes in many passages from *The Road* “the potential for human creativity lying precisely in the misuse of things for purposes other than those for which they are intended” (493). This does not mean, however, that repurposing things like the castiron cauldron for cooking human meat is part of this creativity. Hoberek links this to the use of language in the novel, but it is also closely related to post-apocalyptic dwelling. Not only must the man and the boy—the “good guys” (77) of the novel—find new uses for things in their post-apocalyptic world (using an old beer bottle and a piece of cloth to make a lamp, for instance [135-36]), but in order to dwell in a sense that resembles a Heideggerian-Harrisonian one, they must reimagine the definition of *house*.

Harrison invokes Henry David Thoreau in his attempts to answer the question, “What is a house?” In *Walden*, Thoreau reflects on the purposes of food, clothing, and housing: “to nourish and preserve the body’s ‘vital heat’” (40). So, then, housing and clothing, because they serve the same purpose, can be viewed as the same, according to Thoreau. Taking Thoreau’s philosophy further, Harrison writes: “We live inside our shirts because our vital heat is more than a natural heat. It is an inward heat akin to ... the sacred fire that burned on the altars of the ancient house” (41). The fire that the man and the boy are “carrying” is this sacred fire, and it is this fire that is the center of what it means to dwell in

a “dead world” (273). Close to the man’s death, the boy is described as a tabernacle: “he would raise his weeping eyes and see him standing there in the road looking back at him from some unimaginable future, glowing in that waste like a tabernacle” (273). When one is unable to dwell in a fixed abode, when one must migrate in order to find food and to avoid danger, it is necessary to keep one’s abode with him. Like Thoreau’s shirt, or “bark” (qtd. in *Dominion* 40), the boy carries his dwelling with him on the road. The man’s injunction for the boy not to give up, to continue “to carry the fire” (278), is his desire for the boy to continue to dwell as only a “good guy” can in the world of *The Road*. The boy’s question to the stranger in the “yellow ski parka” (281) at the end is especially important when considered in this light: “Are you carrying the fire?” (283). That the stranger responds with “Yeah. We are” (284) is that much more important. He and his family share the same sense of dwelling as the boy.

Because the world has suffered a fundamental trauma and has since begun to undergo a process of dislexification, contributing to the global hysteria, the traditional sense of dwelling outlined by Heidegger and adapted by Harrison is impossible. A oneness of the fourfold is increasingly difficult to achieve when “the days [are] more gray each one than what had gone before” (3), when “there is no God” (170), and one has to worry constantly about being killed and eaten by a fellow human being. Although the man and the boy never settle down in a shelter for more than a few days at a time, because they are carrying the fire, they are able to dwell in a post-apocalyptic sense. Their reimagining of the abode to include themselves makes “each the other’s world entire” (6), which is all that matters when there is nothing left.

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MARY BUTTS, BRITISH MODERNIST AND EARLY ECOFEMINIST,
WRITES THE “CULT OF NATURE”
BY KATHERINE ECHOLS

Mary Butts, a neglected British modernist and early ecofeminist, regarded nature and the English countryside of her birth as a sacred sanctuary. Although feminism and ecofeminism in modern terms did not exist at the time, Butts’s awareness of the sanctity of the natural world and a woman’s place as its steward, portray her as an ecofeminist. She recognizes women as an embodiment of nature and calls for an ecological revolution that allows women to repossess the land, a common theme in much of her work. Even though writing for her came first, Butts’s absence from the canon can be explained in part by her erratic lifestyle and early death just before the start of World War II (*Journals* 4). Born 13 December 1890 in Poole, Dorset, England, Butts’s childhood was spent at Salterns, the family estate. Her great-grandfather Thomas Butts was a friend and patron of William Blake, a fact of which she was particularly proud. In fact, up until the death of her father, Captain Thomas Butts, the family owned a number of Blake’s paintings, now housed in the Tate Gallery, London. The mystical qualities of Blake’s work so influenced

Butts that she took the title of her autobiography from his poem “The Crystal Cabinet” (Foy 14).

A prolific writer up until her death on 5 March 1937, Butts was captivated with occultism and mysticism, according to Roslyn Reso Foy, who attributes this influence to Cecil Maitland, a Scottish artist and critic of James Joyce, with whom Butts had a destructive relationship (*Journals* 4). Through Maitland, Butts met “The Great Beast” Aleister Crowley and his occult group in Italy. A heavy drug user who lived a bohemian lifestyle in London, Paris, and Villefranch on the French Riviera, Butts attempted a domestic lifestyle at one time, but it failed. She married John Rodker, a Jewish writer and publisher, in May 1918, had one child, Camilla, in 1920, who was raised by her aunt—the couple divorced seven years later. Despite the toll Butts’s lifestyle took on her health, her drug-induced experiences allowed her to connect with her mystical consciousness and “glimpse” the other world while her meditations on nature connected her to the “other England” (Foy 26); in fact, she felt that her soul “came out of the vegetable stuff of England” (*Crystal Cabinet* 262).

According to Butts, only those who recognized their spiritual connection to England understood that the essence of their Englishness lay in the soil. As a contemporary of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, H.D., and Roger Fry, she sought a way to reshape a world that she believed had “lost its soul” (Foy 6). This was possible through the creation of a personal mythology that worked within Butts’ fiction and non-fiction. Through myth she could reestablish order in an unstable post-war world. Butts not only sensed that the world had “lost its soul,” but because of man’s neglect of his spiritual connection to the natural world, his soul remained at risk. Butts’s ecologically minded writing stemmed from the notion that though man had rediscovered nature through an emerging “cult of nature,” a movement that reflected a superficial reconnection with nature and not a spiritual one, he posed a

threat to the natural world, which she held sacred.

In Lee Rozelle's study of the emergence of ecocriticism, he identifies biocentric play at work "socially and ecologically" following the publication of T.S. Eliot's seminal 1922 work, "The Waste Land" (101). As an Englishwoman, a neglected modernist, and early ecofeminist, Butts's sense of Englishness was so rooted in the national soil that she considered any threat to the natural world around her as a direct threat to her own nationality. Writing as an ecofeminist who presumes to "speak on behalf of the Earth" (Guttman 37), she identifies man's industry as a destructive force that calls for women to take possession of the land. Because nature requires devotion and reverence, Butts envisions a man-made garden as the "best image of the kingdom of heaven" (*Crystal Cabinet* 23).

This essay considers Butts's early ecofeminism within the context of her work: the novel *Ashe of Rings* (1921), the autobiography *The Crystal Cabinet* (1937), and two works written in 1932, the pamphlet "Warning to Hikers" and the poem "Corfe." Butts takes on the destructive force of the patriarchal system in *The Crystal Cabinet*, a foundational work for her novel *Ashe of Rings*, a work based on journal writing begun at the age of twenty-five. *Ashe of Rings*, a "War Fairy-Tale," explores a woman's natural and sacred connection to the land and to her race. Butts's pamphlet essay "Warning to Hikers" identifies the emerging "cult of nature" and cautions that man's renewed interest in nature as a recreational pursuit is a direct threat to the natural world. "Corfe" then reads as an incantation that calls for the preservation of Butts's "sacred south."

According to Butts, men—not women—oppose nature (King qtd. in Gaard and Murphy 3-4); however, in many ways her eccentricities undermine her ecofeminist thought and prove problematic. For instance, in her search for meaning, Butts's creates a personal mythology within her fiction. By doing so, she privileges English men and women as "authentic signifiers of Englishness" and upholds them as "saviors of a dying nation"

(Garrity 189). In fact, as Butts rewrote mythology, she politicized it as well in order to create an imaginary and racially superior England, a theory similar to that of the eugenics movement that gained popularity in the early twentieth century. Ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the environment and considers the context in which writers represent nature, including the language used to represent or to speak for nature. Ecofeminists recognize women as an embodiment of nature and call for an ecological revolution that allows women to repossess the land, to become caretakers. As an ecofeminist, Butts recognizes the male dominance over the natural world, especially following the Great War. Long before the ecofeminist movement, however, Butts was already writing about the dynamic balance between human and nonhuman nature.

Butts learned to love nature as a child living close to Badbury Rings, a set of prehistoric mounded circles near her childhood home, Salterns, and even Dorset, all places she describes as consecrated ground. Consequently, her work commemorates nature as a place in which “to look for God”¹ (*Crystal Cabinet* 278). However, had the enchanted gardens at her childhood home Salterns no longer existed, nor the surrounding “woods or dim dangerous marshes or bright stones,” Butts says she would still see the spiritual and come to know nature through God: “all these things were made by God,” were to be “referred to God,” and “[a]ll was or was not according to the mind of God” (*Crystal Cabinet* 49).

As a child she was enamored with nature and sensitive to the cyclical or repeating nature of the earth and the “beginning of all natural religions [and] its sacraments” (*Crystal Cabinet* 6). Likewise she describes her escape to the sanctuary of the kitchen garden of her childhood home in sensuous language. There Butts lay down on the earth to drink in the smell and greenness, listening to a “charm’ of sound” of the birds and bees, and rolling over “nine times like the new moon ... [n]ever to

lose that smell and that arabis and that bee” (*Crystal Cabinet* 6), a scene recreated in *Ashe of Rings*, a novel based on her autobiography and read as Butts’s personal myth. This novel draws all of the author’s ideologies together. In her love of nature and her connection to the spirit of place, Vanna Ashe, the novel’s protagonist, exhibits a feminist spirituality akin to Butts’s own. In this “war fairy-tale” Vanna is a priestess and a steward of the land defending her sacred trust and heritage.

This novel, along with Butts’s other work, can be read as ecofeminist tracts that expose her deep-seated fear that the English race and its national identity were threatened. Archetypically the earth is gendered as female, so Butts naturally identifies herself as an extension of the land. Long before the ecofeminist movement took root or feminist spirituality emerged as a contemporary movement, Butts sought a dynamic balance between human and nonhuman nature. Though she had not named feminist spirituality as such, Butts was already a practitioner. Ritual played an important role in Butts’s personal spirituality that was based on the “primitive ritual” where neither gods nor priests played a significant part (Ruether 262) but where nature did. Because Butts was attuned to nature, she recognized the magic and mystery in the beauty of the natural world. Therefore, a return to the land for Butts is an embracing of the feminine. As an ecologically minded woman, she further identifies an interconnection between human beings, animals, and all aspects of this earth calling for a life lived spiritually. Butts says she learned from her father, Captain Butts, a “belief in a God known only through the beauty of things” and a perception of the visible and invisible (*Crystal Cabinet* 275, 278). Butts senses that all living and non-living matter in this world are interrelated. As a mystic, she believed that myth and ritual tied her to the natural world. In “Warning to Hikers,” Butts writes of this connection with nature as a practice of “rites or sacraments,” which she describes as a “kind of drama, a ritual play taken from universal natural events”

(290). While some people may have lost touch with her illustration of sacramental rites, she believes they continue to unconsciously participate in their daily life through the “unavoidable realities of nature, birth and death and change of state”; yet, men and women only get back what they put in, warns Butts (“Warning to Hikers” 291-92).

Because Butts considered herself a mystic who had much to “reveal to a world that she saw crumbling around her,” her modernist tendency is to use her writing to challenge “existing patterns of language and communication” (Foy 12). This crumbling post-war world is evident in the destruction of nature and in woman’s unconscious natural connection with the earth, according to Butts. As human beings gradually lost their connection with the land or nature, they lost their humanity as well, she claims. Only Butts with her full knowledge of her priestesshood, mirrored in Vanna Ashe, has the power naturally established through nature to reestablish and reorder that which has been destroyed. Time and time again, Butts’s writing returns to ancient rituals proving that she knew something of the ancient rites. As a child Butts says she was “stirred in the secret roots of [her] being ... by the first stories of the classical sagas” (*Crystal Cabinet* 73). In fact, just as the casting of a circle has long signified protection, Badbury Rings, which represents Rings in the novel *Ashe of Rings*, is a naturally cast circle that is a priestess’s sanctuary, just as Salterns was to her a sanctuary, a “‘garden enclosed’ ... inviolate”; furthermore, in East Dorset both “Power and Loveliness walked naked” over the countryside, but it was through this “loveliness” that power comes which “fits also the primal creation before he has tampered with it” (*Crystal Cabinet* 22, 258).

Butts’s exploration of her feminist spirituality, and nature as a sacred space, continues in “Warning to Hikers.” Whereas Butts can be considered as an “initiate with sacred loyalties to the spirit of place” (Radford 127), she took “great pains ... to stress the transcendence of nature over any

human moral system” (Garrity 195). Written during a period when preservationists were reacting to “England’s inter-war crisis in landscape,” Butts recognizes the need for the countryside to be preserved from man’s destruction (Garrity 195). Man may have the right to choose where to live, but the author warns that he does not have the right to destroy what should be instinctively valued. Otherwise man’s destruction of nature shows him to be a “nursery brat, only now bent on destroying more than his toys” (*Crystal Cabinet* 93).

In her autobiography, Butts identifies the industrialism overtaking Poole Harbour, near Salterns, as ruinous and “intolerable, witless change creeping in” to her beloved land (*Crystal Cabinet* 14). As a by-stander of man’s destruction, she views the industrialization of East Dorset as a

victim of the lamb of the green earth, its throat arched to the knife ... sacrificed to ... ‘the play of free change’ in a world hurling itself into new forms, controlled by neither mind or love but by every instinct, crude or base, racing, unchecked towards horror. (“Warning to Hikers” 249)

This reaction is evocative of the idea that “modern culture must incorporate elements of ritual practice in order to save rural England from both urban encroachment and spiritual deprivation” (Garrity 190). This essay identifies nature as a “divinity usually seen as a goddess” not to be “trifled with,” since England is “a countryman’s country”; thus, Butts calls on her fellow artists and writers to “make men conscious” of their natures as Englishmen. However, she does criticize the newly manufactured “cult of nature” and warns that English civilization is threatened by the “unnatural idea of equality ... of nature” (“Warning to Hikers” 275, 277, 289). She places blame on the “fake sensibility” of the middle class, this new cult of nature, for the new breed of barbarians running wild over the countryside who are unlike the aristocracy and the peasants who have “never left the land” (“Warning to Hikers” 278).

During the year “Warning to Hikers” was published, Butts again demonstrates her brand of ecofeminsim in poetry. “Corfe,” best read as an incantation of sorts, asks God to keep away the interlopers in her sacred south:

God kept the Hollow Land from all wrong!
Pour the wind into it, thick sea rain.
Blot out the landscape and destroy the train.
Turn back our folk from it, we hate the lot
Turn back the American and turn the Scot;
Take unpropitious the turf, the dust
If the sea doesn't get 'em then the cattle must
Arm the rabbits with tigers' teeth
Serpents shoot from the soil beneath
By pain in belly and foot and mouth
Keep them out of our sacred south. (Tuma 73-86)

While man has a natural spiritual connection with nature, the farther he separates himself from her in his pursuit of material objects, the more isolated he becomes (“Warning to Hikers” 291).

The Crystal Cabinet also records the alterations to Butts's native land. She is disturbed by the new man-made barriers erected between the “Green World and us.” Rising houses, “butcher-coloured scum,” cut people off “from the world inland” and accompany the “tram-lines, and raw spaces and little shops,” just as “unplanned” industrial towns, though unequal to the ancient cities such as Rome, Paris, and Seville, creep into the countryside (“Warning to Hikers” 122, 289). Butts compares human contact with nature to a man who is participating in the ritual plays of rites or sacraments. This opinion is not too far removed from that of the novelist H.G. Wells, whose works she was familiar with. Wells too reacted negatively to the urban sprawl overtaking England, which he considered an enemy, favoring instead a pollution-free green world of rational men

with limited population (Carey 118, 151).

Butts blames the alterations to the natural world on a “new kind of person,” the “city-bred” (“Warning to Hikers” 283), those who were born and bred “out of touch with the rhythm of natural life” and showed no fear or remorse for this destruction (*Crystal Cabinet* 15). Doubting whether a “new ‘town-awareness’ ... an unconscious reaction the city rhythm” existed on the same plane as a universal “reaction to nature,” Butts is convinced that what passes for civilization—the tram-lines and villas in this “lost and imbecile century”—would eventually rot away and leave Poole Harbor to recover its natural beauty (“Warning to Hikers” 14, 283).

According to Butts, nature is a betrayed female who has been “prevailed against” in wars but is otherwise “very much what a man has when he participates in any rite or sacrament” (“Warning to Hikers” 289-90). Nature’s betrayers are primarily the “lovers of England” who “saw the beloved thrown down and bound and trampled on and wounded, called by dirty names and false names of adoration” (“Warning to Hikers” 293). Consequently, man is the “rapist ... assaulting the unblemished body of England” (Garrity 199). Furthermore, man’s base treatment of nature is a violent metaphorical rape of Mother Earth:

Nature lies like a hand open with the fingers loose for man to run about the palm; dig into the pure flesh and build a palace or sewer. ... The palm is his earth ... and all his works no more than a fertilizer for its flesh, while the men To-day ... going about, leaving a dirty little trail through a sanctuary. (“Warning to Hikers” 294)

Those who keep to the towns have developed a “new ‘town-awareness,’ an unconscious reaction to the city rhythm” that is as “universal” as their “reaction to nature was once,” who “wherever he goes ... brings the town with him,” according to Butts (“Warning to Hikers” 283). Even though

he may enjoy himself and do himself good, “he is not a part” nor is he the “model for something ... good or fine,” because he is “[n]ot the whole living body, fully incorporated into the intricacies of nature” (“Warning to Hikers” 284). Industrialism encroached on nature so much so that mechanization disrupted the “scent-box of nature,” a scent she goes on to describe as “compounded of burnt carbon, oils and dust and our own sweat,” while the sound of rain, the creek of a tree, and the sound of the ocean have been replaced by a mechanical roar (“Warning to Hikers” 276).

For Butts this artificial “cult of nature” was the by-product of a “sort of town running wild over the countryside for an escape from towns” (“Warning to Hikers” 277). In true ecofeminist spirit, Butts believes that man receives back in proportion to what he puts in to nature (“Warning to Hikers” 290). In contrast to preservationists who suggest that “good citizens can be created through proper contact with the countryside,” Butts opposes “this kind of democratic access” because she “believes that real citizens are born, not made—though she never explicitly makes this claim” (Garrity 197). In fact, the middle class is to blame for this resurgence of attention to nature. According to Butts, it is the upper class and the remaining aristocracy who are closer to the land because they have never left it (“Warning to Hikers” 278). Here Butts exhibits the “ruralist vision of a specifically English culture [that] reached its peak ... when a great movement to inhabit the outdoors made the outside” a popular destination (Garrity 195).

Regardless of this encroachment in a sacred, nature space, Butts’s feminized earth remains “indifferent,” “always watching and waiting,” “patiently readying to” regain her strength (“Warning to Hikers” 279-81). Despite man’s assault, nature will continue to defend herself against him through natural catastrophes. More specifically, this vengeance comes with the seasons, such as the “more disagreeable features of November and

March,” which she sees as nature’s hint to turn hikers toward home; in the end the “land will become a no-man’s land” (“Warning to Hikers” 281, 294). Surprisingly Butts also equates nature’s power with the patriarchal authority of the Catholic Church:

The return of the city native may make us weep ... but the country-side which has betrayed her will not care. Nature is a divinity usually seen as a goddess, who has hardly ever lacked for recognition throughout time. Like the Catholic Church she has never had the reputation of being an institution to be trifled with. (“Warning to Hikers” 289)

Industrialism had not only defiled nature but had destroyed nature’s spirit as well. According to Butts, this destruction was “in part to the natural corruption in man’s heart externalizing itself after him” (“Warning to Hikers” 91). She longs for a past when “men were sensitive” to “spring’s return, daisies white on dark grass, the ‘klange’ of cranes that fly across the sunrise” (“Warning to Hikers” 276). However, she cautions that “when Nature ceases to be the Mother, the all-nourisher, you are either left without her or with those aspects of her which are hostile” and “have not made their submission” (*Crystal Cabinet* 15).

Already Butts was seeing the effects of World War I when the “great trees were cut down, and ... that within ten years the Tide would have broken in, and Salterns, house and gardens, woods an orchard, meadows and the moor should be blotted out” (*Crystal Cabinet* 251). In what appears to be a contradictory statement in “Warning to Hikers,” Butts considers nature as a latent power that “turn[s] our triumphs against us” in order to “re-strike the balance of power when we have prevailed against her in our wars” (289). Nature is not an enemy but an adversary, according to Butts, who sounds like a contemporary ecofeminist challenging the “relationship between economic growth and exploitation of the natural environment” in post-war Britain (Mack-Canty 170). As a modernist

Butts' reaction can be interpreted as a "reaction against the triumph of rationalism in industrial society, as an attempt to restore balance in the life of their minds" (Sanders 417). Butts intends to re-discover a pre-patriarchal language, one that no longer negates or subjects the voice of the female.

In this passage from *The Crystal Cabinet*, Butts describes August as the "coronation of the Heath"

in Tyrian dress, ling-embroidered with bell-heather in relief, lacings and panels of sapphire-rose ... lying out under the burning sky, you hear, rising around you ... the bee-thunder. Like an earth-pulse, the drum of nature rubbed lightly, with the whistle of wind and the surf-break for pipe and strings. Millions of bees, gold fur and gold transparencies ... soaring off; and the heather-honey burns with dark sweetness ... (102)

Butts's language in "Warning to Hikers" evokes the same connection with nature to portray England as: "Private, bird-haunted, land of perfection to perfection types of beasts," though man's "denial of her has spread like a nest of sores" (274).

Ashe of Rings expands and fictionalizes the author's ecofeminist manifesto. She is certain that a return to nature and a better understanding of the sanctity of nature will save the earth, which is in peril following the Great War and emerging industrialization. Vanna Ashe, the novel's protagonist, and her father Anthony Ashe, both identify the land with their Englishness and recognize their duty as stewards of nature and the land, especially that of Rings, the family's hereditary estate. With the birth of Valentine, Melitta's "first real child," Vanna is overlooked as the natural successor in the matrilineal inheritance. While his "fortune" is to go to war, had Valentine inherited the property it would have meant the destruction of the Rings. After she is expelled from her ancestral home, Vanna longs to return in order to reclaim her matrilineal heritage and

her identity, but until that happens, she moves through the dark streets of London, living in the shadow of death, darkness, and decay, always hungry and aching for Rings (*Ashe of Rings* 57).

Judy Marston, Vanna's friend, threatens her inheritance. Throughout the novel, the women are foils for one another. Judy, unlike Vanna who understands the natural and the spiritual world, is a "state bred" "death hound" whose spirit is nourished by the ruin of war (*Ashe of Rings* 149). Because of her obsession with Rings, Judy orchestrates the unsuccessful rape of Vanna by neighbor Peter Amburton, a World War I veteran suffering shell shock. She plans for Vanna's rape to happen within the sacred circle of the Rings, an extension of Vanna. This act would defile both Vanna and the Rings; as a result, Judy would then assume Vanna's place. To save herself from Peter, Vanna turns to nature for protection. Within the Rings, she wraps herself in the moonlight and becomes a part of the place to avoid the rape. At once she is light, white on white rock, protected by the cradle of the Rings (*Ashe of Rings* 188-89).

Vanna breathes the earth and draws "pleasure in the place that drew her into a kind of ecstasy," as Butts did as a child in the family garden (*Ashe of Rings* 49). Vanna experiences a symbolic death and rebirth when she challenges the individuals who would defile her childhood home. As the inheritress and protectress of the ancestral Rings, Vanna embodies the "connection between nature and women" (Radford 136). Toward the end of her autobiography *The Crystal Cabinet*, Butts reflects on a visit to the woods near Salterns, much like Vanna when she returns to Rings. Here she discovers the "meaning of everything ... [s]omething ... in [her] blood and [her] training ... [had] c[o]me out of the very stuff of England, the fabric out of which her soul is made" (*Crystal Cabinet* 262).

Ecofeminism may honor nature as a living entity that embodies matter and spirit identified with the feminine. Apart from its benefits for humanity, however, for some ecofeminists this poses a problem.

They argue that to directly identify woman with nature is to legitimize subjugation and to “preserve a status quo” (Soper 32). Nevertheless, as a modernist and an early ecofeminist, Butts’ writing presumes to speak on behalf of a feminized nature while her sensitivity to the natural world and her keen observation that modern society was (and still is) destroying its natural beauty secure her a place among the ecologically minded.

NOTES

- ¹ All references to god represent the idea of a supreme deity and not necessarily the Christian God. For the sake of this argument, all references to god are to be defined by the pre-Christian notion or usage of “goddess,” a female deity in a polytheistic system (OED).

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**THE PERFORMANCE OF A WODE NARRATOR:
THE BODILY RHETORIC OF CHAUCER'S PRIORESS**
BY CECILIA PAREDES

Few medieval narratives capture the attention of readers and scholars as “The Prioress’s Tale” from Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* does. Written in the late fourteenth century, *The Canterbury Tales* begins with the frame narrative of a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury to visit and venerate the relics of Saint Thomas Beckett. Chaucer is one of these pilgrims and also acts as the frame’s narrator, blurring the lines of authorship, narration, and characterization. The pilgrims agree to relate stories during their journey and each of the tales is a traveler’s attempt to tell the best one. It is in this context that the Prioress tells her tale of a little clergeon who is murdered by Jews for singing a Marian hymn. The violence in “The Prioress’s Tale” forms a stark contrast to the prim and precious description of the Prioress in “The General Prologue.” Yet, the Prioress proves to be a figure of excess approaching the status of a wode narrator through the bodily rhetoric she is described in terms of and later uses/performs herself.

If one is to read “The Prioress’s Tale” in such ways that are

recognizable to the past, it is essential to understand the moderation-excess dichotomy that permeated medieval paradigms. At the heart of this binary is a philosophy based on Boethius's influential text, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In it, a *contemptus mundi* view is put forth and all things earthly must be shunned in favor of what is truly rewarding—the celestial. Preoccupation with the worldly or material is often manifested in the excesses of the Seven Deadly Sins. Moderation, conversely, would elevate one towards what Boethius describes as a “divine mind” which envisions a plan called “Providence” (Boethius 87). The ultimate goal is to become one with this source of “divine reason” by rejecting the excess characteristic of earthly life in favor of moderation.

During the High Middle Ages this Boethian worldview takes on a religious dimension. In works such as *The Northern Passion* and the Wakefield Master's *Herod the Great*, moderation becomes an ideal embodied by a meek, myld Christ. The Jews personify excess in the form of the medieval concept of “wodeness.” According to the Middle English Dictionary, if someone is “wode” they are “insane, mentally deranged, or of unsound mind” (MED “wode”). But wodeness can also range in meaning from denoting emotional agitation, distraction, a state of frenzy, and even alienation from God (MED “wode”). Since wodeness reflects a separation from God that is both rational and moral, it often also suggests a turn toward the corporeal. It is precisely the Prioress's rhetoric in her “Tale” and the language used to describe her in the “General Prologue” that gestures toward a preoccupation with the body and signals a wode narrator at odds with Boethian ideals of moderation.

However, various critics situate “The Prioress's Tale” within the genre of the Marian miracle story, classifying the “Tale” as part of a discourse of prayer and thus seemingly complicating this essay's argument. Timothy L. Spence engages in a rhetorical examination of the “Tale” and states that contemporaneous medieval composers were very conscious of the genre

in which they chose to compose. The genre essentially dictated certain conventions that the writer had to acknowledge, if not adhere to. Spence writes that prayer was clearly “an institution ... [and] had species and genres, [with] heuristic techniques of *inventio*, that decorum governed the style and form of prayers in terms of *elocutio* and *disposito* (78). The Prioress’s *Oratio ad Mariam* (or Prayer to Mary) exemplifies the prayer genre called *pura oratio* so well because its “rhetorical decorum is manifest in this prayer’s compositional structuring” (Spence 79). Moreover, the consummate structure supports the claim that “Chaucer’s satire does not reveal itself in the representation of the Prioress’s compositional intention” (Spence 79). This is quite true: it *is* the Prioress’s intention to deliver a heartfelt and inspirational tale in praise of Mary and God. The crucial qualification here is that she *fails* to accomplish her goal, to perform in the way she hopes.

In his 1982 essay “Acts of Interpretation,” Alfred David writes that “several apostrophes break the narrative movement of the tale and sustain the tone of invocation and praise” (155). While the structure might very well recall this invocatory genre and tone, the content of the Prioress’s certainly does not have a “liturgical flavor” as David suggests (qtd. in Spence 79). The tale contains a violence that is only intensified by the Prioress’s apostrophes and, thereby, associates her more closely with the bloodshed and cruelty she accents.

Spence cites Carolyn Collette’s assertion that the little clergeon’s martyrdom is a moving icon with an affective purpose in the tale. Spence partly agrees with Collette arguing, instead, that the *main* emblem of the Prioress’s “Prologue” and “Tale” is the image of Mary nursing the infant Jesus (80). The Marian image and the symbol of the boy’s martyrdom are significant and must not be overlooked. Yet, their importance lies in the fact that they act as foils to Madame Eglentyne. The Prioress stands as a contrastive figure to both; she is neither a clergeon nor a benevolent

Marian figure. Thus, the prayer genre is subverted in the Prioress's apparent corruption of it. The audience expects to hear a Marian miracle story told by a sweet, delicate nun. Instead, the tale is one whose brutality is emphasized by an indulgent and intervening narrator whose ostensible mien proves misleading.

In the "General Prologue," Chaucer the narrator takes great care in describing the details of her physical appearance. Her smile is "ful symple and coy" suggesting a modest nature (Chaucer, "Prologue" 119). Yet, the following line complicates the Prioress's modesty and holiness: "Hire grettteste ooth was but 'By Seint Loy!'" (120). Significantly, Madame Eglentyne swears by the patron saint of goldsmiths and blacksmiths suggesting not only a certain irreverence, but also an affinity with the physical and worldly.

The narrator, however, assures the reader of the Prioress's pleasant and amiable disposition. Her likeable personality seems to be also evident in how she "peyned hire to counterfete cheere / Of court and to been estatlich of manere / And to ben holden digne of reverence" (Chaucer, "Prologue" 139-41). The Prioress's concern for courtly manners and being esteemed by others reflects the importance she gives social norms and acceptance. Moreover, as Merrall Llewelyn Price shrewdly notes, the "counterfete" or fraudulent nature of her courtly manners "implies a simulation or copy" and suggests a performance from the Prioress's part (Price 198). In this instance, the Prioress's counterfeit signals the insincerity of calculated behavior, of a careful performance. The Prioress's fraudulence is later exposed when she seems to lose her restraint in her language. Her preoccupation with earthly matters is made evident in this early description of her and is further magnified in the "Prologue" and narrative she relates herself.

The performativity and physicality that characterize Prioress's narrative voice are interestingly aligned with queer theorist Judith Butler's

ideas of the same. In her work *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that gender can be considered “as a *corporeal style*, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘*performative*’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (179). However, this notion of the “performative” can have the meaning of acting, as on the stage, and of doing or enacting what one is told to do. This has particular significance for both the clergeon and the Prioress. The clergeon, in effect, sings on the stage of religious territory—the streets of the Jewish ghetto. He is also, of course, enacting what Mary inspires/”pierces” him to do, which is sing her praises.

For the Prioress, William Orth asserts, even the dinner table is a stage on which she performs the manners of the court and becomes a “fastidious, affected eater, one always aware of the eyes that might be on her” (200): “At mete wel ytaught was she withalle. / She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle, / Ne wette hir fyngres in his sauce depe. / Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe, / That no drope ne fille upon hire brist” (Chaucer, “Prologue” 127). But, while she is acutely conscious of her body and the social manners that govern her behavior in the two “Prologue[s]”, during her tale, she seems to lose sight of the perception she might be projecting. In her “Prologue,” she performs the role of poet invoking a divine muse and praises the object of her affection duly. Yet, her performance is a fragile one, and begins to break when she interjects herself into the narrative at crucial points that reveal an excessively violent narrator.

“The Prioress’s Prologue” is Madame Eglentyne’s invocation of Mary. Notably, she immediately and explicitly mentions the performativity that is indicated in the “General Prologue”:

‘O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how marveillous
Is in this large world ysprad,’ quod she.
‘For noght oonly thy laude precious

Parfourned is by men of dignitee
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.^e (Chaucer, "Prioress"
453-58)

Orth observes in his essay that the usage of the word "parfourné" in "The Prioress's Tale" assumes this meaning for the first time in Chaucer's tale (197). Typically, "parfourné" would mean "to produce" an object, but this abstract and ritualistic use of "parfourné" signals the theme of performativity in its own right. The Prioress actualizes her praise through her "performative utterances" and her "only real anxiety is that her performative meet its purpose" (207). She establishes the fact that both men of dignity and infants alike can praise God, neither assuring nor denying the possibility of succeeding.

As critics have averred, the infants she is referencing are children who, like St. Nicholas, praised God in fasting by refusing his mother's breast milk. She, therefore, situates herself among men of dignity and saintly infants, but she is, of course, neither—problematizing her ability to praise. In an effort to explain the extent of her modest abilities, the Prioress describes herself as being "a child of twelf monthe oold or lesse / That kan unnethe any word expresse." Yet, her own rhetoric undermines her intended meaning. The Prioress's hyperbolic comparison of herself to an infant who can barely speak only draws attention to the reality that she is *not* an infant and actually *can* speak. The contradiction renders her sincerity even more suspect. Yet, the Prioress grants herself an innocence and holiness so total that she is able to tell/perform her tale nevertheless (Chaucer "Prioress" 483-84).

Her invocation to Mary, presumably, also helps the Prioress articulate her tale. One might argue that this appeal to Mary would absolve the Prioress of at least some narrative responsibility and complicate Mary

as a holy and benevolent figure. The problem with such a claim is that the Prioress inserts herself into the tale, heightening her prominence and control as narrator:

As I have seyde, thurghout the Juerie
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
Ful murily wolde he synge and crie
O *Alma Redemptoris* everemo.
The sweetness his herte perced so
Of Cristes mooder, that to hire to preye
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye. (551-57)

The passage begins with one of several first-person interjections by the Prioress. Such a narrative break marks the Prioress's distinct ownership of and agency over narrative voice in her tale, reaffirming what she said. Moreover, this rhetorical move invites a greater degree of awareness of her presence than some of the other immersive tales in *Canterbury* do with their respective pilgrim-narrators.

This scene also describes with violent imagery Mary's sweetness *piercing* the child's heart. The wounding affectiveness causes the child to happily sing and cry the hymn, but, markedly, to the point of not being able to stop. What Orth sees here as Mary's role in the little clergeon's performance of her hymn can also be viewed as an act of bodily harm resulting in a nearly wode state. Although Mary's contribution to this wodeness remains problematic, it is significant that the Prioress has created clear parallels between the clergeon and herself, thus, strengthening her association with wodeness.

The clergeon's loud, uncontrollable singing grabs the attention of Satan who incites the Jews to kill the boy. "And as the child gan forby for to pace, / This cursed Jew hym hente and heeld hym faste/ And kitte his throte and in a pit hym caste" (569-71). This alliterative and choppy syllabic language echoes the passage which, in her seminal essay, "The

Hissing Stanza in Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale,'" Sumner Ferris called a preceding verse "a tour de force of alliterative onomatopoeia, in sibilant imitation of 'the serpent Sathanas'" (164). Indeed, the Prioress echoes Satan in her harsh-sounding rhetoric as she describes the clergeon's murder. Yet, this degree of detail is not enough for the Prioress. She continues:

I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe,
Whereas thise Jewes purgen hire entraille.
O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
What may youre yvel entente yow availle?
Mordre wol out! Certeyn, it wol nat faille,
And namely, ther th'onour of God shal sprede.

The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede! (572-78)

The details are extreme and satisfy her own wode sensibility as a narrator. For Price, this reiteration of the boy's death is the Prioress's response to the horror of the scene. I would argue that the repetition along with the second interjection of the first person actually signal a horrific wodeness that is all her own. Once more, the Prioress highlights her presence and adds a renewed sense of agency over one of the most gruesome parts of her story. It seems that the Prioress *wants* to indulge in the heinous nature of the murder—how the boy is afterward thrown in a latrine where the Jews empty their bowels. Price cites historical evidence that the association between money and excrement was quite common, but argues that in the case of the Prioress, might suggest something more.

Price, who reads "The Prioress's Tale" through a psychoanalytic interpretive lens, sees the Prioress as fixed in the anal retentive stage of psychosexual development, one that is "preoccupied" with excrement and often marked by "sadism or sentimentalism, or a combination" (199). The sadism or wodeness is especially evident as she goes on to curse the Jews and directly addresses/confronts them yelling out in another

apparent rupture. The Prioress angrily names them the descendants of Herod, and recalls the wodeness he embodies in *Herod the Great*. Her corporeal rhetoric reemerges with the “blood” reference and she essentially *becomes* the blood as she presently cries out against their deed.

Her somatic language continues even as she begins to praise the saintly clergeon. “O martir sowded to virginitee, / Now maystow syngen, folwyng evere in oon / The white Lamb celestial,” (Chaucer “Prioress” 579-81). The Prioress is again concerned with matters of the body as she refers to the young boy’s virginity. She goes on to say mention Saint John the Evangelist and references his teaching that those who go before the Lamb “synge a song al newe / That nevere fleshly women they ne knewe,” again referencing virginity, this time in more carnal terms. The rhetorical choice to employ “virginity” over “chastity” which are two distinct concepts indicates the Prioress’s concern with the bodily state rather than the purity of his spirit.

The Prioress invokes God once more and this time fuses her bodily language with materialistic, pecuniary similes:

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude
By mouth of innocentz, lo heere they myght!
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,
Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge
So loude that al the place gan to ryng! (607-13)

Here, the child martyr is objectified in two ways. With her comparisons of the clergeon to precious stones, the Prioress is inadvertently likening him to treasure objects with financial value. Price states that the little boy’s body now being compared to minerals suggests the impermeability of his body now (208). More significantly, the Prioress is engaging in the kind of monetary preoccupation that associates Jews with excrement. Her

fixation with riches oozes out of her in the form of her jeweled metaphors.

The Prioress, though, is not only revealing her own obsession with the material world. As a member of the Church, she is also exposing the institution's own materialism in their potential use of the boy as a treasured saint. As a martyr, the boy would also likely contribute to the lucrative effects of pilgrimages and relics. The clergeon is doubly objectified when he again becomes a mouthpiece for God by which God will be glorified. The clergeon as a metaphorical body part through which God operates has significant implications:

Mary Douglas has shown us in *Purity and Danger* that “The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.” The margins of the body—mouths, wounds, anuses, vaginas—are therefore places where the integrity and cohesion of the body are seen as particularly vulnerable. (Price 199)

The boy's role as a mouth/throat/voice for God's/the Church's body signifies his position as a herald for an institution that is being described here in terms of a human body. This vulnerability of integrity and unity are similarly evident in the tenuousness of the type of devotion the little clergeon and the Prioress both practice – one of blind faith. In other words, through their blind faith, the clergeon and Prioress both represent the orifices that potentially jeopardize the Church body. The Prioress, however, is doubly threatening in the transparent wodeness and hypocrisy she exhibits in her tale.

This faith characterized more by memorization is precarious in its lack of understanding. As Carol F. Heffernan asserts, iconography formed a visual literature that aided in the piety of medieval laypeople through the affective responses the art created in the viewer (104). For the little clergeon, memorized faith results in his death, but a holy one that exalts

him to the status of sainthood. For the Prioress, on the other hand, this unlearned faith has led to an extreme misinterpretation of ideal Christian values. Something has gone wrong for her to have become the wode narrator that she is. Price concludes that the idea Jews can be expelled and remain expelled from the symbolic Christian body is, ultimately, a mere fantasy (209-10). This is especially true given that the tale's Christian nun narrator herself seems to personify the sinful excess typically characteristic of Jews and representative of a breach in the Christian body.

Hence, the tale's surface story vilifies the Jews, but a closer examination of the Madame Eglentyne's language shows she is almost equally errant. Her excessive metaphors and overstatements ultimately subvert the persona she wishes to uphold and conspicuously puncture her narrative. The Prioress, thus, proves to be best revealed in the bodily rhetoric that abounds in her text, a rhetoric that exposes her as a wode storyteller.

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**“THE MEDUSA V. THE ODALISQUE”: VEIL, VISUAL, AND APPARATUS IN
DAVID FOSTER WALLACE’S *INFINITE JEST*
BY SHOUHEI TANAKA**

Mobile holograms of two visually lethal mythologic females duel with reflective surfaces onstage while a live crowd of spectators turns to stone.

—Film synopsis of ‘The Medusa v. the Odalisque’ directed by James O. Incandenza

David Foster Wallace’s novel *Infinite Jest* centers on the circulation of an elusive film so lethally entertaining that any spectator upon viewing it falls into an entranced, catatonic state. In ironic contrast, Wallace’s encyclopedic behemoth—approximately 480,000 words long and covering an enormous breadth of topics ranging from tennis, drug addiction, entertainment, and advertising, to North American ecological geopolitics, Quebec separatism, and film theory—inevitably tests the reader’s patience. Significantly, this contrast is gendered. While the film in question—the paramount symbol and presence in the novel organizing and linking all of the subnarratives together—crucially centers around the appearance of the lead actress Joelle van Dyne (also known as Madame Psychosis), the larger richly-textured world of *Infinite Jest* is notably male-

centered, as seen in the three main interweaving plot lines composing the novel's dizzying palimpsestic narrative: the tragic bildungsroman of seventeen-year-old tennis and lexical prodigy Hal Incandenza; the drug rehabilitation narrative of twenty-eight-year-old oral-narcotics addict Don Gately upon his entrance into the Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House; and the planned geopolitical terrorist attack by the Quebec separatist group A.F.R. (Les Assassins des Fauteuils Rollents) against the O.N.A.N. (Organization of Northern American Nations). However, even more significantly masculine is the central line of action involving the filmmaking career of James O. Incandenza, the avant-garde auteur and optics technician behind the creation of the fatal film, itself entitled *Infinite Jest* and also known throughout the novel as the Entertainment and the samizdat.¹

The film's central presence and function to the novel's male-dominated narrative in relation to this gendered contrast critically engage readers to parse out the key female character's own function to the film's narrative within the novel itself. Through constructing a complex meta-aesthetic conjunction between the same-titled novel and the film within these gendered parameters, Wallace calls forth attention to the ways in which the aesthetic representations of Joelle van Dyne are dynamically constructed and contrasted between Incandenza's film and the larger world of *Infinite Jest*—the former of which Wallace critically spotlights as a dangerous visual ideological apparatus that, as feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey argues, “reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle” (14). *Infinite Jest* thus interrogates the patriarchal articulations of the visual apparatus of the Entertainment, one involving a particular mode of fetishistic scopophilia and self-involuting male narcissism that positions the “image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, [and] not [the] maker of

meaning” (Mulvey 15), and counters this phallogocentric aesthetic with the employment of what can be called an anti-representational counter-aesthetic.

Belonging to a fellowship called the Union of the Hideously and Improbably Deformed (U.H.I.D.)—whereby all of their members, due to their varying extreme physical deformities, don a veil at all times as a “sort of fellowship caparison” (Wallace 533)—Joelle van Dyne is the most closed and elusive character in *Infinite Jest* raising one of the most contested, tantalizing mysteries of the novel: the question of whether she is “astonishingly beautiful” or “hideously deformed” to the point of either paralyzing admiration or terror. One possible explanation accounting for her entrance into U.H.I.D. involves her problematically immense beauty: nicknamed by Orin Incandenza as the P.G.O.A.T. (Prettiest Girl of All Time) for being so “grotesquely lovely” in her earlier days as a cheerleader and baton twirler for the Boston University football team, Joelle was “almost universally shunned” for her madonna-like beauty whereby no heterosexual male “could bring himself within four meters of her” (290, 290, 295). In fact, Joelle induces for heterosexual males what is termed the “Actaeon Complex” by Orin, “a kind of deep phylogenetic fear of transhuman beauty” (290) named after the Greek mythological figure Actaeon, who, upon viewing Diana bathing naked, is transformed into a stag and subsequently hunted down by hounds. Yet, according to another account by journalist Molly Notkin, Joelle’s entrance into the U.H.I.D. is allegedly due to her hideous deformity that was caused from a heated family brawl in which a concentrated beaker of corrosive acid was accidentally thrown her way “for a direct facial hit, resulting in the traumatic deformity” (795). However, Notkin’s notoriety for “spill[ing] her guts ... sing[ing] like a canary, tell[ing] everything she believed she knew,” “and then some” (788, 1072 n. 326), problematically renders the accuracy of her information questionable. Notably, due to the

various narrative aporia and questionable information mediated through different characters, the novel's equivocation of Joelle's physicality never clearly answers whether her entrance into U.H.I.D. (her admittance occurring the year after the acid incident allegedly took place)² is due to her "transhuman beauty" or her "grotesque hideousness." More than a mere heated site of narrative contestation over what her "real" appearance may be however, the uncertainty of Joelle's physical looks placed alongside the extreme polarity of its two potential possibilities calls attention to the ways in which the productions of representation become closely tied into acts of looking.

Significantly, Joelle's polarizing images between the beautiful and monstrous women archetypes are echoed in a key film listed in the enormous "James O. Incandenza: A Filmography" in footnote 24 entitled 'The Medusa v. the Odalisque' (quotation marks in original), involving the

relatively plotless plot ... [whereby] the mythic Medusa snake-haired and armed with a sword and well-polished shield, is fighting to death or petrification against L'Odalisque de Ste. Thérèse ... [who] has only a nailfile instead of a sword, but also has a well-wielded hand-held makeup mirror. (396)

'The Medusa v. the Odalisque' becomes the thematically crucial metaphor exemplifying her split representational embodiment of both Medusa and Odalisque. A Gorgon in Greek mythology with a hideous face and living snakes in place of her hair, Medusa turns any onlookers into stone with her monstrous gaze while Odalisque, like the Roman goddess Diana, is conversely "so inhumanly gorgeous that anyone who look[s] at her turn[s] instantly into a human-sized precious gem, from admiration" (396). Thus, though diametrically opposed between their beauty and hideousness, both female mythological figures significantly share in common the characteristic of embodying an appearance so alluring as

to have the lethally devastating effect of petrifying any onlooker who gazes upon them. By positioning Joelle into two antithetical, yet similar, archetypes of the *femme fatale*, Wallace calls attention to the ways in which patriarchal discourse fetishistically splits the image of the female into two hyperbolically oppositional archetypes that, in turn, are intersectionally imaged into the same fundamental object of fetishization through the act of male gazing. Whether Joelle is Medusa- or Odalisque-like, the liminal space of visual indeterminacy constructed via her veil surfaces the double-bind she must undergo under open visibility: unveiling her face inevitably results in her conformity to one female mythology or another under the gaze of others—female objectification in the form of either eroticization or abjection. Joelle’s symbolic embodiment as the Medusa-Odalisque figure thus surfaces the ways in which the act of gazing itself circumstantially construct the ideological representation of the female body through this process of eroticized devaluation and hyper-valuation. This primordial act of pleasure looking that is encoded within the structure of the gaze is one that cinema aptly amplifies through its visual apparatus, and one that Joelle, as a recurring cast for Incandenza’s films, doubly becomes the participant of in the Entertainment.

A film proving to be so lethally entertaining that its catatonia-inducing allure leads to the viewer’s literal death, Incandenza’s fatal Entertainment functions in the novel as what Wallace refers to in an interview as “not just a MacGuffin ... [but a] kind of metaphorical device” (Lipsky 157). Marshall Boswell astutely argues that the Entertainment, as a kind of central metaphor for the larger American postmodern culture of hedonism and narcissism, represents “a dangerous piece of art that perpetuates the culture’s desire for self-forgetting, a desire to be returned to the catatonic state of the womb, where needs are met and fed perpetually, endlessly” (160). However, beyond Wallace’s cultural metaphor for the infantilization of the American subject within a spectacle-ridden

consumer and entertainment society at large, the film itself, as its own aesthetic artifact within the world of *Infinite Jest*, functions as an ideological apparatus producing its own sets of metaphors, codes, and conventions for the onscreen female subject.

Though very little information is provided on the actual content of the Entertainment, we learn that it at least involves Joelle playing a maternal-Death figure, apologizing over and over again to the spectator. Amongst the sparse accounts of the film given by various characters in the novel, Molly Notkin's account describes the film as featuring

Madame Psychosis as some kind of maternal instantiation of the archetypal figure Death, sitting naked, corporeally gorgeous, ravishing, hugely pregnant, her hideously deformed face either veiled or blanked out by undulating computer-generated squares of color or anamorphosized into unrecognizability as any kind of face by the camera's apparently very strange and novel lens, sitting there nude, explaining in very simple childlike language to whomever the film's camera represents that Death is always female, and that the female is always maternal. (788)

Again, how much of Notkin's account of the film content is true remains uncertain. Problematically, Joelle too, never having seen the film herself, can speak of it only partially. Joelle herself conversely acknowledges unveiling her face for the Entertainment but is uncertain whether the camera actually captures her face in the screen's composition: questioned by the Quebecois separatists in an interrogation scene towards the climax of the novel, she nebulously answers that she was "[n]ot *exactly* veiled" (939, emphasis mine). Furthermore, she describes herself as wearing "an incredible white floor-length gown of some sort of flowing material" (939) rather than being naked as Notkin posits. From what information overlaps, what is certain is that the Entertainment involves Joelle embodying this maternal-Death figure, apologizing repeatedly and

profusely to a camera placed inside a crib to “reproduce an infantile visual field” (940) for the spectator.

The Entertainment’s lethal addiction, then, involves the viewer’s projected identification as an infant-viewer. Equipped with a specialized neonatal lens that Incandenza himself invented, the camera’s “auto-wobble” (230) effect reproduces a visual field of “[n]eonatal nystagmus” (939) for the viewing spectator. Wallace, here, is clearly alluding to Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, particularly concerning the ways in which infantile desire and maternalism play into the psychosexual formation of the subject. The film’s fatality involves re-triggering the spectator’s infantile desire for a return to a state of maternal plenitude, a pre-Oedipal phase whereby the spectator himself embodies the infant in the crib, staring up at the mother-figure on the screen. Following Lacan’s tripartite structure of the psyche, the film reverse-thrusts the spectator back into a pre-Imaginary phase of the Lacanian Real, triggering a full, virtualized immersion back into the pre-mirror phase of blissful maternal plenitude. As a primordial realm embodying the pure materiality of existence precedent to a subject’s distinction between its self and the world outside it, the Real is that which precedes the subject’s formation of the enunciating “I” and the Symbolic order: the mother’s womb. Because for Lacan, desire is desire for the (m)other, regressing the viewer back to the Real leads to an eruption proving so traumatic that an incalculable threshold of masturbatory *jouissance* literally kills the spectator, trapping him in “a catatonic state of pure desiring, one that involves a form of self-annihilation similar to the process of metempsychosis” (Boswell 133). More than a mere agent that induces metempsychosis onto the viewing spectator, Joelle herself (as her punning actress nickname, Madame Psychosis, implies) becomes appropriated as an immortalized metaphorical vehicle within Incandenza’s film, transfigured into an exoticized maternal-Death symbol.

Consequently, within the Entertainment, the irrevocably threatening and powerful effects that maternal plenitude is able to produce comes at the cost of the fetishization of the mother's image. In other words, maternal plenitude in Incandenza's film is distorted to lend itself only to the masturbatory narcissistic identification of the viewer. Far from signifying a subversive space whereby the maternal figure supersedes the phallogocentric Symbolic order as the authoritative figure within a maternal-centered psychosexual paradigm—one resembling Julie Kristeva's *chora* or Melanie Klein's object-relations theory, whereby the foundation of a subject's ontological formation becomes entirely determined by and dependent upon the mother's immense presence—the regression back to maternal plenitude that the Entertainment achieves translates into a masculinist appropriation of the female body through the visual apparatus.

Laura Mulvey notes that “cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasure looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect” (17). Through “controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative)” and “controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing) ... cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire” (25, 25). The male gaze that the cinematic apparatus produces, closely related to the Lacanian formation of the subject occurring during the mirror stage, rejuvenates the viewer's ideal-ego in a narcissistic relationship by realizing the male phantasy through the projection of the female as an object of inferiority. This is why Incandenza's film perverts maternal plenitude into a “scopophilic thing” (230), an endless, recursive, narcissistic loop that infantilizes the spectator in masturbatory pleasure. As a “brilliant optician and technician” (740), Incandenza specializes in manipulating the apparatus through his highly technical and stylistic innovations to articulate a masculinist gaze. Employing the “auto-wobble” (230)

camera lens that distorts the image it captures into a “milky blur” (939), Incandenza’s compositional centering of the camera on either Joelle’s “corporeally gorgeous, ravishing” (788) naked body or her body embellished with “an incredible white floor-length gown of some sort of flowing material” (939) renders her into “a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, [becomes] the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator’s look” (Mulvey 22). Imaged as the erotic and/or chaste object, Joelle falls under male fetishistic scopophilia, the “build[ing] up [of] the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself” (21).

Notably, Medusa and Odalisque are equally subjects of the gaze as they are objects. Their ability to petrify onlookers with their gaze potentially reverses the male/subject female/object hierarchy in the structures of the male gaze. Noting the cultural symbology of Medusa, Miriam Robbins Dexter posits that “the head [of Medusa] as vulva can be terrifying to a male, evoking both the fear of decapitation and castration, and the fear of overpowering female sexuality” (39). Significantly, then, Joelle, rather than embodying a powerful Medusa/Odalisque subject on the screen that is able to gaze back at the spectator, remains the object of the male gaze in the literal sense of lacking a gaze to return back to the viewer. Whether or not Joelle is veiled or unveiled during the filming, it is clear that her face is either obstructed or distorted from the neonatal lens that produces a “milky blur” (939): she notes that “My face wasn’t important. You never got the sense it was meant to be captured realistically by this lens” (940). Thus, like the Greek hero Perseus who “rather unheroically killed Medusa while she slept, using a mirror to allow himself to safely see Medusa’s face and avoid the magic of her gaze” (Dexter 31), Incandenza “decapitates” Joelle through “blank[ing] out [her face] by undulating computer-generated squares of color or anamorphosiz[ing it] into unrecognizability as any kind of face” (788).

The camera apparatus as a kind of screen-mirror for the spectator (not unlike Perseus's reflective shield) renders Joelle-as-Medusa headless, allowing the spectator to dismantle Joelle-Medusa's returning gaze, and thus, her agency. The Entertainment itself, then, appropriating its own reproductive agency, becomes a kind of perverted Medusa-Odalisque contraption, inducing viewers into catatonia by regressing them into a hermetic womb of solipsistic narcissism. Wallace explicitly hints at the dangers that ensue in Lacan's formulation of desire through Incandenza's other film, *(The) Desire to Desire*, which involves a "pathology resident ... fall[ing] in love with a beautiful cadaver" that dies trying to rescue her paralyzed sister "from the attack of an oversized feral infant" (991 n. 24). As though the film serves as a kind of parodic sequel to the Entertainment, Wallace warns us of the fatal consequences that follow the logical conclusion to the infantilization of the narcissistic spectator: like the enormous feral infant who ends up killing the female in the film, so too does the infantilized spectator lend hand to the destruction of the female body through its perpetual narcissism (significantly, it is similarly Joelle who plays the role of beautiful cadaver in the film).

The deflection of castration anxiety is not only demonstrated through fetishistic scopophilia in the Entertainment but through the devaluation, humiliation, and punishment of the female as object: Joelle as mother must become a provider of plenitude while also embodying an object of guilt upon which the spectator can project his feelings of resentment and anger. Thus, Joelle-as-object produces a voyeuristic gaze for the spectator, as "voyeurism ... has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness" (21). With at least twenty minutes of permutations of Joelle apologizing ("I'm so sorry. I'm so terribly sorry. I am so, so sorry. Please know how very, very, very sorry I am" [939]), the spectator is granted an active controlling

participation in devaluing and punishing the mother figure. If a woman's "visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of actions in moments of erotic contemplation" (19), Incandenza's Entertainment freezes the woman in perpetual erotic and guilty contemplation in the most literal sense of lacking any structure of narrative movement. As such, the apologizing mother-figure Joelle plays onscreen becomes a double-coded linchpin to Incandenza's film: her apologetic, guilt-ridden maternal duty to compensate the good that the viewer lacks, in turn, becomes Incandenza's monstrous "scopophilic thing" (230). Enclosed inside Incandenza's hermetic, aestheticized artifact, Joelle "does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory, which oscillates between [the] memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack" (Mulvey 14).

Consequently, Incandenza's Entertainment ironically shares in common with his other experimental films the tendency to trap itself, and its viewers, in a dangerously regressive self-reflexive loop. Amongst the numerous films cited in his filmography is "[t]he most hated Incandenza film" (397) entitled *The Joke* that exemplifies the apex of his aesthetic self-referentiality: "two Ikegami EC-35 video cameras in theater record the 'film's' audience and project the resultant raster onto screen—the theater audience watching itself watch itself get the obvious 'joke' and become increasingly self-conscious and uncomfortable and hostile" (988-9 n. 24). The hermetic solipsism and narcissism that Incandenza's metafilms portray—'Medusa v. Odisseus' included—encapsulate Wallace's critique towards what he identified as the problematic dominant trend of postmodern metafiction that followed the footsteps of writers such as John Barth, Robert Coover, and Donald Barthelme:³ as the narrator in Wallace's novella, "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," states, metafiction is "untrue, as a lover. ... Itself is its only object. It's the act of a lonely solipsist's self-love, a night-light on

the black fifth wall of being a subject, a face in a crowd. It's lovers not being lovers. Kissing their own spine. Fucking themselves" (*Girl with Curious Hair* 332). Similarly, Joelle finds that Incandenza's works are "oddly hollow, empty, [with] no sense of dramatic towardness—no narrative movement toward a real story; no emotional movement toward an audience ... more like a very smart person conversing with himself" (740). Noting how the "illusion of autonomy" presents "destructive interactions with environments that operate recursively, which leads to deep irresponsibility to the environment and/or to the peoples of the earth" (677), Katherine N. Hayles argues that Incandenza's nickname, Himself, reflects how he is "so inward-bent that any nominative referring to him must include an intensifier of selfhood" (689). Thus, despite the fact that Incandenza's reason for producing the Entertainment in the first place involved a means to communicate to Hal in a last-ditch attempt to rescue his son from his own paralyzing self-alienation, Hayles argues that the film ultimately fails precisely because "it reinscribes with toxic force the illusion of autonomy and the fact of recursivity" (692)—the toxicity of Incandenza's inward-bending solipsism. Of 'The Medusa v. the Odalisque' in particular, Joelle notes that it is "cold, allusive, inbent, hostile: the only feeling for the audience one of contempt, the meta-audience in the film's theater presented as objects long before they turn to blind stone" (740). If the apologizing maternal-Death figure in the fatal Entertainment produces in the viewer a recursive, endless loop of infantile narcissism through objectifying the female, Incandenza's metafilms produce authorial male narcissism through objectifying the audience. Thus, while metafiction is particularly suited for ideologically interrogating the social/political/aesthetic frameworks through which representational systems are constructed through its self-reflexive metacritical interrogation, Incandenza's metafilms, while diametrically opposed to his Entertainment, fortify a similar self-involuting narcissism

precisely through their appropriation of individuals—whether they be onscreen subjects or the audience—as objects.

In resistance against becoming an eroticized object under male scopophilia and voyeurism, Joelle in the larger world of *Infinite Jest* uses the veil as the key counter-hegemonic apparatus to defer the stability of the gaze through a kind of visual evasion by continually refusing to give a clear answer on the actuality of her physical features. Speaking to a group of Quebecois terrorists, Joelle notes that she “used to go around saying the veil was to disguise lethal perfection ... [because she] was too lethally beautiful for people to stand. It was a kind of joke” (940). The phrase made subjunctive here—that it was a kind of joke—obscures what exactly is explicated as false grounds: Is it a “joke” because she is deformed in actuality or that her beauty, being so lethal, required her to facetiously require a donning of a veil in order to prevent the infamous “Actaeon Complex”? Interrogated by Don Gately as to whether she was horribly deformed or not, Joelle sarcastically remarks in similar evasive rhetoric: “Don, I’m perfect. I’m so beautiful I drive anybody with a nervous system out of their fucking mind. ... I am so beautiful I am deformed. ... I am deformed with beauty” (538). Refusing to inscribe her body as either monster or madonna, Joelle equivocates her physicality not so much as to conceal her physicality but to raise and interrogate the representational problematic of how both deformity and beauty become inscribed under the male gaze. Her liminality finally deconstructs the very framework of the beauty/deformity binary precisely in order to demonstrate how the articulation of the archetype binary itself functions as an act of appropriation within patriarchal discourse—a discourse that is counteracted by U.H.I.D.’s representational politics of the veil. As Joelle explains to Gately,

U.H.I.D.’s First Step is admission of powerlessness over the need to hide. U.H.I.D. allows members to be open about their

essential need for concealment. In other words we don the veil. We don the veil and wear the veil proudly and stand very straight and walk briskly wherever we wish, veiled and hidden, and but now completely up-front and unashamed about the fact that how we appear to others affects us deeply, about the fact that we want to be shielded from all sight. U.H.I.D. supports us in our decision to hide openly. (535)

While the concealment of the female body is far from a viable mode of counter-hegemonic praxis, Joelle's veil is at least partially subversive in denying her body any mode of representational imaging. The veil operates as a radical space of indeterminacy that temporarily resists patriarchal signification onto the female body, denying an inscription of either monster or madonna. Noting the hybridized crossovers of written and visual representations and practices in the novel, Philip Sayers notes that Joelle's "eyes are figured as the lens of a camera, her veil a filter over it ... serv[ing] the function of protecting her from being seen" (Sayers 361). What Sayers argues as this kind of "semiotic hybridity" (361) that Wallace constructs in the novel between the language of the written and the visual, then, functions for Joelle as a kind of counter-representational aesthetic: through using her own veil as a kind of counter-apparatus, Joelle is able to appropriate her own visual apparatus, essentially inverting the male/active-female/passive hierarchy inscribed within the structures of the male gaze. Paradoxically, then, it is precisely her "open concealment" that inverts the male gaze: the veil, as a kind of camera, now gazes the gazer, equipping Joelle with a counter-active female gaze that masks her own line of visibility.

Noting the various recursive structures of narcissistic desire that haunts the various characters in the novel, Mary K. Holland argues that the novel ultimately fails to articulate a successful exit out of the pathological narcissism that typifies Wallace's vision of American culture's

postmodern despair:

“recursivity” manifests itself not only as a method of escaping an illusion of the autonomous self but also, and even more forcefully, as evidence of the destructive implications of a culture that counters the potentially solipsistic autonomy of the individual with the self-obliterating invasion of the self through mediation. (225)

Holland’s nuanced point of inescapable recursion evinces how Joelle’s anti-representational politics of open concealment—entrapped within the paradoxical spaces of openness and concealment—becomes something far from an emancipatory, successful praxis of resistance. Subverting this narcissistic loop of male scopophilia results in a further form of regressive recursivity: the veil also contains as much as it conceals. Shortly before her suicide attempt in Molly Notkin’s apartment, Joelle expresses her feeling of alienated containment:

The rain’s wet veil blurs things like Jim had designed his neonatal lens to blur things in imitation of a neonatal retina, everything recognizable and yet without outline. A blur that’s more deforming than fuzzy. ... What looks like the cage’s exit is actually the bars of the cage. ... The entrance says EXIT. There isn’t an exit. The ultimate annular fusion: that of exhibit and its cage. ... It is the cage that has entered her, somehow. (222)

The metaphor of the veil as a cage here, again, alerts us to Joelle’s double-bind: every exit out of the gaze is actually another entrance to it. This inescapable entrapment is exemplified most starkly in Incandenza’s film, aptly entitled *Cage*, involving a “[s]oliloquized parody of a broadcast-television advertisement for shampoo, utilizing four convex mirrors, two planar mirrors, and one actress” (986 n. 24). Outnumbered by the multiple cameras with their reflective Perseus-like lens surrounding and imaging her, Joelle too, stands as the lone actress on the set of *Infinite Jest*.

Resisting the gaze means the gaze has already penetrated upon the female body: there is nothing outside the gaze.

Answering as to why *Infinite Jest* had turned out to become such an enormous book in a television interview, Wallace curiously—and, yes, rather unwarily—added that

feminists are saying white males have [this] Okay-I'm-going-to-sit-down-and-write-this-enormous-book-and-impose-my-phallus-on-the-consciousness-of-the-world [complex] ... if that was going on, it was going on a level of awareness I do not want to have access to. (Charlie Rose)

However, evading the fall into such a mode of phallogocentric writing does indeed occur on a conscious “level of awareness” for Wallace, a particular mode of masculinist representation in art that *Infinite Jest* very much “gives access” to for ideological interrogation. The novel, too, wielding its own aesthetic apparatus and representational system, incorporates various codes and conventions to produce a particular gaze and a world—yet it attempts to invert this phallogocentric aesthetic that Incandenza’s film incorporates by producing a metafictional disjunction between itself and the film, refusing to satisfy our own voyeuristic desire to see the film within the novel’s diegetic frame. Thus, the novel itself functions as a kind of veil, doubling Joelle’s resistance by refusing to disclose her physicality to the reader through its own various narrative aporia and gaps. With even the archived filmography of James O. Incandenza stated as having “no other definitive data” on the film (the film is listed as “unfinished, unseen” [993 n. 24]), the actual content of the lethal film remains tantalizingly nebulous: Wallace’s metafictional ekphrasis of the film within the novel prevents the reader from ever directly experiencing or “seeing” the Entertainment. Standing as the novel’s central symbol and its aesthetic doppelgänger, Incandenza’s Entertainment functions as the paramount center organizing and linking all of the subnarratives together.

It is significant, then, that “the book’s primary symbol is in fact an absent center” (Boswell 126) through this anti-representational counter-aesthetic that *Infinite Jest* constructs. ‘The Medusa v. Odalisque’ —whereby the “[m]obile holograms of two visually lethal mythologic females duel with reflective surfaces onstage while a live crowd of spectators turns to stone” (988 n. 24)—is itself a metafilm of a play occurring within a film. *Infinite Jest* too contains within itself an ekphrastic film that self-reflexively points us to the larger novel, but the novel is a complete inversion of ‘The Medusa v. Odalisque’: our readerly gazes have been refused. Neither to ruby nor stone we have turned.

NOTES

- ¹ I will hereafter refer to James O. Incandenza's *Infinite Jest* as the Entertainment.
- ² Parsing out the chronology of *Infinite Jest* is notoriously complex. I thank Stephen J. Burn's meticulous chronology of the novel for gathering this information. See pages 94-95 in *David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest: A Reader's Guide*.
- ³ In an interview with Larry McCaffery, Wallace notes: "[Metafiction] helps reveal fiction as a mediated experience. Plus it reminds us that there's always a recursive component to utterance. This was important, because language's self-consciousness had always been there, but neither writers nor critics nor readers wanted to be reminded of it. But we ended up seeing why recursion's dangerous, and maybe why everybody wanted to keep linguistic self-consciousness out of the show. It gets empty and solipsistic real fast. It spirals on itself. By the mid-seventies, I think, everything useful about the mode has been exhausted, and the crank-turners had descended. By the eighties it'd become a godawful trap" (142).

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**FOMENTING PARANOIA: HOAXES
AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

BY DANIEL POWELL

On 22 October 2012, a tropical depression formed in the southern Caribbean Sea, just off the coast of Nicaragua. The storm slowly gathered momentum and, over the course of the next week, the depression evolved into the destructive Hurricane Sandy. It lashed the Eastern Seaboard, leaving a path of destruction that some have estimated will amount to more than \$50 billion dollars in total economic damages (Drye).

While demoralizing to a country already saddled with a sluggish economy, those substantial material losses were but one negative outcome of the storm. The storm contributed to more than one hundred fatalities and displaced thousands as it moved slowly inland, creating a sense of fear and anxiety for many in its path. Dubbed “Superstorm Sandy” by some, this media-driven moniker perhaps contributed to the social anxiety that flourished in the digital environment as the storm descended on the Atlantic states. The prevalence of misinformation and inauthentic “reporting” in the immediate aftermath of Sandy’s landfall illustrates a troubling paradox that we’ve seen all too often in recent years—a majority

of Americans have access to a greater supply of credible information than at any other time in human history via the Internet, and yet we often place our trust in evidence that is patently false. Some of these beliefs fossilize over time, fueling a bevy of popular conspiracy theories and digital hoaxes whose primary channel for dissemination is the Internet. The very features that draw us to the medium—its accessibility, anonymity, and sense of inclusion—also contribute to the sense of false credibility that perpetuates these widely held beliefs, in turn presenting barriers to the rational discussion of world events, politics, religion, and social customs.

The events surrounding Hurricane Sandy, and our collective digital reaction to this tragic weather event, represent a useful and timely example of this paradox. The storm's enormous dimensions (it sprawled across hundreds of miles just prior to making landfall in coastal New Jersey) caused disruptions in power for over eight million residents in the upper Atlantic region. Accessing reliable storm information became difficult, particularly for those who had lost power and found themselves in the storm's path. Understanding that there were hundreds of thousands without ready access to television news reports, agencies such as NBC and CBS took the unusual steps of expanding their online reporting to those who could only stream the broadcasts on their personal electronic devices. While it was laudable for the major networks to expand their online coverage of the storm, scores of Americans looked elsewhere for their updates, turning instead to social media. The dearth of credible information left a vacuum, and dubious reports filled the void.

ABC News reported that, just prior to the storm's landfall, there were over seven million tweets referencing Hurricane Sandy (Venutolo). This speaks to the duality inherent in our culture's tricky relationship with technology: information, while not always credible, is ubiquitous in America. As Paul Farhi states in his article "Trolls find nothing sacred in storm," in the "Twitter age, bad news travels fast. Even when the bad news

isn't really news at all." Popular hoax-investigation website *Snopes.com* presents fourteen images (some are digitally fabricated, while others are still photographs from blockbuster films) that purportedly show Sandy's impacts on New York and New Jersey. These include Photoshopped images of sharks swimming through the streets of New Jersey, flooded Manhattan McDonald's restaurants, and fifty-foot waves crashing against the Statue of Liberty. They were liberally shared via social media outlets such as Twitter, obfuscating the impacts of a serious storm and potentially creating confusion and fear for those viewing them.

Some of these digital hoaxes are simply absurd in their extremity, while others are instantly recognizable to those with the slightest modicum of exposure to American popular culture. The case remains, however, that none of these images is a laughing matter when a storm is on the move in real time and millions are without access to radio or television. It's true that Americans live in an era of digital ubiquity, and yet there are still large segments of our population who lack the technical savvy to sift the Internet for credible information. In the case of an event unfolding before a nation's eyes—right there on our television and computer screens—the consequences of these hoaxes can be disastrous. On one end of the spectrum, there exists a potential for generalized anxiety among loved ones for their friends and family in the storm's path; on the more extreme end, there is a risk for obfuscating critical information that can save lives, as many regional and national disaster-response agencies (such as the American Red Cross) have taken to social media to disseminate action plans and coordinate rescue efforts.

We've seen similar responses to devastating storms in the past. *Snopes.com* reserves an entire (and growing) category for information surrounding Hurricane Katrina and its impacts on the Gulf Coast. There are currently fifty-two articles debating the merits of information disseminated on topics ranging from crime and politics to charity and

prophecy concerning the storm. We can likely expect more of the same in the near future, as many of the worst storms (based on the metrics of storm intensity, loss of life, and economic impact) on record have occurred in the last ten years (“A History of Destruction”). Our culture is still adjusting to the increasing frequency of these devastating events, and an important aspect of that adjustment seems to be our relationship to technology and our ability to communicate honestly in times of crisis.

The cultural treatment of these storms and their aftermaths—including the news stories debunking the hoaxes and the extended discussion of the faux news items in chatrooms, on blogs, and in discussion forums—creates a pair of interesting questions: why is the Internet such a fertile environment for the spread of disingenuous information, and how does this information operate within the psyches of the users?

In a partial response to the latter, temporality is an important factor in how false information is spread and becomes popularized. If digital hoaxes such as those evidenced during Hurricane Sandy can have disastrous consequences in the moment, it is the sustenance of conspiracism over time that can have long-lasting impacts on our culture’s tricky relationship with factual reality.

In his book *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*, Jovan Byford offers the following synopsis on the topic:

The principal medium for the transmission of conspiracy theories today, however, is neither the press nor television, but the internet. The kind of conspiracy theorizing that a generation ago was disseminated in photocopied newsletters and pamphlets, in books sold in specialist bookshops or through mail order catalogues, or in amateur videos that were costly to produce and distribute can now reach, via the world wide web, a large proportion of the (developed) world instantly and at minimal cost. Over the past 15 years, conspiracy theories have

spread like wildfire through the internet, to the point where, in September 2010, the search-term ‘conspiracy’ yielded close to 30 million results on Google. (11)

The same search today returns 125 million results.

That conspiracy theories and web hoaxes are popular in the online environment is not in question, but an investigation into their component parts and the scope of their cultural captivation can yield insights into a question that is crucial to any successful society: How do we *know* what we think we know?

BELIEF AND CREDIBILITY

A pair of prominent theories on the philosophy of belief informs this discussion. The first, advanced by Cambridge mathematician and philosopher William Kingdon Clifford, holds that it “is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence” (Chignell). Clifford structures his assertions around a narrative, a tale of an unscrupulous ship owner who took payment for transatlantic passage even though he knew his vessel was not seaworthy. When the ship sank and he pocketed the insurance money, the ship owner assuaged his guilt by insisting that the craft had been sound, despite evidence to the contrary. Clifford states that the ship’s owner had acquired his belief “not by honestly earning it in patient investigation, but by stifling his doubts” (Chignell). Clifford’s absolute belief in the importance of sufficient evidence creates a second postulate in his philosophy. He states that it is also “wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to ignore evidence that is relevant to his beliefs, or to dismiss relevant evidence in a facile way” (Chignell).

A counterpoint to Clifford’s principle is provided by American philosopher and psychologist William James, who argues that “there are some contexts in which it is permitted to form a belief even though we

don't have sufficient evidence for it, and even though we know that we don't" (Chignell). James believes that excluding such philosophical ideals as faith in our belief-formation processes could constitute failures of the individual intellect, or our collective social mores. James does advance a series of criteria, however, for qualifying his definition:

In "The Will to Believe" he lays out a series of strict conditions under which an "option" counts as "genuine" and believing without sufficient evidence is permissible or required. For instance, the option must be between "live" hypotheses—i.e. hypotheses that are "among the mind's possibilities" (thus, belief in the ancient Greek gods is not a live option for us these days). There must also be no compelling evidence one way or the other, the option must be "forced" such that doing nothing is also in effect to make a choice, and the option must concern a "momentous" issue. In the absence of those conditions, James reverts happily to a broadly Evidentialist picture. (Chignell)

These conflicting views foreground an important debate at the center of human philosophy—how do we account for the complexity and diversity of our beliefs? For some, simply seeing *is* believing. For others, no amount of contradictory evidence is enough to dispel a deeply held conviction. And still for a third group, skepticism is the default position and carefully tested evidence is the only concrete pathway to forming a personal belief.

Even these conflicting definitions fail to adequately capture the basis of belief for some. In an article published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* titled "Dead and Alive: Belief in Contradictory Conspiracy Theories," Michael J. Wood and his coauthors conclude that evaluating sufficient evidence is often inconsequential in the perpetuation of many widely held conspiracy beliefs. The authors presented British undergraduates with a series of popular conspiracy scenarios describing the deaths of Osama bin Laden and Princess Diana. They found that

survey subjects expressed a belief in “mutually contradictory” conspiracy theories. “This finding supports our contention that the monological nature of conspiracism is driven not by conspiracy theories directly supporting one another but by the coherence of each theory with higher-order beliefs that support the idea of conspiracy in general” (Wood, Douglas, and Sutton 5). This indicates that larger, more deeply held personal biases—things such as prejudice, anti-authoritarianism, a distrust of “official” narratives, and groupthink mentality—impact our beliefs more fundamentally than does the presence (or exclusion) of evidence. Wood and his coauthors explain the impact of new conspiracy theories on those “heavily invested in conspiracism” as cumulative. Even if contradictory, a fresh perspective on a given topic seems more reliable because it diverges from the official narrative. This momentum of falsity is particularly prevalent in environments that flourish on the Internet—a medium whose reach, anonymity, and access allows for a constantly shifting narrative to emerge and evolve.

THE MEDIUM MATTERS

The practice of assessing belief stands at the center of the inquiries made by Stanford University’s Persuasive Technology Lab. The lab’s Web Credibility Project poses the following question: What causes people to believe (or not believe) what they find on the web?

As part of the response to that question, the project has created a set of guidelines for assessing web credibility. The lab’s leading researcher, Dr. B.J. Fogg, argues that “credibility is a ‘perceived quality’ that ‘doesn’t reside in an object, a person, or a piece of information’” (Freeman and Spyridakis). Fogg’s assertion tends to fall more closely in line with James’s theory on belief; it grants the consumers of information wider latitude in how they assess and evaluate Web sites, with the perception of quality certainly emerging as a subjective rationale.

The guidelines include advice on such rhetorical considerations as visual design, resource documentation, physical presence, and contact information. That final element is the source of an investigation by authors Kris S. Freeman and Jan H. Spyridakis, who analyze the importance of contact pathway links in establishing webpage credibility. Their study, recounted in the essay “Effect of Contact Information on the Credibility of Online Health Information,” analyzed responses on “cues to credibility” from among over one hundred survey respondents who were asked to look at a one-page web article on diabetes before answering a questionnaire. The article contained some text, a logo, and contact information. “To minimize effects on credibility, we removed all references, sources, and the byline” (Freeman and Spyridakis 155). A pair of fictitious physical addresses was included on the webpage—one intended to convey a higher profile in the form of a Washington, D.C., address, and the other, situated in North Dakota, meant to infer no credibility beyond the mere presence of an address. Upon reflection, the authors concluded:

Although our study focused on medical information, the results very likely apply to other types of webpages ... our paper shows that even seemingly simple factors, such as contact information, may elicit unexpected responses among readers that may vary by demographic group. Nevertheless, our research supports the increasingly common practice of including a contact link in page templates at all levels of a website. (163)

This is where factors such as creator anonymity and unchecked access lead to potentially confusing results in determining credibility online. Implementing something as simple as a fake contact page can lend false credence to information that has been altered, is false, or is irresponsibly positioned.

One need only type the words “pacific north” into his or her Google

search window to yield author Lyle Zapato's website *Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus* (<<http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>>) as the third result. While the website is most likely interpreted as whimsical farce by even its most naïve users, it *has* created some confusion since its inception in 1998. A general search for stories on readers duped by the site produces a sizable number of results—so many, in fact, that apparently some educators have begun to use the website as a tool in teaching digital literacy to their students. As *Xconomy.com* correspondent Wade Roush points out:

The question is whether children raised on the Web can parse reality properly. And every so often the educational establishment and the mainstream media—most recently, the *New York Times*—drag up Zapato's site as an example of the kind of seemingly authoritative material that gives the Web a bad name, by fooling unsuspecting young Internet users into thinking it's for real. *Edutopia*, the magazine of the George Lucas Educational Foundation, recently denounced the tree octopus site as full of “pseudoscience” and “outright lies.”

With its accessible two-column design, horizontal menu, slick production values, and chunks of easily read “information,” the site could appear convincing to the unsophisticated user. Zapato effectively links to legitimate conservation organizations to establish a sense of credibility for his preposterous mission to save the threatened “arboreal cephalopod.” There are additional layers of esoteric context a user must fully decipher to intuit the site's creative intentions. Two of the faux publications listed on the site include the term “Cascadia” in their title, a reference to the short-lived notion of creating a utopian territory spanning parts of Oregon and Washington, the latter of which is Zapato's home state. The horizontal menu includes, among other pathways, links to fabricated news stories (“Media”) and misrepresented data (“FAQs”), including a legitimate link

to the online version of the *Merriam Webster's Dictionary's* discussion of the plural form of the word "octopus." The only contact information on the site includes a direct link to the author which, however informal, does confer a sense of approachability and physical materiality.

While Zapato's long-established site represents a harmless example of the internet's capacity to stretch the limits of credible information, there are dozens of examples of sites that take conspiracism into potentially exploitive places by both promoting paranoia and preying financially on their users. The commodification of belief (or the financial exploitation of those seeking any deviation from normative narratives, regardless of factual evidence) exposes another layer of the potentially disastrous effects that fostering paranoia on the Internet can have on a culture. Not only can these practices lead to anxiety and obfuscation in the face of tragedy, but they can also put a serious dent in one's bank account.

The syndicated talk radio show *Coast to Coast AM* draws millions of listeners on a nightly basis, easily winning its timeslot. The show's immense popularity is due, in part, to its inclusion of multiple viewpoints: "And then it's on to the usual calls about alien-human hybrids, spiritual visitations and global conspiracies. But that's not all. [Host George] Noory combines the unexplained with something unexpected—in-depth chats with some of today's most respected scientists" (Dotinga). The combination of credible science mixed with anonymous conjecture has spilled, profitably, into the digital realm, where perhaps this strange marriage of seemingly contradictory ideals is best suited. In his article "Conspiracy Theories and Conspiracy Theorizing," Steve Clarke writes about the perception that most modern conspiracy theories are extremely unpopular in intellectual circles. Clarke argues that conspiracy theories are largely the product of Populism—filled with stories born of the ideas and narratives of the working class, and mostly propagated by those lacking college educations (77-78). By juxtaposing interviews with

credentialed scientists with anonymous narratives of alien abductions and other conspiracy theories, programs like *Coast to Coast AM* represent the bridge between scientific plausibility and the populist narrative.

Nowhere is that more clear than in Internet chatrooms and on conspiracy forums, where anonymity is the norm and academic credentialing is frequently dismissed with impunity (accentuating the earlier discussion of disbelief in “official narratives”) by participants. The show’s website, *coasttocoastam.com*, provides a pay service to subscribers (in addition to its sizable online store and ubiquitous advertising) to participate in chats such as these a few times each month. The deep intersection of “science” and commerce on a site that hopes to be taken (at least peripherally) seriously illustrates a substantial problem in relying on information that is packaged and produced to appear as credible: What incentive does an entity like *Coast to Coast AM* have in examining some of these conspiracy theories on a serious basis? Why disprove the prevalence of alien abductions when it sells so many coffee cups, drives so much traffic to the pay site, and forms a substantial block of monthly programming?

Despite the deep commercial influences in evidence throughout *coasttocoastam.com*, the site does a good job of meeting the ten guidelines for establishing authority listed with The Stanford Web Credibility Project, including an extensive contact page and a thorough description of the show and its primary purpose, which *is* to entertain. Still (and this is nothing new, nor unique to this program), the presentation of information in the digital environment, and its ability to foment genuine belief among the show’s listeners, falls far short of satisfying Clifford’s first principle on the merits of evidence.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

While the Internet can be an important tool in creating and

facilitating communication among members of various discourse groups, this connectivity can also represent a double-edged sword. As Jonathan Kay states in his book *Among the Truthers: A Journey Through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground*:

The Internet destroyed all of these [traditional] communications barriers overnight, which is why it immediately became the dominant hub for virtually every conspiracist subculture in existence—including jihadism. Communication on the web is cheap, global, immediate, and uncensored. And so it is perfectly suited for unfunded, geographically disparate activists seeking to promote a dissident message. (237)

Kay's text focuses on the so-called "9/11 Truth Movement," a series of complex conspiracist explanations for various levels of U.S. Government involvement in the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. His chapter "Democratizing Paranoia" effectively captures the role of the Internet in both brokering affinity spaces for the discussion of these narratives, but also in facilitating the ease of access. Simple Internet searches yield dozens of hits for places to discuss many popular conspiracy theories—from the notion that musician Tupac Shakur faked his own death to the decades-old myth that fluoridation of public water is a Communist plot to reduce the intelligence of American children.

Psychologist Irving Lester Janis's theories on groupthink mentality—among them the notion that some groups will attempt to minimize conflict by jumping to conclusions without the sufficient testing of evidence—can be seen in many contemporary internet conspiracy discussions (McCauley). A quick perusal through the three pages of contributions on the thread titled "The election was stolen/rigged!" (posted by 1337m4n on 5 November 2012 on the forum of the James Randi Educational Foundation's website) illustrates the principle well. While the first few posts tend to approach the topic with humor and

skepticism, the conversation quickly moves toward posts that tend to lend both theories and emotional support to the discussion. There is a sense of mutual self-congratulation among some posters, as if shared ideologies confirm the rationale for belief. As Kay asserts,

this positive social feedback becomes addictive, [and] the conspiracist's network of enablers grows—often to such a point that it crowds out the conspiracy theorist's nonbelieving friends. The process resembles the formation of an electronic cocoon that envelops a conspiracist with codependents. (237)

Our understanding of technology's impacts on the ways we communicate and our personal behaviors is still evolving, but evidence of precisely the behavior that Kay and Janis seem wary of is abundant on the Internet, and not merely in obscure conspiracy discussion forums. Mainstream digital news stories are teeming with conspiracy discussion in the comments sections, some extending thousands of remarks deep. In this sense, distrust of "official" narratives and fear of "higher-order" authorities are already deeply ingrained in America's internet culture.

SEPARATING THE SIGNAL FROM THE NOISE

Clarke maintains that the prevalence of conspiracy theories is generally a good thing for our culture—that these narratives challenge our society to improve our explanations for why things happen, that they occasionally *are* correct (he cites Watergate as his prime example), and that they "maintain openness in society" (91).

I wish I could share his optimism but, if the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy proved anything, it's that the future of digital communication looks anything but more open and honest. If sites like those operated by *Coast to Coast AM* continue to garner profits on the practice of peddling dubious information, and in creating a culture in which those narratives thrive, then this becomes a real impediment to the rational discussion

of important events. If Clarke's theories on populism accurately reflect the rationale for belief held by some, then the potential for an information gap exists, and one possible outcome of such a gap could be a stifling communication impasse for our culture. Transmitting fake and disingenuous information seems to serve less in the interests of unlocking informational gridlock than it does in actually *fracturing* it—creating a division between the gullible and the savvy ... between those that can access viable information efficiently and those who will fall victim to scams and lies.

And all the while those beliefs, frequently built on the foundation of doctored images and elaborate, often contradictory narratives, fossilize further into genuine belief—a crucial impediment to our society's ability to deal with critical collective issues.

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**“A GEOGRAPHY OF DISPARATE SPIRITS”: INTERROGATING PATHOLOGY AS
OPPRESSION IN “A WOMAN IS TALKING TO DEATH” AND “MENTAL”**

BY RUSTY RUST

Judy Grahn is hailed as a champion for working class women and is a prominent figure in early lesbian poetry alongside Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich. In *Identity Poetics*, Linda Garber references Grahn’s influence: “Judy Grahn was to lesbian feminism what Rich became in the 1970s and early 1980s” (31). Much of her poetry deals with the intersectional violence of heterosexism, classism, pathology, and race. In addition to the oppression that is portrayed within “A Woman Is Talking to Death,” Grahn’s poem “Mental” tackles the subject of mental health directly and interrogates analogous oppressive systems. Though the subjects of the poems differ, they share a similar context. Their pathology is demonstrated through the stigma and lack of agency that many of the subjects experience under the subjectivity of society, the mental health system, and repressive police forces. Grahn uses her poetry to interrogate the engrained prejudice within these social systems and although at times she seems conflicted, there is a clear call for a renegotiation of legitimacy and capacity—to see mental health as socially constructed.

Homosexual identities were historically deemed non-normative and categorized as a mental illness. Her poem “Edward the Dyke” is her most widely recognized challenge to the field of mental health and their classist control over the homosexual community.¹ Through this poem she attacked the capitalist and pathological structure of mental health and laid the foundation for further critical inquiry. Garber argues that, “[a]s an architect of lesbian feminism, Grahn indeed played a key role in transforming earlier conceptions of ‘the lesbian’ and the language used to pathologize her” (42). In Grahn’s poem “A Woman Is Talking to Death,” the most consistent oppressed subjects are the lesbian women that appear in these poems: “This woman is a lesbian be careful” (3.193). This not only refers to her homosexual subjectivity, but also her refusal to be defined by relationships with men. Though the content alludes to the stigma against homosexuality of the time, scholars have not focused on the way that these poems portray the homosexual subject as one that was marginalized through pathology within the mental health system.² Though Grahn’s primary identity is as a lesbian feminist poet, she was aware of the intersectionality of oppression: “the poem is ‘about’ the narrator’s particularly lesbian perspective. ... But Grahn’s inclusive conception of love and her focus on various forms of oppression—classism, sexism, racism as well as homophobia—belie such a simplistic reading of her lesbian feminist politics and poetic themes” (Garber 44). While much of her poetry deals with lesbian subjects, it is impossible to ignore her awareness of race and class within lesbian feminist movements. Grahn writes about human subjects as they are interconnected in the world and experience a multiplicity of identity.

This is also a reflection of the rights movements of the time both “the women’s movement and lesbian feminism were informed by the class consciousness and materialist analysis inherited from prevailing leftist movements of the 1960s” (Garber 33). On the West Coast,

women were banding together to form consciousness raising groups and discuss the ways in which their movement could be strengthened through recognition of difference and movement as a unified whole. Grahn was involved primarily with a lesbian feminist organization that sought power and recognition through the production of women's literature. This group was called the "Gay Women's Liberation Group," which became "the first lesbian-feminist collective on the West Coast, founded around 1969. The collective established the first women's bookstore, A Woman's Place, and the first all-woman press, the Women's Press Collective" (qtd. in Garber 31). Though other contemporary poets surrounded Grahn, she is often referred to as an originator of lesbian poetry. Viewing her as an originator of the lesbian feminist movement, "trains the spotlight onto the working-class materialist politics" as opposed to the "white middle class bias" that focusing on Adrienne Rich would uncover (Garber 33). In "A Woman Is Talking to Death," Grahn is credited for creating community in her poetry by, "calling into being ... a unified human communitas, a 'we' capable of containing and healing the divisions between subject positions that the capitalist appropriation of human labor, emotions, time, and lives has represented as natural and desirable" (qtd. in Garber 39). By redefining the way that Grahn write about lovers, she expands the notion of her community: "How many lovers have we left" (1.149). Grahn is able to evoke community in what are seemingly disparate categories of people and, though there isn't much scholarship on her poem "Mental," it also serves as a demonstration of this ability. Much of Grahn's work is in response to the oppression of working class and/or lesbian women through their pathologization in the 1960s and 1970s as both hysterical and homosexual, which was treated by psychiatrists as psychological disorders.

The category "homosexual" emerged only in relationship to its alternative heterosexual, which was deemed normative while the former

was considered perverse. Medical practitioners defined homosexuality as a lifestyle that could never be divorced from its sexual practice. This separated it from heterosexuality, which was perceived of as normal and never related back to its sexual practice. So while people only thought of homosexuals as sexually obsessive and defining everything through their sexual relationships, heterosexuality was normal and could be seen as separate from sex.

Furthermore, homosexuality was pathologized because of its deviation from normative lifestyle practices: “In the DSM-II, until 1973, homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder, a fact that aroused great hostility from the gay community. In 1970 gay rights protesters mobbed the APA annual meeting in San Francisco, shouting down speakers with whom they disagreed” (Cooper 6). Through this stringent regulation on people’s sexuality, the American Psychological Association made strong enemies within the gay community. Gay rights advocates were so outraged by the pathologization of their identities that they came out in numbers during The Gay Liberation to protest their unfair treatment within the medical community and the stigma that it had spread socially. Foucault recounts this saying, “homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (101). This language is represented in Grahn’s poetry through the reclamation of pathologizing language. In “A Woman Is Talking to Death” Grahn refers to her subjects as perverts when they help an older woman that had been raped. Grahn writes:

I actually did something loving
I took her in my arms, this woman,
until she could breathe right, and
my friends who are perverts too
they touched her too

we all touched her. (7.379-84)

The power in the language of this stanza is in the reclamation of the word “pervert” in the context that is being used in these lines. It should be normal to want to help and hold someone after they have been assaulted, but the perversion of this act signals that there is an unjust definition of perversion, since the word is being applied to consoling a beaten woman. Furthermore within the context of rape, this contrast between what is normal and what is perverse becomes clearer. The act that is more closely analyzed is not the rape in this poem but the comforting of one woman by another. The possible lesbianism becomes more of a focus than the rape of an older woman. Despite the demand for fair treatment within the psychiatric community, the APA did remove direct attacks on homosexuality from the DSM. However, instead of removing references to homosexuality entirely, the APA created a new category that stretched stigma against homosexuality into the late 1980s.

The head of the committee that would decide which disorders to list in the DSM III was Robert Spitzer. In order to figure out what belonged in the DSM, Spitzer needed to clearly define what would qualify as a mental health condition and “according to Spitzer’s definition a condition can only be a mental disorder if it causes distress or disability” (Cooper 7), which meant that homosexuality could not be defined as a disorder. So Spitzer created a category that would allow for homosexuals to receive medical treatment if they felt like their sexuality was either unwanted or caused them distress. This diagnosis was labeled Ego Dystonic Homosexuality. Though Spitzer’s decision reflected a political compromise that to some degree favored both communities, “the new DSM-111 category clearly implied that for some homosexuals the absence of heterosexual arousal may represent psychopathology. This was completely unacceptable to many who had championed the 1973 decision” (Spitzer 211). By pathologizing members of the community, the APA was still refusing to

recognize homosexuality as naturally occurring and just as normative as heterosexuality. The gay community that Judy Grahn was a part of saw “[l]esbian and gay identity [as] ... a ‘natural’ occurrence that is legitimate in its own right and a ‘cultural’ expression that is distinct from the larger social context” (Bravmann 85). Though some may have disagreed with this analysis, it was eventually decided that homosexuality was not a mental illness. The challenge to Ego Dystonic Homosexuality was finally heard in 1986 and all references to homosexuality were removed from the DSM, though stigma against homosexuals within society remained.

Judy Grahn positioned herself within society as an activist who advocated for women, lesbians, and those afflicted with mental health conditions. Since women were labeled “hysterical” and lesbians were regarded as “non-normative,” though these groups of people are not pathologized today in the same manner, both of these kinds of people were once considered mentally ill and/or dealing with a form of psychosis. Her poem is a reflection of the discourse surrounding this history; “A Woman Is Talking to Death’ examines how power is organized within the language of public discourse—trials, testimonies, interrogations, confessions, orders, name-calling, facts” (Tullis 73). The subjects of these poems interrogate their oppression and take control of their subject position through a demonstration of the control of language and thus their own agency. They reverse the rhetoric of pathology and claim autonomy from patriarchal structures of control; “Mental” takes on the subject position of a mother dealing with mental illness, a family member dealing with mental illness, and military veterans who have mental illness thrust upon them through social conditioning. In these stanzas she explores the same concepts of pathology, agency, and social structures that oppress the subjects within the poems, to reveal how authority, capitalism, and social stigma delegitimize these subject’s identities.

Grahn writes, “One characteristic of working class writing is that

we often pile up many events within a small amount of space rather than detailing the many implications of one or two events” (qtd. in Tullis 70). The representation of this piling up takes place in both “A Woman Is Talking to Death” and “Mental” which each have nine sections that tackle a variety of intersectional issues and different subject positions. As disparate as the subjects may seem, both poems have analogous discussions. In “A Woman Is Talking to Death” Grahn indicts various forms of authority, in this stanza she discusses the racialized brutality of the police:

Six big policemen answered the call,
all white, and no child *in* them.
They put the driver up against his car
And beat the hell out of him.
.....
you mutherfucking nigger.
that’s a fact. (1.134-37, 139-40)

By describing the policemen as big, she is setting up their authority through the use of space. It should be noted how she sets “all white” (135) apart from the others words in commas to reveal the racial difference and contrast with the hate-impregnated word “nigger” (139). She states that there is “no child *in* them” (135) signifying that they have lost their innocence. Additionally, in line 136, the authorities “put the driver against his car,” removing him from his agency as a driver—no longer in control of himself or his vehicle, he is now being controlled by authorities. This signifies a loss of freedom and agency because of the loss of his position. This brutality may seem separate from the sexist and heterosexist kind of subjectivity that is portrayed within the poem but the ability for one person of oppression to bear witness to another links them inextricably. Grahn supports this frame of an extended community by referring to the man as her lover, “[s]o I left—as I have left so many

of my lovers” (1.89-90). This not only signals a redefinition of love as Grahn has noted, “The poem contrasts sharply with what women know about the difference between love and death. ... [I]t began a redefinition for myself of the subject of love,” (qtd. in Carruthers 312) but it expands the possibility of what can be considered an inclusive community. Lovers are no longer just a romantic partner but people that need help.

The way that language is used within these poems signal a consistent reclamation of negative language and subjects that redefine themselves through their struggle for agency. In Grahn’s poem, “A Woman Is Talking to Death,” “we see the negotiations of a speaker, confined and contained in a web of language and social discourse, redefining herself and her relationship to language and others throughout the course of the poem” (Tullis 70). Perhaps Grahn’s vision of community in her poetry is creating a community of the oppressed rather than separating her subjects by race, ability, or sexuality. This same frame of reference to authority and intersectional violence is demonstrated in “Mental”:

And they shot him forty eight times shot forty eight times shot forty
eight times shot forty eight times shot forty eight times
they thought they saw Godzilla, giant dark crazy devil axis of evil
they thought they saw the great satan, yes that was surely him
.....
(he’s the mother of all bugs) (7.233-36, 239)

This stanza not only uses repetition to signify the excessive force of authority when describing the number of times the subject was shot, but also uses hyperbole by calling the subject “Godzilla” (235). This further calls into question the actions of the police officers. Grahn alludes to the subject’s place in society by referring to him as “the mother of all bugs” (239) or those that are unwanted. Bugs are small relative to the size of most people and can easily be squished. In some cases bugs can represent a racialized identity, such as in Oscar Zeta Acosta’s *Revolt of the Cockroach*

People, whose title is supposed to refer to Chicano/a people, which are referred to as cockroaches in the novel because of their ability to survive. So when Grahn refers to her subject in this poem as the “mother of all bugs” (39) she may be alluding to more racialized violence. Grahn interrogates both police and doctors within mental health as systems of authority and repression in the end of section seven of the poem when she places women within the context of mental health:

no need to fear your hysteria will bring chains
or a ring of whitecoat people terrified of getting sued,
or a ring of bluecoat people terrified. unto death.
and shooting. you. you-shooting-you. (7.254-57)

Though she is asking women to consider what it would be like to not have to fear any of the aforementioned items, the hypothetical statement indicates that these were/are real issues for women. The pathologizing of women’s bodies through hysteria, signals that women’s bodies were seen as sites for mental illness. The root of the word hysteria is meant to refer to the uterus. As such, the line “your hysteria will bring chains” (254) refers to the potential to be locked away for being a “nervous woman.” Chains not only signify the potential to be locked inside a mental institution, but the removal of agency since chains are restricting: “it is the material of violence and prejudice that we find repeated. If the poem were not words but actions, we might say that we were witnessing its uncontrollable compulsion to repeat, a compulsion that would reveal its drive toward death” (Avi-ram 3). The repetition of rings (254-55) also signifies this restriction in that rings are never-ending loops and to be surrounded by rings of authority further compels the reader to feel restricted. The words in this stanza create an abrasive texture that is emblematic of the oppressive structure of mental health. The authority is represented by coats of white and blue to call into being the reciprocal nature of oppression that can be perpetuated by the medical and police authorities.

However, the authorities recognize the agency in the beings that they are repressing because they are “terrified. Unto death” (256). This recognition of agency is what leads to the shooting as a way of removing agency and relieving fear. The location of agency within the subject “you-shooting-you” (257) causes the subject’s death.

Agency is also explored through absence in “A Woman Is Talking to Death” by the lesbian characters that are oppressed by systems of authority that are parallel to those previously mentioned.

[be] my witness—“No,” I said, I’ll be your
witness—later,” and I took his name
and number, “but I can’t stay with you,
I’m too frightened of the bridge, besides
I have a woman waiting
and no license—
and no tail lights—” (1.83-88)

The absence of agency becomes apparent within the first two lines in which the subject who is asked to be a witness explains that it is not possible for them to bare witness. She defers her witness and shares that she is frightened, which is not enough to signal a complete lack of agency. Though in the next couple of lines she reveals that she has a woman waiting and that is one of the chief reasons that she does not want to witness for this person. The female partner is couched within reasonable justification for departure, such as not having a license or the required safety equipment on a vehicle, but including the female partner signals a social stigma. In this poem, “the lesbian ‘I’ is ostracized, unwanted even when she tries to be conventionally helpful and socially constructive as a witness, a supporter of the police” (Carruthers 312). Later in the poem, the female lesbian subject interrogates her ability to be a witness:

that same week I looked into the mirror
and nobody was there to testify

how clear, an unemployed queer woman
makes no witness at all,
nobody was there at all for
those two questions: what does
she do, and who is she married to? (1.114-20)

In these lines, her lack of presence is referred to by the lack of a witness looking back at her from the mirror. While looking in the mirror she does not recognize a legitimate presence. Instead she allows her identity to be rendered invisible both by her own lack of recognition of potential for agency and resignation to authority. However, her agency is also socially negotiated and there isn't a clear way for her to be present within society because of her lack of employment and refusal to be defined by a relationship with a man. In this way she is seen as both a threat to capitalism, and thus class structures, as well as patriarchy. Even though there is some presence of agency in the ability to refuse hegemonic ideology within a society, the sacrifice is seen as legitimacy and privilege—even presence. The oppression of women and other subjects in this form offers no reasonable alternative to accepting dominant ideology.

Oppressive military structures perpetuate these rigid categories of identity that exclude homosexuals, those that once gave their health to serve their country, and subjugate women. Grahn uses a portion of “A Woman Is Talking to Death” to address the ways in which military structures have oppressed women through their labor and regulated their sexuality, “[t]his woman is a lesbian be careful” (3.193). She does not define herself through relationships with men, be careful. But she is a woman, so she can be ordered to take care of those who define themselves through men,

we were instructed to give her special attention
not because of the wart on her nose
but because of her husband, the general.

as many women as men die, and that's a fact. (3.202-05)

It's a fact that other women will be taken advantage of by patriarchal power structures for superficial reasons. Those women that define themselves through men will reap the privilege to be taken care of by others under their command. But it's a fact that in death all men and women are equal. Grahn's exploration of military regulation regarding sexuality involved the story of someone who was thrown out of the military for being a lesbian:

... They were my lovers, those
women, but nobody had taught us how to swim.
I drowned, I took 3 or 4 others down
when I signed the confession of what we
had done together. (3.240-44)

The sea that is represented seems to indicate the kind of patriarchal oppression that lesbian women in the military drown in trying to be themselves. Nobody taught them how to survive as lesbians within in an oppressive and male dominating military structure. So the careers of four women drowned. Though they acted together, "had done together" (244), in the end they were separated by the structure both literally and figuratively.

Repressive military structure is also present in "Mental" where Judy Grahn interrogates the ways in which the military industrial complex is complicit in creating pathological issues for soldiers. After training soldiers to kill others and putting them in situations where they witness violence and brutality, they are sent to live on the streets and treated as second-class citizens. This pathology mirrors the classist structure that lesbian women, hysterical women, and now veterans are made to endure: "... they will call you ... that word of prophets, murderers, and survivors ... that word that separates you from them that accomplish things: craaaaaazy ... they will call YOU ... craaazy" (9.405-08). This is the way

that a repressive society uses language to delegitimize real experiences and oppress victims of capitalistic and patriarchal structures. Grahn writes, “[e]veryone thinks schizophrenic means helpless and locked up for life but lo! there are a lot of functional folks with the illness and they have jobs and families, some have children (8.312-14). Through the language that is used to pathologize these “folks,” society reinforces these repressive notions through class, race, heterosexist, and ableist oppression. Language does more than describe people; it also asserts possibilities for what they may be capable of and sets limits for how others interact with and perceive them also.

Language impacts individuals, whether they are dealing with social constructions of mental illness like homosexuality and stress from wars or the “piling up of events” within the every day. The language demonstrated in these poems is used to marginalize subjects by fitting them into disparate categories such as “queer,” “crazy,” and “hysterical” to render them illegitimate. Possibilities for agency of these poetic subjects arise when these subjects break away from dominant ideology and seize the language of pathologization that used to bind them up—for others to view them differently and to recognize the larger societal structure’s complicity in creating these ill subjects. She challenges readers to consider how and why these subjects are considered ill.

What if we don't need to choose
Between lockdown asylums and the streets
what if we create geography of disparate spirits?
what if the space were set aside for behaviors like these:
dance on one leg, sing for hours off key,
scream and roll around,
hold your breath, accuse the universe of crimes
listen to essential messages from bees
rock all day pace all night

recognize strangers but not your family
pound your furies in the stalwart bodies of trees (“Mental”
7.242-52)

In this portion of the poem Grahn utilizes the same structure to demonstrate freedom that she uses to reveal their bondage in “A Woman Is Talking to Death.” When ordinary subjects were couched within extraordinary subjects and circumstances, it neutralized the contrast between the extraordinary and the ordinary. When being lesbian was equated to not having a license, it normalized lesbianism as criminal behavior. In this section she uses the same technique to normalize otherwise non-normative behaviors, “sing for hours off key ... recognize strangers but not your family” (246, 251). Mixing these behaviors within the same stanza creates a structural cohesion that symbolizes this possibility for a holistic view of normalized behavior. Furthermore, these lines have an end rhyme that cements their cohesion and this is repeated within the lines that end with “bees” (249) and “trees” (252). The stanza structure and the rhyme scheme work together to bring these “disparate” behaviors together.

Grahn sees the possibility for people to exist within a community that values difference; she discusses the ways in which the pathologization of people, and the oppression that it fosters, causes a breakdown in society. From working class women and lesbians that fight a patriarchal structure named “Death,” to creating a space for those that are deemed ill, her poetry stretches our ability to understand the complexities of identity and oppression. She demonstrates what must be shown rather than told. And though one subject struggles with her mother’s “illness” she also says, “[t]here are dances, notions and inspirations we can’t know except for butterflies” (“Mental” 7.276-77). There may be difficulties in understanding other structures of behavior but there is an inherent beauty in a perspective that we cannot ever fully know.

NOTES

- ¹ In “The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke,” Grahn directly challenges the capitalist and oppressive nature of the mental health complex through a caricature of a lesbian meeting with an overzealous and greedy doctor: “... The doctor pressed another switch and electric shocks jolted through her spine. Edward screamed ... Another switch and a photo of a gigantic erect male organ flashed into view, coated in powdered sugar. Dr. Knox handed Edward a lollipop. She sat up. “Im saved,” she said, tonguing the lollipop. “Your time is up,” Dr. Knox said. “Your check please. Come back next week.” “Yes sir yes sir,” Edward said as she went out the brown door. In his notebook, Dr. Knox made a quick sketch of his bank” (Grahn 16-18). This poem clearly interrogates the structure of mental health and the motives of the doctor who is treating his patient but imagining his money.
- ² Homosexuality was listed in the DSM II as a mental health disorder and removed in 1973. The DSM III relisted homosexuality as an Ego-Dystonic Homosexuality and regarded it as a Sexual Orientation Disturbance until 1986 when all references were completely removed (Spitzer 210).

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FLOATING ROOTS: DIASPORA AND PALIMPSEST IDENTITY IN
DANTICAT'S *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*
BY ASHLEY GREENWOOD

Writing from various intersections of oppression, the immigrant woman has the unique ability to offer multiple deconstructive critiques of her world. Unlike native citizens whose subjectivities and cultures are usually defined within unified nationalist discourse, a citizen of diaspora must construct identity and culture through an existence characterized by fracture and disunity. To be categorized as a member of the diaspora is to be characterized by movement and uprooting. Whether that movement comes from choice, necessity, or force, the flow of people and culture from one place to another is what gives diaspora subjectivity its uniquely organic form. For the diasporic writer, but particularly for the female diasporic writer, to embrace an identity of disunity and contradiction through textual creation is to craft a discursive space of existence beyond and between binary subjectivities defined by a racist, patriarchal, heterosexist society. To write in this way is an act of resistance. This paper will examine the way in which Edwidge Danticat, an author of the Caribbean diaspora, constructs a textual narrative in direct opposition to

binary totalities of identity.

Danticat includes construction of a subjectivity that exists both inside and outside the nationalisms of native and adoptive homes. The transient nature of a diasporic subjectivity “is associated with self and with community identities that are deterritorialized or constructed across borders and boundaries of phenomena such as race, ethnicity, nationality or citizenship” (Agnew 15). The deconstruction of the nation-state and the various economic, social and political technologies it employs (including but not limited to capitalism, colonialism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism) is essential to the construction of a truly egalitarian world. This type of radical subversion is a common characteristic of diaspora cultural production that seeks to resist “assimilation into the host country, ... to avoid social amnesia about ... collective histories ... [and] to revive, recreate, and invent their artistic, linguistic, economic, religious, cultural and political practices and productions” (Hua 193). The novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is an example of this type of diaspora production. It reveals a conscious attempt by its author to create hybrid (mis)classifications of identity. Danticat’s novel offers both an affirmation of diaspora subjectivity and an alternative methodology for the epistemic production of the subject.

Breath, Eyes, Memory is a novel of the *bildungsroman* tradition, semi-autobiographical, as it follows the coming of age of a young, Caribbean woman. However at the political level, the novel is deeply engaged in representing “the dual or paradoxical nature of diaspora consciousness ... that is caught between ‘here’ or ‘there’ ... and [that] is shaped by multilocality” (Agnew 14). *Breath, Eyes, Memory* offers the reader a window into the psyche of the narrator through its use of first-person narration; the psychic ambivalence expressed for both past homeland and present home through the narrators’ voices captures the hovering, rootless nature of the diaspora subjectivity. Constantly travelling back

and forth from their past/homeland and her present (future) home, the protagonist Sophie can be characterized as a subject of the diaspora, or a subject of multiple nations. Sophie rejects attempts of national inscription in a direct challenge to ideologies of assimilationist nationalism present in most Western nation states, particularly the United States. Instead, Danticat explores the painful process of *palimpsest* identity formation: the scraping off of preconceived, predetermined external expectations and the (re)inscription of self definition.

The Caribbean region has a long one-sided relationship with “official nationalisms” as technologies of imperialism. From the deliberate homogenizing of diverse African cultures through processes of slavery to the production of a colonial elite class, imperial nationalisms have been and continue to be contributing facets of postcolonial Caribbean national subject (re)production. For female subjects of the diaspora the ideological implications of imperialism, patriarchy, and assimilation arise as sites of palimpsest or self-(re)inscription. Palimpsest translated from its Greek and Latin roots means “again I scrape;” implied acknowledgement of the personally painful nature of (re)inscription makes palimpsest subjectivity ideal for understanding the ambivalent anti-anti-nationalist¹ identities (re)created by Danticat in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The idea of a palimpsest, the agential nature of (re)inscription, the allusion to writing itself, creates an ideal metaphor for thinking about the creation of diaspora subjectivity within the novel.

Despite the problems that arise from patriarchal formulations of nationhood, the task of constructing a national ideology in the postcolonial nation is an important undertaking. However, for the woman of the Caribbean diaspora monist national identification is not easily defined or even explicitly desired. In fact, nationhood, as in the investment or identification with a single nation-state, is not even a possibility for the Caribbean migrant woman. The identification

of a black diaspora has emerged in direct opposition to Western reproduction of the black subject as the essential Other to the white Self. Unity around shared histories of experience with similar operations of domination (slavery) and colonization (particularly the erasure of native cultural practices, religions, and languages), as well as experiences with neocolonialism in terms of assimilationist ideology employed by the adopted nation produces a diaspora subjectivity that defies monist conceptualizations of nationalism. The diaspora subject cannot be contained by a singular national identity. While authors like Danticat are often represented through hyphenated national identifications (e.g. Haitian-American), the seemingly dualist nature of their identification is actually a mark of their “alien” status within the larger American nation. Danticat is an author of the Caribbean diaspora who lives in the United States. Diaspora subjectivity, while acknowledging homeland and new home, occupies a third area that at once combines and deconstructs both nationalities to form a third “homeless” identification. The forging of an anti-nationalism, such as a diaspora consciousness, is an attempt to acknowledge both the power of national ideology to unify as well as represent the exclusionary monist nature of national consciousness.

Sophie’s attempts to craft her own female identity is hampered by the negative creative forces of patriarchy and imperialism; however Danticat attempts to counter this reality by creating a textually discursive, matrilocally epistemic subjectivity in her novel. In the essay “Diaspora and Cultural Memory,” Anh Hua utilizes quilting as a metaphor in order to conceptualize feminist, or woman centered projects, of cultural production. The historically feminine categorization of quilting and the communal aspects of quilting circles, as well as the agency exerted in crafting a piece, is very useful for understanding Danticat’s rejection of not only imperial but also patriarchal gender subjectivities (Hua 192). Myriam Chancy’s critique of masculine formulations of the exile is also

pertinent to the project of matrifocal subject production in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Chancy argues that masculine formulations of the exiled subject dominate literary and theoretical discourse (3). In effect, then the female exile or migrant writer must “not only ... strike a balance between their land of exile, which is usually a colonizing force, and their homeland ... they must also overcome the negation of their identities as women in a world that defines itself as male” (Chancy 4). In other words, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* tells the story of female exiles and experiences that speak directly to their lives.

My categorization of this novel as matrifocal in nature should not be understood as the novel merely substituting patriarchy, or male domination, with matriarchy, female domination. In actuality, matrifocality should be understood as a “mother-centered” group dynamic or one that values and maintains “close emotional ties between mothers and children” (Ho 113). In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* Sophie’s female subjectivity comes to be defined in opposition to both her migrant mother Martine and her mother/aunt Atie. At the ideological level, the production of a female subjectivity by female subjects is an important inversion of the processes of patriarchal subject formation. Ultimately, patriarchy can be understood as an ideological structure that “can be destroyed only by nonmaterial means, which is to say a psychocultural revolution” (Ho 116). The power of migrant women’s writing to be a technology of matrifocal ideological production should not be underestimated. According to Chancy, women of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora assert an identity that “is decisively selective in its assertion of a recuperated and rearticulated identity that is both individual and communal ... in ways which reaffirm the roots of origin while the self always remains cognizant of the fissuring” (5-6). In short, the discursive representation of Caribbean female diaspora subjectivity by Danticat should be understood as an attempt to “transform exile into a source

of self-integrity in order to move towards the reclamation of the ... homelands” women have been excluded from (Chancy 28).

Although *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is about a young Haitian immigrant living in America the novel begins and ends in Haiti. Literary critic Donette Francis suggests that Danticat’s decision to reject linearity, as well as her decision to set the novel in multiple locations “[suggests] that neither a chronological telling of events nor one of geographical space can explain the complexities of” the lives of women of the Haitian diaspora (76). In effect, Sophie travels not *back* home but *between* homes, as her nationality is truly double. Sophie’s ability to embrace both her homes by the end of the novel seems to be an important intervention by Danticat into formulations of the diaspora consciousness. Sophie is able to transcend feelings of homelessness; even better she creates her own home both in America and Haiti through self (re)inscription on her own terms. While Danticat is highly invested in resisting patriarchal nationalist and imperialist discourse through matrifocal intervention and subject formation, she is still able to critique the ways Haitian women themselves have some responsibility for the continued ideological silence around sexual violence and trauma through the practice of virginity testing.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* Edwidge Danticat takes up a critique of the limited potential for imperial and national subjectivities to accurately represent Haitian women. Although the tone of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is not overtly abrupt or confrontational the text is engaged in exposing the ambivalence of nationalistic subject production from the onset. The protagonist’s surname, Caco, is testament to Danticat’s project of resisting imperialism as well as establishing a dignified subjectivity for Haitian women both in Haiti and in the diaspora. The Cacos were Haitian peasant farmers who fought against the US marine presence in Haiti in the early part of the 20th century, however this same group was also

responsible for raping “women of the very nation they were assembled to protect” (Francis 77). Danticat’s decision to name her protagonist Sophie Caco “signifies the complicated space Haitian women occupy in both narratives of local resistance and narratives of American imperialism”; Sophie’s options for occupying an existing national identification are problematic at best (Francis 77). The last name Caco is a “nightmare ... passed on” (Danticat 234) to Martine and Sophie by Danticat in order to expose “a larger cultural framework that enforces misogynistic patriarchal values” (Francis 85). The larger cultural framework of which Francis speaks implicates not only Haitian, but also U.S. imperialist, ideologies concerning the formation of national female subjects.

For the Caco women, as well as for Haitian women as a whole, sexual trauma is an heirloom to be passed down through generations. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* this is represented through the relationship between Martine and Sophie. Sophie is the result of Martine’s rape by a Macoute, or a member of Duvalier’s rural militia. Martine’s rape and subsequent trauma is representative of actual state violence enacted against Haitian women, and it is an important way in which Danticat speaks directly to the silence around Haitian women’s sexual violation. While Danticat is interested in exposing the ways that patriarchy and imperialism have limited Haitian and Haitian diasporic female subjectivities, she is also interested in exposing women’s own complicity and maintenance of those same oppressive ideologies. In the novel this is exhibited through Martine’s testing of Sophie’s virginity. This process is carried out by insertion of Martine’s pinky finger into Sophie’s vagina to feel for an intact hymen. Martine claims that testing is something that “a mother is supposed to do...to her daughter until the daughter is married,” because “it is [the mother’s] responsibility to keep her [daughter] pure” (Danticat 61). However, for Sophie these tests are extreme violations to her subjectivity.

Martine’s sexual violation of Sophie exposes the way in which women

are sometimes responsible for the continued violation of other women. During Sophie's first test, Martine tells her the story of the *Marassa* in order to distract Sophie's mind from what is happening to her body. However, the story is much more than a simple distraction:

The *Marassas* were two inseparable lovers. They were the same person, duplicated in two. They looked the same, they talked the same, walked the same. When they laughed, they even laughed the same and when they cried, their tears were identical...When you love someone you want him to be closer to you than your *Marassa*. Closer than your shadow. You want him to be your soul. The more you are alike the easier this becomes. When you look in a stream, if you saw that man's face, wouldn't you think it was a water spirit? Wouldn't you scream? Wouldn't you think he was hiding under a sheet of water or behind a pane of glass to kill you? The love between a mother and a daughter is deeper than the sea. ... You and I could be like Marassas. You are giving up a lifetime with me. (84-85)

While the tale of the *Marassa* takes on a semi-sinister tone here, specifically because it is being used by Martine to subsume her physical violation of Sophie's body, the story is useful for understanding the potential Danticat sees for matrifocal identity formations. Martine sees Sophie and herself as *marassas* unified by the legacy of their sexual violation. In fact, Martine is making them identical by continuing the practice of testing on her daughter. However, Sophie's transformation into Martine's *marassa* can also be understood as Martine's desperate attempt to protect her daughter from the malicious masculine figure lurking in the shadows of this tale—an obvious allusion to male violation. While Martine's desire to fashion Sophie into her *marassa* through testing only sustains the environment of violence that both women desire escape from, her insistence that the love between mothers and daughters is “deeper than the sea” encompasses the

awesome potential of female voices to alter female realities. Ultimately, Sophie is able to understand her mother's violation of her as a symptom of Martine's own inability to retell, and thus begin to heal from, her own rape. For Danticat, silence equals death, which is why Martine, who is never able to voice her trauma, is dead at the end of the novel; while Sophie who has learned to verbalize her pain is alive and has achieved some sense of peace.

By the end of the novel Sophie is able to create a diaspora subjectivity that is rewritten in her voice through her rejection of testing; however, her first act of resistance is performed silently, on her body. After a prolonged period of testing Sophie reaches her breaking point, feeling as if "there [were] no longer any reason for [her] to live" (87). In this bleak state of mind Sophie recalls a Haitian folktale about a woman who could not stop bleeding no matter what she did or where she went. In desperation, the woman seeks out the *vodou* goddess Erzulie in order to be healed. Erzulie responds that if the woman "want[s] to stop bleeding ... she c[an] no longer be a woman," (87). The woman chooses to be a butterfly and "never [bleeds] again" (88). While posing as a tale of freeing transformation, the woman's metamorphosis into the butterfly actually negates her status as a human being: "If she wanted to stop bleeding, she would have to give up her right to be a human being" (87). In other words, death is the only escape from bleeding for the Haitian woman. While Sophie does not kill herself, she does kill her mother's *marassa* by destroying the need to continue the violation of testing. Sophie takes a pestle and destroys "the veil that always held [her] mother's finger back every time she had tested [her]" (88). Because Sophie is not able to verbally reject her mother's testing of her, she must use her body to kinesthetically rebel at the very sight of violation. While Sophie's self penetration does end the testing, the price of freedom is extremely high. Sophie's act of emancipation becomes the new site of her sexual trauma.

It is not until Sophie is able to talk, to verbalize her questions about testing to her grandmother (a woman who was also a victim/perpetrator of the practice), that she is able to come to terms with her sexual trauma and begin to heal.

When asked why she preformed the tests on her daughters, Grandmè Ifé replies that “everything a mother does, she does for her child’s own good”; however, she also tells Sophie that Sophie “cannot always carry the pain. [She] must liberate herself” (157). Finally, Grandmè Ifé validates Sophie’s pain by apologizing: “My heart, it weeps like a river ... for the pain we have caused you” (157). Sophie is able to verbalize her trauma. When she returns to the States she continues breaking the silence surrounding her painful sexual past. She even attends group therapy with two other women who have also “suffered sexual violations at the hands of their local cultures” (Francis 85). Ultimately Sophie is able to recognize her “hurt and [her mother’s] were links in a long chain,” a chain she has the power to break (203). Sophie’s ability to verbalize her trauma is distinctly tied to her status as a diasporic woman, because it is only through her status as insider/outsider that she is able to (re)inscribe herself. At the end of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie creates a palimpsest subjectivity for herself, an identity which scrapes off the pre-inscribed values, histories, and destinies surrounding Haitian women’s sexual violation determined by her culture, and by the external forces of patriarchy and nationalism. Sophie’s identity is, instead, rewritten in her hand.

Breath, Eyes, Memory is a consciously produced, extremely political representation of female diaspora subjectivity. The subjectivity forged within the novel attempts to represent a female subject of the diaspora in a way that rejects and resists dominant ideological expectations surrounding nation, gender and subject formation. The novel creates a discursive space which explodes monist conceptualizations of the nation-state, defies patriarchal determinations, and stresses the importance of orality and

community in identity formation through matrifocal contextualization. In short, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* can be counted among novels invested in the psychocultural revolution that is necessary to bring about the end of patriarchy, racism and imperialism at the ideological level.

NOTES

¹ While diaspora inherently resists the bounds of the traditional nation (anti-national), it does not deny the necessity of connectedness in some type of community formulation, which may or may not resemble a nation (anti-anti-national).

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CHILDREN OF EXILE: CULTURAL INFLUENCES FOR
THE TEMPEST'S SECOND GENERATION
BY ERIN ARENDSE

Critics have done extensive work toward creating a comprehensive reading of the colonizing narrative in *The Tempest*. Among the colonial elements pointed out by various critics are Prospero's authoritarian anxiety as it is played out toward Caliban (Kingsley-Smith, "Forgotten" 232), the "threat of miscegenation" (Chin 97), Prospero and Miranda's linguistic colonialization of Caliban (Greenblatt 23), and myriad other colonial and postcolonial elements. Sometimes however, colonial readings of *The Tempest* can be mistakenly taken as equivalent to readings of cultural identity in the text. This would be a mistake, since the island—uninhabited except by animals and spirits prior to the arrival of Sycorax, Caliban, Prospero, and Miranda—presents something of a cultural vacuum into which the play's central human characters bring their own ideas of cultural norms and identity. While normally the colonizer would operate on terms and ideas of "the Other" to establish their legitimacy and authority over the colonized, all the characters in *The Tempest* are "Other" on the island. Thus the colonizing narrative alone falls short

of representing the battle waged throughout the play for dominance in terms of cultural influence.

Cultural identity, in the sense that it represents a personal affiliation with particular values, language, and history, can remain relatively consistent in the context of a homogenous society or stable geographic location such as Renaissance Naples or Algiers. As Said says, “It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in a place*, being *at home in a place*” (8). Said points out here that one’s cultural self-identification can reveal something about the place they believe to be their home. But when confronted with a level of cultural rejection as seismic as exile or when coming into contact with a radically different cultural form, the individual’s sense of cultural identity cannot help but shift and reform.

To reach for a more complete reading of cultural identity and disparity in *The Tempest* requires, among other things, an in depth consideration of the effects of forced migration (namely exile) on each character’s personal perception of cultural identity as it appears in the play. As Peter Rose so eloquently states, “[For the exile and refugee] the normative order has broken down, old rules no longer obtain, social groups have been torn asunder, and there is often nowhere to turn” (9). Similarly, the island inhabited by the exiled characters of *The Tempest* is completely devoid of structures such as government and religion that normally spur nationalistic and colonizing actions. Thus, the interactions seen among the exiled characters of *The Tempest* can be seen as altogether separate from the typical cultural disintegration and homogenization associated with colonizing ventures and can instead be read as individualized developments of cultural identity.

For instance, Prospero is the only living exiled character that could potentially put a label on his cultural identity. He is well educated, Italian, and a nobleman of Milan. This gives him a paradigm in which to consider

his identity as a person in relation to other persons. Neither Miranda nor Caliban enjoys this luxury. Neither has any concept of their ancestry, and Prospero is their only source of knowledge. Miranda's memory of her past is "far off / and rather like a dream than an assurance" (1.2.44-45), thanks in part to her father's reticence on the matter, and Caliban has been born in a land separated from his racial origins without a native language in which to express his understanding of his ancestry.

Because both Miranda and Caliban experience this cultural vacuum similarly and because both function as the second generation of exile and cultural relocation, it is profitable to parallel and juxtapose them in the context of their major cultural influencers on the island. These cultural influencers can be divided into three major categories: the presence (and absence) of Sycorax as a reminder of origins and history, Prospero as an enforcer of values and knowledge, and the shipwrecked Italians as cultural contextualizers who throw the island culture into sharp relief with their own. As each of these influencers struggles throughout the play, against the backdrop of exile, to place themselves as an authoritative voice in the formation of Miranda and Caliban's cultural identities and perspectives, they simultaneously work to break down the traditional binary of colonizer and colonized, leaving in their wake a multiplicity of cultural influencers.

Knowledge of origins and history serves as particularly powerful cultural influence. In *The Tempest*, the memory of Sycorax lingers as a witness to Caliban's origins. It also creates in both Miranda and Caliban a different sense of rightfully derived authority. As Sycorax's only offspring, Caliban is the story keeper for his family. Having been born on the island and never given access to an external source of knowledge, all he has to provide him with an understanding of his past are the legends of Sycorax that remain on the island. Whether Caliban remembers the stories surrounding his mother's exile from his childhood or, as Leah

Marcus argues, Prospero acquires the story from Ariel and passes it along to Caliban (287), Sycorax and her memory are the only connections Caliban has to the culture of his history. Because Sycorax was banned from Algiers for practicing witchcraft and continued, it would appear, to practice witchcraft and sorcery on the island, Caliban's history and his understanding of himself are heavily influenced by the dark and spiritual forces that gave power to his mother. The curses he calls upon Prospero reflect Caliban's belief in the power of his mother's art. Prospero also alludes to this element of Caliban's origins, when he claims that Caliban was sired by the devil (1.2.319). However, each of these is simply a discursive manifestation of Sycorax's influence. Her memory comes into play much more seriously in the way that Caliban understands Prospero's art. He holds Prospero's power as higher than that of his mother and even higher than that of his mother's god Sebetos (1.2.371-72), most likely because his own appeal to his mother's powers proves continually ineffective. Caliban also believes that Prospero maintains an almost omnipotent control over every facet of the island. This belief in Prospero's power explains why Caliban believes that Trinculo is a spirit sent to torment him for being too slow with the wood, and why Caliban maintains such a worshipful, almost pathetic, posture towards Stephano, who Caliban comes to believe is the one spirit on the island immune to Prospero's power.

The memory of Sycorax affects the way Caliban views Prospero's magic, but also the way Caliban views Prospero as a parental and authority figure. Sycorax is obviously Caliban's biological mother, but Prospero is Caliban's guardian—a fact Prospero himself grudgingly acknowledges at the end of the play when he says, "this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275-76). As Caliban's self-proclaimed guardian, Prospero aligns himself with Sycorax as an authoritative figure on the island and in Caliban's life. Jane Kinglsey-Smith expounds on the link between

Sycorax and Prospero in some detail. She argues that their similarities as magicians and colonizers cause Prospero no small amount of anxiety and undermines, even in his own eyes, his claim that he remains the rightful Duke of Milan. Prospero “recognizes the anti-social nature of magic through its anti-social fate, namely expulsion to an uninhabited island” (“Forgotten” 228). He finds Sycorax’s banishment just, but since he is also a practicing magician of sorts, Sycorax’s fate cannot help but trouble his belief that his own exile is devoid of justice. However, particularly with regards to his authority over Caliban, Prospero must align himself in some sense with Sycorax in order to take her place as the ruling figure of the island and as Caliban’s guardian. Since both Sycorax and Prospero practice the harnessing of spiritual powers for their own ends, and because both Sycorax and Prospero are the only parental figures, either literally or figuratively, that Caliban knows, he associates sources of power and subjugation as directly linked to the spiritual and magical realm. The irony of this situation is that it is in fact precisely Sycorax and Prospero’s interest in the supernatural arts that causes both them to be set apart as cultural rejects and social outcasts in the first place, thus undermining Caliban’s belief that their cultural authority stems from their magic.

For Miranda, the memory of Sycorax causes little obvious consternation. In fact she seems to remain more or less oblivious to Sycorax’s legacy, except where it relates to Caliban’s existence and his belief that the island is his rightful inheritance (1.2.331-32). Miranda says that it is because of his “vile race” that he is “Deservedly confined into this rock / Who hadst deserved more than a prison” (1.2.360-61). She believes that Caliban has forfeited any rights he had by birth because of the corruption in his nature. Sycorax, as his mother, becomes to Miranda a symbol of a race of moral degenerates. This perception is reinforced by the fact that Caliban, according to Prospero, is a bastard, bringing Sycorax’s sexual practices into question. Thus, Caliban and

Sycorax become the metonymic symbol in Miranda's personal cultural formation for all that is evil and base.

If Sycorax's memory holds sway over the formation of Caliban and Miranda's cultural histories and views of rightful authority and power, Prospero's current presence in their lives is as an active creator and imposer of values and education. As Miranda's father and Caliban's master and guardian, Prospero stands as the island's primary authority figure. As a result, he is the primary creator and enforcer of social structure for the island's inhabitants. He is the source of knowledge (via his books), power (via his control over the island's spirits, including Ariel), and of language (which it must be assumed he teaches to Miranda, who in turn teaches Caliban). Any cultural identity formation that takes place on the island happens under his watchful eye. For all these things, Prospero's claim to this position is unstable at best because of his own concealed and unreconciled history as a rebuffed leader from another place and time. As Jane Kingsley-Smith puts it in *Shakespeare's Exile of Drama*, "Prospero's identity as a cultural outcast is at first muted by the fact that he seems to have brought his culture with him. He describes his library as a metonym for Milan, and imaginatively displaces his dukedom with the books he so prizes" (163). Kingsley-Smith goes on to say, *almost off-hand*, that Prospero's library enabled him, while still the Duke of Milan, to retreat from his duties as a civic leader. One could suggest from this that Prospero's exile, and his extraction from Italian culture, was well underway in the space of his library before Antonio physically sent him away on a boat. Prospero's political exile is simply a manifestation of his long-term failure to engage with his socio-cultural surroundings. However, Prospero is unable to reconcile his geographic exile with his self-inflicted cultural exile and attempts to use the knowledge he gains through his books to instate himself as the island's primary authority. Prospero's personal confliction regarding his status as a cultural outcast makes it difficult for

him to rightfully claim the authority to educate Miranda and Caliban with regards to their own cultural identity. Yet, as is so often the case in terms of cultural influence, Prospero emerges throughout the drama as a major influencer in the creation of a cultural identity for both Miranda and Caliban, regardless of his legitimacy to do so.

With regards to Miranda's education, Prospero says "and here / Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / Than other princes can, that have more time / For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (1.2.171-74). But Prospero's claims to have taught Miranda to "more profit than other princes" rest on very little evidence. He has certainly not taught her anything from his precious books, or we would see signs of Miranda using, or at least comprehending, his special arts. Nor has Prospero taught her anything about her personal history. This is evidenced by Miranda's excitement that his twelve-year reticence concerning their origins comes to an end in the first act, where she says, "You [Prospero] have often / begun to tell me what I am, but stopped / and left me to a bootless inquisition" (1.2.33-35). In fact, it seems that the only truly thorough portion of Miranda's education lies in the realm of courtship, sex, and marriage. Patricia Pessar would refer to this as Miranda's "gendered citizenship" as an Italian noblewoman (217). Pessar says that "a private-public binary infuses law" and that "many problems of concern to women are conceptually relegated to the private sphere" (218). Since Miranda and her concerns are relegated to the private sphere, Prospero feels no need to educate her in areas related to the public sphere such as the sources of authority, at least on the island, and the means of wielding them. Instead, her educational focus is restricted to private matters.

This is particularly evident in her interactions with Ferdinand, which also reveal the values that Prospero has cultivated in Miranda. She uses courtly language to speak to Ferdinand regarding matters of love, marriage, and fidelity and makes eloquent allusions to her virginity,

which she calls “the jewel in my dower” (3.1.53). Her clear understanding of marital expectations and the concepts of dowry, maidenhood, and fidelity, in spite of growing up on an island inhabited by only herself, her father, and Caliban (who is apparently not considered a valid candidate for the position of Miranda’s life companion) suggests that Prospero has taken pains to educate her in these cultural values and practices in spite of the general lack of obviously available suitors.

The most revealing evidence of the extent of Prospero’s education (perhaps even indoctrination) of Miranda, however, is his ability to predict her behavior when she meets and falls in love with a man. Miranda may think she is surreptitiously engaging with Ferdinand when her father is not nearby, but she is in fact behaving exactly as her father expects her to behave. He is present during the first act of scene three when the two lovers express their undying love and devotion, and his words at the close of the act imply that, while Miranda and Ferdinand might have excitement in discovering their mutual love, Prospero himself is not surprised by the course of events and thus has only a minimal sense of immediate joy (3.2.92-94). Additionally, Miranda’s disobedience in going to see Ferdinand and in telling him her name are met with no consequences except her father’s eventual blessing of their engagement. This is in stark contrast to Caliban’s painful experiences of “old cramps” (1.2.369) and being “pinched / As thick as honeycomb” (1.2.328-29) following instances of disobedience. Miranda’s actions are consistent, in spite of surface appearances, with the acceptable cultural behavior Prospero desires to inspire in her, so she suffers no punishment and the permissibility of her actions is reinforced.

It is not difficult to see that Prospero has a significant cultural influence on Miranda. He is her father and the only person of real influence over her on the island. Prospero’s cultural influence on Caliban, however, may be more difficult to see, given Caliban’s distinct disdain

for Prospero's every attempt to exercise authority over him. But Caliban, like Miranda, cannot escape Prospero's influence. As argued previously, Prospero has aligned himself to a limited extent with Sycorax, whose influence Caliban acknowledges, in order to gain power over the island's spirits. Additionally, Prospero has placed Miranda, over whom he has substantial influence, as Caliban's linguistic and moral tutor.

Both Prospero and Miranda view their attempts at Caliban's moral education and his assimilation into their culture as a failure. Miranda says to Caliban:

... I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. ...

But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with. (1.2.352-54, 357-59)

It is not Caliban's practical education that has failed. Miranda herself states that, "thou didst learn" (1.2.358). He has acquired speech, a basic knowledge of astronomy, and various housekeeping skills. Rather, it is Prospero's and Miranda's attempt to instill their ethical values into Caliban that has failed. Because Miranda and by association Prospero believe that Caliban cannot assimilate into their morally superior culture they define his culture as the absence of their own and relegate him to the position of a slave "deservedly confined into this rock" (1.2.360), thus figuratively (via their personal disdain and subordination of Caliban) and literally (via his exile from the cell Miranda and Prospero inhabit to the rock) removing him from their cultural space.

In contrast with Prospero's failed attempt to imbue his values into Caliban is Caliban's successful linguistic education via Miranda. For Caliban, who has no language at all until Miranda teaches him to speak Italian, it would seem natural that he would begin to identify himself

more fully as a person of whatever culture Miranda and Prospero have formed on the island. In fact, Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, in their study of second-generation immigrant cultures, have identified language as one of the strongest factors in cultural self-identification. Children whose immigrant parents use the dominant culture's language in the home (Italian, in the case of *The Tempest*) are much more likely to identify themselves as members of the dominant culture (167). But we do not see Caliban identifying himself very closely with Miranda and Prospero at all. To the contrary, he rejects their language as good for anything except cursing them, and he seems to completely disdain their company. Stephen Greenblatt connects Renaissance beliefs regarding linguistic colonialism to *The Tempest* saying that they "represent a fundamental inability to sustain the simultaneous perception of likeness and difference" (31). Greenblatt grants that Caliban gains some victory over this normal binary through his use of Prospero's language to curse Prospero (25) and the creation of the word "scamel," which only Caliban understands (32). However, Caliban does more than marginally overcome this binary of "likeness" and "difference." Instead, he inhabits both of its elements concurrently. This is possible because Italian, being his first language, is the language with which he identifies himself culturally and the language in which he thinks and speaks when he is by himself (2.2.1-17), making him very much "like" Miranda and Prospero. Simultaneously, his tendency to move from verse, which he speaks while with Miranda and Prospero, to prose, which he uses with Stephano and Trinculo, marks him as "different" in his use of language from Prospero and Miranda. Homi Bhabha illustrates the usefulness of this doubly inhabited binary with his concept of a hybrid "third space" of culture. He says:

... the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other

positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (211)

By taking the language that Prospero and Miranda have taught him and subjecting it to his own uses, Caliban is able to redirect this aspect of their cultural influence in a way that allows him to create for himself a separate structure of linguistic authority. Moreover Caliban is able, through this linguistic third space, to begin reconstructing the government and social structures previously left in ruins by his mother's exile, namely by attempting to reassert some sense of the power that Sycorax previously maintained over the island.

Ironically, Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda appears to be the only way that Caliban attempts to create a sort of cultural connection with Miranda and Prospero (prior to his final submission at the play's end). Even in this case, however, Caliban's motivation for raping Miranda stems more from a desire to create posterity for himself than from an inclination to merge with their society. He tells Prospero, "Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.349-50). Note that he does not want to people the island with Calibarandas, which would imply some sort of cultural fusion, but simply with Calibans. This points back to Caliban's belief that he is the rightful owner and authority over the island. As he says to Prospero, "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother" (1.2.331). Caliban cannot escape the memory of Sycorax and the knowledge that she was once in the place of Prospero. Woon Ping Chin summarizes this beautifully in "Sycorax Revisited: Absence and Exile in Performance." "[Sycorax's] burial on the island bestows upon her a haunting power that serves as a constant reminder to Caliban of his birthright, spurring his defiance and resistance" (97). The memory of Sycorax returns again and again to undermine Prospero's legitimacy as the

island's ruler and cultural standard.

For the twelve years that Miranda, Prospero, and Caliban live on the island together, Sycorax's posthumous presence and Prospero's educational endeavors are the primary cultural influences in the lives of Miranda and Caliban. But with the arrival of the shipwrecked Italians, Caliban and Miranda are exposed to an entirely different set of cultural influences. The radically different nature of the character sets to which Miranda and Caliban are each introduced produces an equally different effect on their cultural identities.

Miranda's first contact with Ferdinand and the rest of the Italian nobles bears particular regard to her understanding of the extent of man's capabilities. The first revelation she receives of this new society comes from Prospero himself—always the creator of Miranda's lens—when he explains the nature of their origins. Kingsley-Smith makes reference to this moment in the play and points out that Miranda's worldview allows her to accept without incredulity that her father possesses power over nature. However, the thought that he may have power over some community of people that she has never seen is astonishing to her. Kingsley-Smith says, "Prospero's empowerment as a magician is nothing to the revelation that he once held political sway in Europe. ... So impossible is it that he should have been Duke of Milan, that she questions whether he is, in fact, her father" (162). This ability to accept without difficulty one version of her father, ironically the same version which was responsible for their exile from Milan, while reacting with disbelief to another, seemingly more believable, version is rooted in Miranda's assumptions of what is normal. In this case, Miranda finds it difficult to believe that her father could have had socially installed power over other men, rather than a power produced through his ability to bend nature to his will.

Miranda and Ferdinand's flirtations also point to Miranda's process of acquiring a cultural identity. As Ferdinand and Miranda speak

together, certain elements of Miranda's cultural paradigm are affirmed and others are challenged. Stephen Orgel comments on this tendency in "Prospero's Wife," "The wooing processes tends to be what it is here: not so much a prelude to marriage and a family as a process of self-definition—an increasingly unsatisfactory process" (206). For instance, Ferdinand confirms the absolute necessity that she be a virgin in order to find a suitable marriage partner when he says "O, if a virgin, / And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you / The Queen of Naples" (1.2.445-47). The message is clear and consistent with the beliefs taught by Prospero—Miranda's virginity is crucial to her ability to securing a good marriage.

However, the encounter with Ferdinand also causes Miranda, whose inexperience with the outside world has made her vulnerable her whole life to her father's manipulation, to challenge for the first time her father's authority to say what is just and good. In direct contradiction to her father's statement that "To th' most of men this is a Caliban / And they to him are angels" (1.2.478-79), she argues "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple" (1.2.455). She believes that her father's assessment of Ferdinand is too hastily made and that his sentence of carrying wood, something normally performed only by Caliban, is unjust. Thus, her encounter with Ferdinand allows Miranda to claim a certain amount of autonomous thought and cultural perception. Miranda's autonomy, however, is quickly revealed as insubstantial and fleeting. When the curtain opens to reveal Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess, it becomes obvious that she has merely transferred her cultural dependence from Prospero to Ferdinand. She accuses Ferdinand of cheating at chess, and when he denies it she says, "Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play" (5.1.173-74). This response indicates Miranda's willingness to shift her beliefs of what is just and good to meet the beliefs that Ferdinand wants her to maintain. Orgel's

self-definition is indeed “an increasingly unsatisfactory process” (206).

With the arrival of the rest of the Italians, Miranda further displays her inability to break free from the influence of her father on her perceptions of the world. Her sudden introduction to her father’s original culture, rather than the culture he has created on the island, is completely awe-inspiring for her. She exclaims, “How many goodly creatures are there here? / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in’t!” (5.1.182-84). From her perspective, these gallantly dressed men with all their noble finery and manners cannot possibly be anything but brave and good. However, as John Gillies points out, Miranda’s view of the men is incomplete. “Raised in isolation from European society, Miranda looks on human beings as a species for the first time, recognizing in them a ‘world’ of beauty, goodness, and utopian possibility. With no direct experience of ‘human’ (as distinct from native) depravity, she misses what Prospero sees: creatures whose potential is perpetually cancelled by their history” (180). In spite of his own knowledge regarding the potential for men to have a goodly appearance but an evil heart, Prospero has failed to educate Miranda in the art of discerning good men from those who might do her harm. Thus she is unable, when she meets these particular men, to perceive that they are not fully goodly, beauteous, or brave.

In contrast to Miranda’s first contact with Ferdinand and the Italian noblemen, Caliban’s first encounter with men from the world beyond the island is with Trinculo and Stephano who are described in the list of characters as “a jester” and “a drunken butler” respectively (3). Like Miranda, who believes the Italians to be gods or spirits when she first sees them, Caliban is at first unable to identify Trinculo and Stephano as men. Instead, he believes Stephano to be a spirit sent by Prospero to torment and punish him, so he begs Stephano, “Do not torment me, prithee! I’ll bring my wood home faster” (2.2.68-69). It is only after Stephano has made Caliban slightly inebriated and convinces him that, “I was the

man i' the moon, when time was" (2.2.132-33) that Caliban comes to believe that Stephano is not under Caliban's control. Instead, he believes Stephano to be a spirit that has somehow overthrown Prospero's power. Just as Miranda recontextualizes her cultural paradigm to fit Ferdinand's authority instead of Prospero's, so Caliban shifts his service from Prospero to Stephano. Unfortunately for Caliban, his deviation from Prospero's social structure proves much more disastrous than Miranda's. Stephano may not be subject to Prospero's whims, but he does not prove to be immune to Ariel's enchantments. Nor does he listen to Caliban's frequent warnings regarding Prospero's power. Thus Stephano, with Caliban and Trinculo in tow, winds his way to his eventual humiliating end—a drunken and captured thief smelling of “horse-piss” (4.4.199). Ironically, it is precisely Caliban's own knowledge of the culture of the island—its history and sources of power—that could have prevented this end. But Prospero's indoctrination of Caliban and Caliban's subsequent belief that he lacks within himself the power to overthrow Prospero are too strongly ingrained in Caliban's perceptions to be overcome.

Ultimately, it is not until Caliban encounters the Italian noblemen and sees Prospero dressed as a nobleman for the first time that he ceases his constant attempts to self-define his place and influence in the island culture. Upon seeing them he says, “O Sebetos, these be brave spirits indeed! / How fine my master is! I am afraid / He will chastise me” (5.1.261-63). Caliban's use of the word “brave” in this line reflects Miranda's earlier reaction of sheer awe at the apparent beauty and power of the men from Naples. Seeing Prospero partially restored to his original place as the Duke of Milan and placed among the “brave spirits” from Naples causes Caliban to attribute legitimacy to Prospero's claim to authority that Caliban could not previously allow. Dressed in his Duke's costume (5.1.84-86) and standing accepted and revered among his peers, Prospero cuts an impressive figure that subdues Caliban by its sheer

visual aesthetics. In addition to this visual display, Prospero asserts his authority over Caliban and the island by referencing Sycorax's previous authority on the island. He says that she is "a witch, and one so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power" (5.1.269-71). This reference to Sycorax associates Caliban with an ancestry of power that he does not possess. Instead, Caliban is afraid and unable to assert himself over Prospero who finalizes his authoritative claim over Caliban in this moment by stating, "Two of these fellows you / Must know and own; this thing of darkness I / acknowledge mine" (5.1.274-76). This claim places Caliban's social position alongside that of Trinculo and Stephano, who are dependant upon the whims and generosity of their masters for their well-being. Caliban clearly sees this power relationship from Prospero's perspective for the first time when it is contrasted against the power relationships of the shipwrecked Italians. This revelation leaves Caliban submissive and unable to further resist Prospero's authoritative advances. For better or worse, Prospero has finally managed, thanks to the arrival and example of members from his original cultural setting, to establish legitimacy as a source of authority on the island.

As Miranda and Caliban seek to define their cultural identity and understand their place in the world, they are influenced by the history, education, and value sets given to them by Sycorax and Prospero. These influences are in their turn either challenged or affirmed by the arrival of the shipwrecked men from Italy. Their mutual exile on the island allows for this multiplicity of cultural influencers to create a subtle and complex system of cultural authority that would not have been possible had they remained in their original geographic homes. Thus each cultural force vies with the others in an irreconcilable attempt to prove its own legitimacy and gain the right to present itself as the authoritative source for cultural identification on the island's children of exile.

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CAN A COLONIZER BE A FRIEND? THE CASE OF
MRS. ELTON & JANE FAIRFAX
BY CHRISTINE HILL

When Edward Said's article "Jane Austen and Empire" was published, literary critics were challenged to rethink Austen's contribution to English culture. Said's assertion, more generally discussed in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, that all novels by authors living in countries exerting colonial power can, and should, be analyzed through this specific historical lens created a new paradigm. Said's conclusion specifically regarding Austen's *Mansfield Park* that "the novel steadily, if unobtrusively, opens up a broad expanse of domestic imperialist culture without which Britain's subsequent acquisition of territory would not have been possible," caused a firestorm of controversy (95). While many scholars have tried to refute Said's claims, Austen does, indeed, depict the "domestic imperialist culture," but rather than affirming, she subverts it by representing colonial tendencies as socially inappropriate and distasteful (95). Looking at *Emma*, rather than *Mansfield Park*, and considering the ways in which Mrs. Elton attempts to colonize people and places, it becomes clear her social practices are ridiculed.

Austen's depiction of life in her novels is, for the most part, romantic and idyllic. Many people mistake these pastoral stories for realistic portraits of life in England. There were, however, many social, political, and economic stressors in England during Austen's time. Mona Scheurman, in *Reading Jane Austen*, discusses the way Austen portrays an England that is cohesive and tranquil, despite larger national concerns due to the French Revolution:

Those quiet novels that she produced during this period of extraordinary tumult deliberately leave out many of the stressors of her time; she is writing romances, in the sense that we use the word today, that is, escapist fiction that, quite opposite to our perceived view of Austen's works as detailing a bucolic existence of a slice of England, quite deliberately omit much of the reality of which she had to be aware. (171)

So rather than detailing a realistic rendering of England, Austen romanticizes an existence that in reality was unstable. Trying to discern what life was actually like in England, from what Austen is projecting or imagining life to be, is a difficult task. Yet, understanding Austen's departure from the dominant social conventions of her time is important in tracing the support or disdain for England's imperial endeavors within the novels. For many critics, Austen's use of satire marks her as a politically and socially conscious writer. However, Clara Tuite, in her article "Domestic Retrenchment and Imperial Expansion: The Property Plots of *Mansfield Park*," argues that most scholars who try to point to Austen's use of satire forget that satire can be used to reinforce the dominant social norms. "This form of sanctioned critique, which is part of the country-house genre," writes Tuite, "marks Austen's novel within the terms of specifically conservative satire. A primary function of conservative satire is correction, renovation and restoration" of the deviant character to the conventions of the dominant class (Tuite 96). However, Tuite fails to

identify adequately the conservative standard to which characters are being restored. I argue there are two competing social conventions depicted within Austen's novels, or at least within *Emma*. Austen's romanticism is not simply one of omitting harsh realities, but of purposeful invention of new modes of social engagement set in opposition to the conventions from which colonialism would later spring.

In recognizing multiple social values within *Emma*, I borrow from Rajeswari Rajan in reading Austen for her "complex and contradictory manner" (10). Rajan, in "Austen in the World: Postcolonial Mappings," writes:

Readings of English texts as colonial discourse are not, however—except at a very elementary level—matters only of identifying their imperial thematics, uncovering their implicit ethnocentrism or their domestic/provincial/nationalistic self-centeredness, and speaking an ideological indictment. Rather we have to grant that a whole range of connections exists with questions of class, race and gender, and that the ideology of the text (including its ethnocentrism) is a complex and contradictory matter. (9-10)

I am interested in identifying not just the scenes in *Emma* that overtly address issues of slavery and colonialization, but how such mechanisms and structures are represented in the novel through characters and relationships. In the case of *Emma* this means that the representations of social conventions within the novel are not uniform, but rather different cultural values are stratified to show those that are better or worse at contributing to individual happiness and community cohesion. I also want to be clear in stating that in just the way colonialism very rarely had one evil mastermind, so too are the characters within Austen's novels multidimensional. The characters who drive the plot through conflict are complex with understandable flaws and insecurities. Since the characters

are multifaceted and the social values represented within the novel are not uniform, the task of unraveling becomes much more complex than Tuite's definition of conservative satire.

Even within the realm of conservative satire, Mrs. Elton is not the individual who needs to be restored to conservative norms. Rather it is Emma who deviates from the accepted conventions of her class and gender. Similar to Deirdre Coleman's conclusion in "Imagining Sameness and Difference: Domestic and Colonial Sisters in *Mansfield Park*" that, "despite Edmund's insistent use of the benevolent, equalizing terms 'friend' and 'sister' to describe Mary, the language of unequal power relations—of dominance and submission, terror, and slavery—marks her interactions with Fanny" (301), I argue that the relationship between Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax, while labeled as friendship, is rife with paternalism and hypocrisy (301). Mrs. Elton exemplifies the dominant values of English society, values that enabled colonization; however the negative portrayal of Mrs. Elton in *Emma* shows them to be undesirable. While she is not socially ostracized, Mrs. Elton is clearly not valorized in the novel, and, instead, is excluded from the "small band of true friends" the novel privileges as the ideal (Austen 381). In addition to her selection criteria, Mrs. Elton's intentions with the relationship are revealed through her methodology: "However, my resolution is taken as to noticing Jane Fairfax.—I shall certainly have her very often at my house, shall introduce her wherever I can, shall have musical parties to draw out her talents, and shall be constantly on the watch for an eligible situation" (230). Her description is all about what she can do for Jane, with not a single indication of what Jane can do for her. This is similar to Emma's relationship with Harriet as Emma thinks to herself: "She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners" (37). Again, it is not an equal relationship,

but one based on Emma acting on behalf of Harriet, which essentially objectifies her. Harriet, similar to Jane Fairfax, is of a lower social status and has no wealth to speak of, making the relationship between Emma and Harriet similar to that of Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax. There is a key difference, however, between the two sets of friends: Harriet is enthusiastic about her friendship with Emma, whereas Jane simply associates with Mrs. Elton because she has very few options. Mrs. Weston and Knightley discuss Jane's motivations in conceding to such an intimate association with Mrs. Elton. Knightley tells Emma, "Miss Fairfax is as capable as any of us of forming a just opinion of Mrs. Elton. Could she have chosen with whom to associate, she would not have chosen her" (231). The limited nature of her choices, or essentially that Jane does not really have a choice because the only two options are visiting with Mrs. Elton or staying home with her aunt, is indicative of the lack of enjoyment Jane derives from Mrs. Elton's company. It is also the hallmark of the relationship between Mrs. Elton and Jane that, although it is veiled under the guise of friendship and kindness, is not reciprocal.

This unequal relationship is typified in Mrs. Elton's conversations, which do not indicate friendship or kindness, but rather paternalism and vanity. When Mrs. Elton learns that Jane goes to the post office every day, even in the rain, she exclaims, "You sad girl, how could you do such a thing?—It is a sign I was not there to take care of you" (238). Mrs. Elton essentially turns Jane into a little girl, one who needs to be taken care of, rather than a woman old enough to take care of other people's children professionally. When Mrs. Elton says "Oh! She *shall not* do such a thing again," it is with an authority and a certainty to which "Jane looked as if she did not mean to be conquered" (238-39). Jane, in this instance, wants to argue but cannot within the confines of polite conversation. Added to that, she has a secret reason for going to the post office every day, which prevents her from pushing the issue. Mrs. Elton, on the other hand, has

no such qualms in aggressively asserting her will. As Mr. Knightly points out: “Mrs. Elton does not talk *to* Miss Fairfax as she speaks *of* her” (232). The post office scene is a prime example of Mrs. Elton speaking *of* Jane, as Mrs. Elton constantly uses “she,” rather than “you,” in addressing Jane. Jane is in the same room with Mrs. Elton, but instead of directly referring her comments to Jane she makes a display of her power and will through her speech. Jane is not a person with whom Mrs. Elton is interested in engaging in dialogue. Rather, Jane is an object about which Mrs. Elton can wield knowledge and authority. Juliet McMaster highlights the important role Mrs. Elton’s speech plays as an indicator of her personality in her article “Mrs. Elton and Other Verbal Aggressors”: “For Mrs. Elton the exchange is all about power. And within the bounds of supposedly polite exchange, she nevertheless bristles and snarls and snatches any advantage she can” (74). Mrs. Elton could be talking to anyone and she would still try to be the dominant voice in the conversation; that this is most clearly seen in her interactions with Jane is due to their intimate “friendship.”

Given the power dynamics already described, the description of the relationship between Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax as a friendship is questionable. The way friendship is described in the novel also pointedly shows Mrs. Elton acting in ways that are exactly the opposite of friendly. For example, when Emma visits Miss Bates and learns Jane has accepted a position as governess, Emma says, “Her friends must all be sorry to lose her; and will not Colonel and Mrs. Campbell be sorry to find that she has engaged herself before their return?” (305). This is in direct contrast with Mrs. Elton’s visit to Miss Bates congratulating her on Jane’s connection. Rather than feeling the loss of a friend, Mrs. Elton celebrates her own success in securing Jane a position, essentially treating Jane as a commodity. Mrs. Elton’s paternalistic attitude toward Jane is revealed in her sense of triumph and distinct lack of sadness. Emma’s inquiry after

the Campbells reminds the reader Jane does have friends who will be truly sorry to lose her company, as opposed to Mrs. Elton, who has never really appreciated Jane as a person.

Jane herself defines how her friends are to act when she asks Mrs. Elton not to inquire about a governess position on her behalf. Jane tells Mrs. Elton most clearly, “I make no inquiry myself, and should be sorry to have any made by my friends” (242). White reaffirms the conclusion that Mrs. Elton is not a friend to Jane because she does exactly what Jane has explicitly asked her “friends” not to do (57). White goes one step further: “there is the opportunity to consider that just as Mrs. Elton is not much of a friend to Jane Fairfax so Mr Suckling may not be much of a friend to the abolition,” referring to Mrs. Elton’s comment regarding the slave trade (52). This is the much-addressed scene in which Jane Fairfax says, “There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something—Offices for the sale—not quite of human flesh—but of human intellect” (242). Mrs. Elton, taking the comment as somehow directed at her, replies “Oh! My dear, human flesh! You quite shock me; if you mean a fling at the slave-trade, I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition” (242). Since Jane’s term of human intellect echoes William Cowper’s “Negro’s Complaint,” an abolitionist poem by a contemporary writer, Mrs. Elton is not remiss in her assumption that Jane’s comment was referencing the slave trade, which was abolished in England in 1807. Jane’s comment is also rather pointed, since Mr. Suckling lives in Bristol. It was general knowledge that Bristol was a slave port heavily invested in the trade, as noted by Adam Hochschild in his book *Bury the Chains*:

For several decades, plantation and triangle trade wealth had helped finance a wave of new building in Bristol, and the slave trade was reflected in names like Guinea Street and the African House tavern. In the suburb of Clifton and the surrounding

countryside lived one of Britain's largest concentrations of absentee West Indian landowners. (112)

Families who could afford to own estates in the suburbs of Bristol usually owed their financial success to plantations overseas. With a large number of absentee plantation owners located in the countryside surrounding Bristol, it is easy to see why Mrs. Elton's mind would immediately jump to Mr. Suckling when a reference to the slave trade is made. Mrs. Elton's qualification of "friend" with "rather," is another indication that Mr. Suckling's support of the abolition movement is just as suspect as her use of the word "always." White's reading, that just as Mr. Suckling was not a very good friend to abolition, so too is Mrs. Elton not a very good friend to Jane Fairfax, is justified.

However, it could be interpreted from the openness of the text that Jane's comment may also be referring to the ways in which Mrs. Elton is, herself, commodifying and trading Jane in ways that are not friendly, but commercial (McMaster 79). After all, there are many positive images of governesses within *Emma* that would lead a reader to be suspect that a critique of the profession is being made. When Mrs. Elton is "astonished to find [Mrs. Weston] so very lady-like!" Emma is immediately on the defensive (Austen 225). Miss Taylor is described in the very first page of the novel as "less a governess than a friend... more the intimacy of sisters" (23). Any analogy to the slave trade in regards to the example of Miss Taylor/Mrs. Weston would be startling. In addition, there is Mrs. Goddard, the head of the school Harriet attended and with whom she lives. Mrs. Goddard is described as "a plain, motherly kind of woman, who had worked hard in her youth, and now thought herself entitled to the occasional holiday" (36). Clearly, with these two positive examples of women successful in occupations teaching young children, Jane's comment can be taken as a critique of the profession only as it relates to the commercialization of an individual in the anonymity of offices. Jane,

however, doesn't need an office, because Mrs. Elton has stepped in to do the job. To Mrs. Elton, Jane is an object symbolizing Mrs. Elton's social standing, rather than a person with her own dreams and desires. "I know you, I know you" rejoins Mrs. Elton, inferring she knows Jane better than Jane knows herself and that if Jane leaves everything in her hands, she again will be "a little more nice" to Jane than Jane herself (243). In this very next instant, Mrs. Elton proves that she is no friend to Jane Fairfax, rather she is only interested in using Jane to demonstrate her own resources and power.

Part of Mrs. Elton's power is derived from her association with Mr. Suckling and Maple Grove. Maple Grove, for Mrs. Elton, is the epitome of status and wealth and for good reason. If Mr. Suckling's wealth was derived from the slave trade or a slave plantation, then his would have been yet another family for whom "the slave economy's profits were a path to respectability" (Hochschild 15). And like those Englishmen who owned plantations, Mrs. Elton tries to make a colony of Hartfield, Donwell, and Highbury upon her arrival. Maple Grove, as her standard of civilization, is what she tries to recreate in her colonial project. As McMaster points out:

As she [Mrs. Elton] colonizes Hartfield by attaching it to Maple Grove, as she boasts of being 'blessed with so many resources within myself,' as she tries to take over Emma by assuming partnership in 'establish[ing] a musical club,' she proves herself an imperialist and a self-aggrandizer on a grand scale. For a practical correlation to these verbal practices, I need only cite her campaign to take over Jane Fairfax and turn her into a mere personal appurtenance.... If Jane Fairfax only just avoids being traded by 'offices for the sale... of human intellect,' she as narrowly escapes becoming the virtual slave of Mrs. Elton. (79)

Mrs. Elton's love of Maple Grove becomes, then, a kind of geographical

symbol of her own colonialism. Much the way Said says an idealized vision of England serves as a stabilizing anchor for English expansion abroad, so Maple Grove provides the returning point for Mrs. Elton as she enters into her new community and tries to dominate it. Yet Mrs. Elton's view of Maple Grove is distorted. This can be seen in her assessment of Hartfield as "modern" as opposed to Maple Grove, which Mr. Suckling's family has been in possession of for a mere eleven years (Austen 221, 251). If Mrs. Elton is interested in colonizing Hartfield upon arrival, she quickly expands her interest to include Donwell. After Knightly casually tells Mrs. Elton it is better to change her plans to picking strawberries at Donwell due to bad weather and lame horses, she offers to plan the entire visit. Mrs. Elton tells Knightly, "I am Lady Patroness, you know. It is my part," and in doing so tries to take over Donwell by assuming a position only Mrs. Knightly should rightfully occupy (283).

It is while visiting Donwell for their day of strawberry picking that Emma walks out alone and admires the English countryside: "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive" (288). It is scenes invoking a tranquil and stable England, similar to this one, that Said criticizes as reinforcing "a culture well-grounded in moral, economic, and even metaphysical norms designed to approve a satisfying local, that is European, order" (Said 81). This cultural order, often symbolized in pastoral scenes of England, was the foundation on which colonialism was built. However, these scenes should not be taken at face value—while the description of the English countryside is certainly beautiful and serene, this particular scene does not symbolize the moral sentiments of colonization. In highlighting "English culture," Emma is thinking primarily of English agriculture. This is a sign of approval, not of imported goods which colonialism produces, but of the domestic cultivation of crops. The domestic sufficiency of England

is also alluded to by Mrs. Elton's constant referral to her "resources," which occurs at least five times throughout the novel. The OED defines "resources" as "personal attributes and capabilities regarded as able to help or sustain one in adverse circumstances." It can also mean "the collective means possessed by a country or region for its own support, enrichment, or defence." England is a country rich in natural resources; this is evident in Knightley's large estate and the cultivation of it by farmers like Mr. Martin. In contrast, Mrs. Elton is shown to have, in reality, very few personal resources, as her "resources were inadequate" to the sudden cancellation of plans due to bad weather and lame horses (Austen 283). Mrs. Elton's "resources," then, are called into question, while England's resources, those self-sufficient and without the products from the colonies, are honored.

Additionally, while it is the sun that is described by Emma as not being oppressive, it is because the sun is seen in contrast with the overwhelming presence of Mrs. Elton during the outing. Mrs. Elton dominates the visit, "lead[ing] the way in gathering, accepting, or talking" (287). Emma is seeking relief from Mrs. Elton's domination, also, of Jane Fairfax. Immediately prior to Emma's walk Mrs. Elton is triumphantly telling Jane and the rest of the party how she has secured a position for her with a family from Maple Grove. The narrator tells the reader, "The pertinacity of her friend seemed more than [Jane] could bear" (288). Jane, in fact, is the one who prompts Emma's walk, as she encourages the group to explore the gardens in an effort to escape Mrs. Elton's attentions. So too is Emma's walk a break from Mrs. Elton's pride in being the cause of the visit and the landscape offers an escape. The description of the location represents an alternate definition of what is English, setting it in opposition against Mrs. Elton and her colonial tendencies.

Mrs. Elton likes to fancy herself a woman of the world, and like a good colonizer, wants to bring her knowledge to benefit those colonized.

After Mrs. Elton leaves Hartfield upon her first meeting with Emma, Emma summarizes Mrs. Elton's character as:

self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred. She had a little beauty and a little accomplishment, but so little judgment that she thought herself coming with superior knowledge of the world, to enliven and improve a country neighborhood. (227)

As Emma points out, Mrs. Elton's confidence in her knowledge of the world is false. From the beginning, the reader quickly understands Mrs. Elton does not know much of England, let alone the world. Mrs. Elton calls Surry the "garden of England," and when Emma tries to politely suggest otherwise, she reveals her ignorance by saying, "I have never heard any county but Surry called so" (222). The similarity between Mrs. Elton's lack of knowledge and that of absentee plantation owners in Bristol paints them both as absurd. One of the arguments made by absentee plantation owners against abolition was that slavery was beneficial and healthy for slaves (Hochschild 159). They held this mistaken belief primarily because they had never been to their properties in the West Indies to see slavery first hand (Hochschild 322). While Mrs. Elton feels that the people of Highbury "were a good deal behind hand in knowledge of the world, but [that] she would soon shew them how everything ought to be arranged" she is employing the same reasoning of the colonizer to the colonized (Austen 234). But, as Emma's assessment of Mrs. Elton reminds the reader, this is false reasoning. For, "all her notions were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living; that if not foolish she was ignorant," (220-21). With Maple Grove as Mrs. Elton's standard—the "one set of people and one style of living" that she bases her opinions on—her relationship to every other place becomes distorted as she justifies her superiority through incorrect knowledge of the world.

Mrs. Elton's relationship to the people and places around her is

important because they exemplify the way larger socio-political processes are founded upon the characteristics of the individual citizens. Mrs. Elton, prefiguring the colonial project, is not valorized in *Emma*. Instead, she is depicted as arrogant, vain, and hypocritical. However, Mrs. Elton is not in the minority within England at the time. Mrs. Elton's attitude represents a larger cultural practice of hypocrisy and paternalism that, as Said points out, paved the way for colonialism. The problem is Mrs. Elton's pattern of treating people is contagious. Mr. Elton, who at the beginning of the novel is admired, quickly declines in Emma's opinion: "[Emma] did not think he was quite so hardened as his wife, though growing very like her" (263). Contemporaries had similar ideas about the infectious quality of the slave trade, as many of the men who made voyages to Africa and the West Indies testified to the deterioration of their humanity (Hochschild 131, 158). Even within the novel, Emma's relationship with Harriet, a mirror of Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax's relationship, demonstrates the prevalence of this kind of behavior. However, Emma, by the end of the novel, is transformed by recognizing her faults:

With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief. (328)

Mrs. Elton, unfortunately, does not have the same realization or repentance that Emma experiences. That Emma was proved "universally mistaken" is an indication that this is a lesson valuable to all people in all places. In the end, Mrs. Elton's behavior is ridiculed and disapproved of by the "small band of true friends who," as a part of a community that values equitable friendships, experience "perfect happiness" (381). The reader is left to infer that Mrs. Elton is not included in this community, as she must hear the particulars of the wedding from her husband—she,

herself, was not was not actually at the wedding (381). The recognition of the dangers of this type of behavior is the lesson that not only Emma learns, but that the novel itself seems to espouse by the exclusion of Mrs. Elton. Arrogance and vanity, then, are the faults to avoid, both as an individual and as a country.

Mrs. Elton attempts to colonize the people and places around her through her paternalistic and arrogant insinuations most clearly evident in her friendship with Jane Fairfax. Wider social power differentials in the domestic and global arenas are embodied in individuals who recreate these imperious hierarchies. Jane Austen's *Emma* seems to champion, not necessarily abolition or wide-scale political revolution, but rather equality on a personal level that may indeed change a community, a nation, and even the world.

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INTERROGATING THE EKPHRASTIC AMBIVALENCE IN
ANGELA CARTER'S "COME UNTO THESE YELLOW SANDS"
AND MAROSA DI GIORGIO'S POEM ON *LAS MENINAS*
BY NATALIA FONT

1. EKPHRASTIC CONFLICTS

Ekphrasis has been the most widely studied procedure of exchanges between words and images. Its popularity rests on the fact that the term covers many modalities of image-textual links, from the quotation, to the allusion, the extended description, the interpretation, the supplementation, the differentiation and the transformation of images into words. Whether we consider it to be a rhetoric ornate (Homer's Achilles's shield and the sculptures in Dante's *Purgatorio* are great examples), or a genre (as in the case of texts which are entirely ekphrastic such as Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn", Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Sonnets for Pictures*, Auden's "Musée de Beaux Arts" or Shelley's "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery"), or a discipline (art history as ekphrasis), ekphrasis partially inherited the correspondence of the sister-arts' inter-artistic comparison but, at the same time, it questions and disarms that tradition because it not only looks for intermedial

likeness and resemblance, but also, it emphasizes differences, introducing the conflict between texts and pictures as a primordial issue. The most widely spread definition of ekphrasis can be found in *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (1993), in which James Heffernan, committed to a historiography of ekphrasis as a textual mode, attempts to re-define the polysemic term in an ample and inclusive manner, stating that ekphrasis is a “verbal representation of a visual representation” (3). Thus understood, as a representation of a previous representation, ekphrasis is a rhetorical procedure founded in meta-representation and this assumption leads to the perception of the verbal as metalanguage of the visual. That is, leads to the understanding of the verbal as superior modality of representation, and of the visual as mere object of study.

Therefore, I am interested in the case of ekphrasis not only because it is the most popular of the inter-artistic links but, precisely, because it is a comparative strategy, that interrogates the hierarchization of media and the approach to difference. I will present a critical study of two ekphrastic texts: “Come unto These Yellow Sands” (1979), a radio-play written by the English writer Angela Carter, and an unnamed poem on *Las meninas* written by the Uruguayan poet Marosa di Giorgio and included in the posthumous collection, “Pasajes de un memorial: Al abuelo toscano Eugenio Médicis” (2006). I aim to offer an exploration of ekphrasis as a conflictive representational site and to interrogate some aspects of W.J.T. Mitchell’s implications.

In *Picture Theory* (1994) Mitchell explains that our fascination with ekphrasis is staged in three moments that he calls *ekphrastic indifference*, *ekphrastic hope* and *ekphrastic fear* (152). The first moment highlights the gap that separates the media, and coincides with the realization that ekphrasis is impossible. A verbal representation can refer to an object, describe it, but never “bring its visual presence before us in the ways that

pictures do” (152). This stage of apathy for ekphrasis questions the notion of representation as re-presentation. The second moment, the *ekphrastic hope*, designates the proposals of *ut pictura poesis* and the notion of sister-arts’ comparative traditions based on the idea that “the impossibility of ekphrasis is overcome in imagination or metaphor” (152), as the text is able to make us see through the mind’s eye. But Mitchell believes these hopeful aspirations for verbal language to achieve iconicity to be utopian, idolatrous and fetishistic. The third phase, the *ekphrastic fear*, emerges as the fear of the image as “other”, and parallels the dialectic of word and image enthroned by Lessing who showed the image as a dangerous, mute, female, and castrating object and for whom intermedial reciprocity was perceived as promiscuous (155).¹ In this vein, by interpreting ekphrasis as verbal imperialism of the word over the image and by inserting the idea of ekphrasis in socio-cultural and political implications that go beyond the constraints of the aesthetic realm, Mitchell reads *ekphrastic hope* as the will to overcome the “otherness” that the voiceless, powerless and, thus, colonized visual object represents to the textual as a gendered, racial or social “other” (157).² In these lines of thought, in ekphrastic encounters, the opposition between text and image lies encoded in an ontological relationship as representing the opposition between self and the “other”; what is feared is what the silent, mute and feminine image represents, as a threat to the masculine and eloquent linguistic voice.

The term *ekphrastic ambivalence* refers, then, to the representational vacillation and ambiguity between the three modes or stages of ekphrasis, between the indifference towards the visual, the fear of the visual and the utopian love of the visual, and is thus grounded in our ambivalence towards “others” (Mitchell 163). As an irresolvable conflict, this ambivalence materializes in the oscillation between not considering ekphrasis as representational problem, between believing in the possibility of transmedialization, and between emphasizing the media gap.

However, even when Mitchell's interest lies in describing how the ambivalence works and what its consequences are, he not only voices but also seems to endorse a critical, skeptical reading of ekphrasis, questioning its validity as a rhetorical device and as a distinctive genre, offering a rather disenchanting vision of the concept. He describes ekphrasis as a vacillation but he suggests that the perspective from which he will analyze it is assuming that "ekphrasis is, strictly speaking, impossible" (156). Moreover, he seems to align with the perspectives that reduce ekphrasis to utopian metaphors (158) and to an issue of themes—"ekphrastic poems speak to, for, or about visual works of art in the way texts in general speak about anything else" (159)—arguing that the general confusion about its representational particularities comes from Marshal McLuhan's misleading reference "the medium is the message", thus implying that the message (visual representation) will turn the verbal medium into a visual one (Mitchell 159).³

I will offer a reading of how the *ekphrastic ambivalence* is staged in the works of Carter and di Giorgio and I will consider its rhetorical and cultural repercussions. In so doing, I will challenge Mitchell's disenchanting vision of the topic.

2. COME UNTO THESE YELLOW PAGES

"Come unto These Yellow Sands" (from hereafter, "CUTYS", as Carter refers to the play), a radio-play written for the BBC in 1979 is, from my perspective, Angela Carter's most interesting ekphrastic work. In the Preface to the Bloodaxe edition, Carter defined her play very ambiguously, first as: "[not] precisely story-telling for radio, nor is it art or cultural criticism" (12), and later as exactly the opposite: "it isn't a documentary at all, nor, really, a play, but *a piece of cultural criticism* in the form of a documentary-based fiction" (12). Charlotte Crofts has presented the relevance of Carter's contradictory definition of her radio-

play as a way to defy univocal interpretations (71-72). I choose to focus on the paradoxical contradiction as both an important ingredient of Carter's fictional manners, and as a position from which to analyze the conflictive intersection of media the radio-play proposes. Even when incongruous and ambiguous, this introductory presentation of "CUTYS" is important insofar as it postulates the figure of cultural criticism at the core of the work, and it is from Carter's critical perspective that I will interrogate ekphrasis as a type of extremely ambivalent *imagetext* that both highlights and hides the cracks and fissures between the media; that paradoxically embraces the *ekphrastic hope* whilst simultaneously relying on certain prejudices proper to the stage of *ekphrastic fear*.⁴

On a structural, rhetorical level, what are being criticized in "CUTYS" are the word and image dialogues. Described by one of Carter's characters as "an imaginative reconstruction for radio of the life and surviving paintings of Richard Dadd" (16), "CUTYS" concerns the verbal exploration of several of Dadd's oil paintings including, *Titania Sleeping* (1841), *Puck* (1841), *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (1842), *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* (1854-8), *The Fairy Fellers' Master Stroke* (1855-64) and some of his watercolors: *Tombs of the Khalifs, Cairo 1843* (1843), *Sketch for an Idea of Crazy Jane* (1855), *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions. Murder* (1854). The publication by Bloodaxe Books with the reproductions of the images listed above (plus a photograph of the painter working on *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* taken at the Bethlehem hospital in 1856, which constitutes another visual representation with which Carter works in her fictional biography of the Victorian painter) turns Carter's radio-play into an intensively *paragonal*, illustrated *imagetext*.⁵

Intermedial relations and conflicts are already at the core of Richard Dadd's paintings for some of his creations are visual representations of, or responses to, William Shakespeare's plays *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Murray Krieger, for example, would speak of "reverse

ekphrasis” when referring to Dadd’s Shakespeare-inspired pictures, seeking to produce an “equivalent of the verbal text instead of the other way round” (xiii).⁶ The representational layers at play thus become more complex when characters of Shakespearean plays, later represented by Dadd on canvas or paper, come to life as dramatized, verbal *tableaux-vivant* in Carter’s radio-play, playfully teasing Dadd’s visual recreation of them, whilst Mendelssohn’s (musically ekphrastic?) *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* can be heard as background music. Furthermore, to add yet one more level to this multilayered play, some of Carter’s characters perform the *ut pictura poesis* tradition of inter-artistic sisterhood when establishing intermedial analogies, such as is the case of the male narrator of the radio-play defining Dadd as a “painter of poetical reverie” (“CUTYS” 16), and the character Henry Howard—professor of painting at the Royal Academy Schools in the Victorian times—who appears in “CUTYS” as the embodiment of the sister-arts’ paradigm: “*The genius of the painter, like that of the poet, may ever call forth new species of beings—an Ariel, a Caliban or the Midsummer Fairies*” (“CUTYS” 18, emphasis added).

But Carter works on the basis of a witty cultural parody on that tradition of intermedial equivalence, and on the scenario of ekphrasis it produces. In this manner, Carter’s “CUTYS” constitutes a carnivalesque and Bakhtinian, polyphonic and dialogic work, where the voices of Shakespeare, Mendelssohn, a Hobgoblin chorus, Puck, Oberon, Titania and Richard Dadd, amongst others, converge to create a humorous commentary not only on Dadd’s life and pictures but also on the process of transmedialization.

“CUTYS” thematizes the act of transmedialization by focusing on a dramatization of the passage from images into words. For example, Carter’s Titania ekphrastically describes herself and the scene she is in as painted by Dadd in *Titania Sleeping* (Fig. 1): “I [Titania] am pictured in a kind of grotto, a recess composed both of flowers and of tiny bodies of



Fig. 1 Richard Dadd. *Titania Sleeping*. Private Collection, 1841.

my attendant fays” (“CUTYS” 18), and later:

These tiny, charming, antic creatures, scarce bigger, some of them, than a dewdrop, contort themselves in all manner of quaint dispositions ... The tranquil and timeless light of fairyland ... falls on the bare shoulders of my two attendants and suffuses the white, rosy-shadowed velvet with which my own succulent limbs are upholstered. My succulent yet immaterial limbs. (“CUTYS” 21)

So far, we access ekphrasis as verbal description in which verbal Titania first idealizes the visual scene she is in and, secondly, concentrates on the sexual undertones of fairyland and its naked beings. The repetition of the syntagm “succulent limbs”, focusing on the latent voyeurism implicit in Dadd’s picture (Fig. 1) regarding the exposition of Titania’s naked body, emphasizes the difference in the gazing perspectives between

Carter's 20th century eyes, aware of gender issues in viewing, and Dadd's Victorian views. In this context, verbal Titania's portrayal of herself and of the midsummer fairies—and their ambiguous sexuality—as depicted visually by Dadd, emerges as a whimsical gesture, as statements of critical revisionism on Victorian art as a dangerous cultural ideology which surreptitiously hides sexuality under the screen of seemingly naïve and idealized figures.

In a similar manner, in relation to Dadd's *Puck* (Fig. 2), Carter's character of Puck complains about himself being pictured as “a plump, white, juicy child seated on a toadstool of a botanically imprecise description ... around my little pedestal, which looks far too frail to support my Bacchic corpulence, dance dozen[s] of those tiny nudes, dozens of them” (“CUTYS” 21). Like Titania's, Puck's comments on his visual depiction are also aimed at revealing the falsified nature of Victorian fairyland's proposed naïveté. Infantilized as a baby, although evidently naked and, indeed, juicy, Puck remains somehow asexual in this picture by Dadd (Fig. 2).⁷ However, the text confronts the image, battles against its allegedly innocent connotations, presenting a counter-perception of the visual immediacy of Puck's fleshiness. The term employed, “Bacchic corpulence”, which parallels Titania's ekphrastic appreciation of her “succulent limbs”, boosts the libidinal qualities of the mythic character and of his surrounded naked mates also with sexual suggestions.

Later, when referring to another of Dadd's pictures, *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* (Fig. 3), verbal Titania concentrates on her representational change, making some critical comments on her pictorial creator, comparing her portrayal in *Titania Sleeping* (Fig. 1) to the now big and unrealistic scale of the Cleopatricized and Middle-Eastern dark version of herself in *Contradiction* (Fig. 3): “And he [Dadd] has learned some respect for the Queen of the Fairies. Now I dwarf my court! ... Here come I, Titania, with my gigantic stride! How big I've grown, since the



Fig. 2 Richard Dadd. *Puck*. Private Collection, 1841.



Fig. 3 Richard Dadd. *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania*. Private Collection, 1854-8.

time he took my picture when I was sleeping in the glade" ("CUTYS" 40); "I have grown very brown, as if my skin has been burned by hotter suns than coaxed his cold kingcups" ("CUTYS" 42). Titania's ventriloquist criticism of her pictorial depiction is targeted, on the one hand, at the *demythologization* (Carter's favorite figure of cultural criticism) of Dadd's participation in that falsified cultural ideology of Victorian fairyland, which dangerously veils the violent rejection of the "other."⁸ In this vein, the text projects the consequences of the *ekphrastic fear*, as verbal Titania evidences her considering of pictorial Titania as racial and identitarian "other", in particular, a darker one. "CUTYS" Oberon also parrots his concerns about his pictorial rendition: "He has decided to give me, Oberon, the fierce, proud air of an Arab chieftain or a Kurdish brigand. No doubt he took my picture from some sketch or other of his travels" ("CUTYS" 42). The focus on the depiction of Titania and Oberon in *Contradiction* as dark, and Orientalized, evidences a metaphysical anxiety towards the image, supporting Mitchell's proposal that racial "otherness" is codified in a visual/verbal opposing coding (*Picture* 162). Titania portrayed as a drama Queen worried about the inaccuracies of her visual depiction, repeats this gesture of the text mocking the visual.

In this manner, the effect of Dadd's pictures being spoken through Carter's ekphrastic text can be read as an iconophobic attempt to master, conquer, and subjugate the pictures by the text. Such an attempt is founded in the fear of the image and has its root in the tradition that emanates from Simonides de Ceos's claim that "painting is mute poetry", by which ekphrastic texts have the possibility of giving voice to "subaltern" images.⁹ By turning painted characters into radio-play characters, Angela Carter interrelates with the objective of making the pictures speak, attempting, in consequence, Mitchell's *ekphrastic hope* regarding "the transformation of the [supposedly] dead, passive image into a living creature" (*Picture* 167). As an example of this verbal rhetoric of domination, by appropriating of

Dadd's characters and transforming them into hilarious critics and harsh commentators of their visual presentations, Carter emphasizes the gap that separates the media and stages a competition or an evaluative debate between the arts in which the fidelity of the transmedialization (from Shakespeare's texts to Dadd's paintings first and from Dadd's visuality to Carter's textuality later) is evaluated and in which the superiority of the verbal is implied by the coarse tone of irony. As the voices the images access attempt to evaluate, disapprove of and even ridicule the images, the *paragonal* competition staged favors verbal representation as superior critical commentator of the visual images, supporting, in appearance, a verbocentric approach to representation.

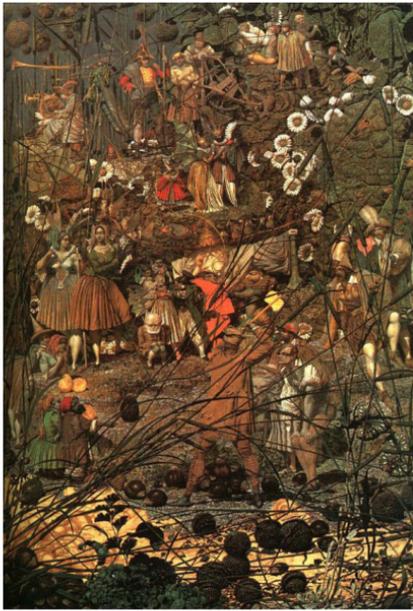


Fig. 4 Richard Dadd. *The Fairy Fellers' Master Stroke*. London: Tate Gallery, 1855-64.

A female narrator tells the story that after being put in the Bethlem

Hospital, Dadd soon resumed painting, though, in his isolation and confinement, his paintings “underwent a kind of magical petrification. In these strange canvases, the rules of time and space and perspective have undergone a subtle transformation and there is no effect of either depth or movement. As if everything had stopped still, stock fast, frozen in time” (39). Therefore, according to this narrator, Dadd’s pictures represent the extent to which images are immobile and stopped in time as opposed to the fluidity and time-development of verbal narrative. These remarks by Carter’s narrator apparently support Lessing’s idea of difference between texts and images expressed in the oppositions of time/space and ear/eye, which Mitchell proved to be “neither stable nor scientific” (*Picture* 157). That is, Carter’s narrator’s comments seem to voice a rather conservative and polemic understanding of media differences. As if to reaffirm this classic and misleading perspective, in relation to *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* (Fig. 3), Carter’s Oberon states that “No wind stirs or ever could this frozen grove. Time does not exist, here. She [Titania] and I confront one another in a durationless present ... [b]ecause time does not pass in these wards of absence; everything acquires the quality of a still life” (42-43).

The Fairy Feller’s Master Stroke (Fig. 4) is presented as the epitome of this determinist quality of painting as a-temporal, not only because it is considered to be Dadd’s masterpiece (of everlasting appeal) but because the scene represented in the picture, that of the Fairy Feller holding his axe in the air, just before giving his master stroke “offers a scene from a narrative just before the conclusion; it illustrates a story that has no beginning and therefore cannot end, it tells an anecdote the point of which is never made. ... But the axe cannot fall. Nothing can move. ... And here we are, stuck fast for all eternity, waiting for me [Fairy Feller] to strike, waiting” (“CUTYS” 46-47). Therefore, in relation to the reading offered by Carter’s radio-play, this picture (Fig. 4) exemplifies the anti-

narrative quality of images, the stillness of images.

However, there is a turn of the screw to this reasoning because, if we come back to Carter's female narrator, the reason why the axe never falls does not necessarily imply that the author offers an interpretation of Dadd's paintings as still and mute in order to convey a conservative and pro-Lessing understanding of media. Alternatively, in this narrator's interpretation the axe never falls so that the illusion of fairyland never vanishes, so that the fairies can always remain fairies, and so that, for Dadd, the character, self-knowledge and self-awareness (Dadd as a parricide deluded about believing himself the incarnation of the god Osiris with a mandate to kill his father whom he thought to be the devil) might always stay imminent but never accomplished ("CUTYS" 52). Then, Dadd's famous picture and its immobile axe have a double symbolism unrelated to rhetorical concerns of media definitions. The fairy feller's axe stands for the knife with which Dadd stabbed and killed his father: "the blow that I [Fairy Feller's] am about to strike, which he prevents me, is the very blow he [Richard Dadd] struck himself!" ("CUTYS" 47). If the axe does not blow, the parricide and the consequent confinement of the painter are also stopped, that is why the picture needs to be frozen and still. Additionally, the axe-not-falling also represents "the icy calm of absolute repression" ("CUTYS" 53), thus asserting a social critique of Victorian England as "the most repressed society in the history of the world" ("CUTYS" 53). Under the light of these remarks, Carter's "CUTYS" can be interpreted as a parodic, alternative version of Lessing's understanding of media that plays with those ideas of the image as a timeless, mute and frozen narrative only to subvert them by the never-ending intrusion of irony, by the critical reading of the Victorian era and by the critical biographical note on Richard Dadd, his art and his madness.

Moreover, Carter interplays with the idea of Dadd's execution of the so called *pregnant moment*, by which figurative paintings are said to

capture a moment of a sequence of actions, like a photo snap, and present that single moment as metonymic representative of the narrative. The axe in the air just about to fall is a perfect example of this idea and the classic understanding of ekphrasis refers precisely to the literary possibility of freezing narrative “in which poetry is to imitate the visual arts stopping time, or more precisely, by referring to an action by the still moment that implies it” (Steiner 41). But, because “CUTYS” is a radio-play, and not a narrative text, it is then not precisely focused on descriptions but more concerned with the development of actions. Then, Carter speculates with the idea of ekphrastic texts freezing time and narrative in theoretical, conceptual terms, but does not really adapt the material, generic configuration of her text to the rhetorical structure of ekphrasis; instead, the play involves a rapid development of events, profuse dialogues and continuous change of scenes. Consequently, “CUTYS” offers a displaced and at times contradictory idea of ekphrasis.

Furthermore, the rhetorical panorama changes when we notice that the same verbal ekphrastic voices which have criticized the images also aim their ironic remarks at verbal discourses on the images, such as high art discourses, Psychoanalysis and Orientalism. As I have hinted, on the socio-cultural level, what is being criticized in “CUTYS” is the Victorian age and its institutions of education, of art canonization and of confinement and repression. On the one hand, Carter attacks the art establishment by asserting, for instance, that training at the Royal Academy of Art did not encourage originality, and was simply “confined to copying old masters” (“CUTYS” 18). And another way in which the characters’ satire destabilizes the meaning of discourses on Victorian art is by means of Oberon voicing a pseudo-Marxist parody on ekphrastic academic speech on the genre of fairy painting: “The vogue for paintings of fairy subjects during the mid-Victorian period might be regarded as manifestation of a compensatory ‘ideology of innocence’ in the age of

high capitalism. ... The Victorian fairy land is a place that not only never existed but also ... [i]t represents a kind of pornography of the imagination” (“CUTYS” 23-24). Concomitantly, the concept of academic lecturing is caricatured by having poltergeists playing the role of students: “And I’ll [Puck] thank you poltergeists to keep a firm hold on your impulses during the lecture” (“CUTYS” 23). In an over formal and officious tone, which is in itself funny, Puck gathers together the presence of the “ugly beings”, the marginalized counter-face of the lovely and romanticized fairies, left out of Dadd’s iconography. An awkward crowd of Trolls, “emanations of the id”, “apparitions from the unconscious”, “nightmares and ghouls” sits together in an a sort of amphitheatre in which Puck introduces a lecture and by so doing Carter parodies Psychoanalytic readings of art, and Victorian educational systems all together (“CUTYS” 23-24).

On the other hand, the radio-play is highly concerned with Dadd’s long trip to Greece, Italy, Constantinople, Beirut, Damascus and Egypt, among other places, with Sir Thomas Phillip, who hired him to record the visual impressions, images of their trip. This trip is considered to have triggered Dadd’s obsession with Egyptian mythology that lead him to parricide. Parodying the cult of the exotic and Western fascination with the Orient that Dadd exhibited in his art—and which represents one aspect of the Victorian appropriation of the cultural “other”—Carter presents the trip as an example of Victorian misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the Orient as a “compensatory ideology of sensuality, of mystery, of violence” (“CUTYS” 32).¹⁰

Therefore, given this parodic scenario, in which mockery is not solely targeted at images but also at verbal discourses, I believe that, instead of interpreting the play as an example of the text subjugating the images, it is possible to read “CUTYS” as the paradoxical gesture of the images speaking for themselves, thus embracing or achieving the *ekphrastic hope*, asserting the resemblance of media and sarcastically defying Mitchell’s

belief in the impossibility of such a hopeful proposal. But not because Mitchell is wrong in implying that there is a considerable difference between the image and the voicing of the image by the text, but because in her mocking radio-play, Carter shows—with puns, witty humor and harsh political criticism—that pictures are not silent after all, but are presented as a polyphonic arrangement of voices telling different stories. Somehow, what “CUTYS” shows is a commitment to the expression of the visual narrativity or the “visual storytelling” (the term is Meike Bal’s) already at work in Dadd’s pictures. The strategy of ventriloquist dramatization, as opposed to a third person narration of the images, actually defies the idea that images are mute. The defiance is paradoxical and contradictory, of course, for Carter creates a text to show that pictures have voices, or that pictures tell stories. In this respect, let us remember that Peter Wagner refers precisely to the *paradox of ekphrasis* as the promise “to make the silent image speak even while silencing the unspoken (and, perhaps, unspeakable) or imposing verbal rhetoric ... upon the image” (32). This paradox enhances the state of *ekphrastic ambivalence* between the fear and the love of the image and parallels Carter’s contradictory presentation of her radio-play in the Preface.

As shown at the beginning of this section, Carter usually works with paradoxes as challengers of established meanings and precisely one last paradox comes to the centre of this radio-play. For another way in which “CUTYS” offers an exploration of the differences and similarities between verbal and visual representations is through the discussion of the pragmatic differences that are supposed to separate the media, as expressed in the distinction between hearing and seeing and between the listener and the onlooker. Carter writes in the Preface for Bloodaxe publication:

the listener is invited inside some of Dadd’s paintings, inside the ‘CUTYS’ of the title and into the eerie masterpiece, ‘The

Fairy Feller's Master Stroke' to *hear* the beings within it—the monsters produced by repression—squeak and gibber and lie and tell the truth (12, emphasis added).

I read these intricate displacements among the senses (sight and hearing) as a point of access into the hybrid *imagetext* which implies representing from dual and conflicting places, the text and the image. In this case, thinking *imagetextually* entails avoiding monolithic perspectives on media, avoiding reducing the media to the senses and welcoming paradoxical possibilities: to hear paintings and to see texts. The premise has echoes of the Hellenistic rhetoric perspective on ekphrasis, which understood it as a device that could connect the ears and the eyes by way of vivid descriptions; a quotation from Hermogenes in his "Ekphrasis" reads: "[ekphrasis] must through hearing operate to bring about seeing" (qtd. in Krieger 7).

According to Carter's contradictory perspective, radio is the best medium to represent Richard Dadd's paintings because radio makes us *see* whilst, at the same time, the reader is invited into Dadd's paintings to *hear* as if words could not achieve their own purpose without the gaze, as if the gaze could not achieve its own purpose without words. In this manner, instead of reducing media to different senses, ear for the verbal medium and eye for the visual medium, Carter suggests that radio embodies a "fruitful paradox" ("Preface" 11), that of the heterogeneity of media, that of radio being "the most visual of mediums because you can't see it" ("Preface" 11).¹¹ Working on paradoxes, she decided to undermine purist media definitions, to materialize the metaphoric intentions of the *ekphrastic hope* and to "paint some pictures on radio" ("Preface" 11). If you cannot see it, you have to imagine it. Thus, Carter compels us to the redefinition of the idea of textual and verbal media as hybrid and contaminated realms and encourages us to consider the notion of *verbal images* not only as metaphoric but taking into account the fact "that

images, pictures, space and visibility may only be figuratively conjured up in a verbal discourse does not mean that the conjuring fails to occur or that the reader/listener ‘sees’ nothing” (Mitchell, *Picture* 96).¹² In this vein, the gap between words and image is dismantled and “CUTYS”, a radio-play that at first sight might be perceived as an illustrated text highlighting the gaps and ruptures between media, should be better appreciated as a hybrid and integrationist conflictive *imagetext*.

3. LAS MENINAS AND THE “OTHERS”

I would also like to offer a brief study on one of Marosa di Giorgio’s ekphrastic pieces that dialogues strongly with Carter’s rhetorical intentions as developed in relation to “CUTYS”. One attractive ekphrastic creation by di Giorgio appears in the first poem of “Pasajes de un memorial: Al abuelo toscano Eugenio Médici” (2006), an intimate and pseudo-confessional collection of mini-texts. Consisting of a poetical discussion on Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656), in this prose-poem the figures of the maids of honor are verbally described, accentuating the mysterious visual and conceptual effect of the picture:

Médicis Eugenio, Eugenio Médicis, I brought you meninas as a present. Velázquez’s meninas and the others. You will watch them anxiously; place them where it pleases you. In your hand, butterflies; on the chest of drawers: with the mirror they will be double. So beautiful, so strange, silvery little dress, ballerinas with pearls, glassy blue eyes, sky-blue eyes, looking into an ambiguous and fixated prospect. Gems, yolks with no destiny, eternal immobility. They are meninas. They exist, and they do not. But I brought them. For you; as a present. And there is a new thing in the room, a hawk, a violet light, a spy-hawk, but it could not take them away from you. (39, emphasis added)¹³

In my perspective, the above text represents a challenge to Mitchell’s

mistrust of the representational assets of ekphrasis, questioning his voicing of the idea that “words can cite but never sight” (*Picture* 152), and I propose to examine di Giorgio’s text on Velázquez’s image in order to continue re-thinking the possibilities of the *ekphrastic hope*.



Fig. 5 Diego Velázquez. *Las meninas*. Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1656.

Las meninas is an extremely debated and utterly famous picture, and yet, in spite of the textual and theoretical competition, di Giorgio’s text represents an original approach to the famous canvas that deserves critical attention. Many scholars have considered Velázquez’s painting as meta-representation; as a picture in which the subject matter is pictorial representation. Mitchell studies the painting as a *hypericon* or metapicture, i.e., as a “figure[s] of figuration, picture[s] that reflect on the nature of images” (*Iconology* 158). For him the picture represents precisely how images can *picture theory*; it represents the extent to which images

can offer a visual theory of representation outside of the limitations of verbal discourse. Meike Bal, on the contrary, proposes that the meta-representative and self-reflective character of *Las meninas*, a picture about painting, is, per se, discursive. Bal maintains that “what we ‘see’ is a *discourse* on representation, this [*Las meninas*] would be an instance of visual discursivity” (*Reading* 263). Both Bal and Mitchell read the work as representative of their own agenda; whilst Bal is focused on visual poetics and on the narrativity of images, Mitchell highlights the possibility of the image to be free from verbal dominion.

I believe that the literary strategy of self-reflection as presented in di Giorgio’s text makes the work visual. Like Velázquez’s picture, her text is self-reflective insofar as it draws attention to its representational qualities and to the affinities between words and images, a topic which is integrated into the structural composition of the text. In her work, di Giorgio reproduces the effect of mirror-reflection, which is of utmost aesthetic and rhetorical importance in Velázquez’s picture, by the syntactically-built chiasmic mirror-image with which she inaugurates the poem: “Médicis Eugenio, Eugenio Médicis”. The figure of the mirror, the instrument of self-reflection, allows for the experience of the double and in so doing it serves as an image of the rhetorical gesture of ekphrasis which is to re-present the visual as text or to present a specular and new verbal version of visual representation. As has been studied by Michael Foucault in *Les mots et les choses* (1966), and by many others after him, the mirror introduces a paradox into Velázquez’s painting, that of the King and Queen of Spain, Felipe IV and Mariana de Austria, appearing to be in the place of the viewer.¹⁴ A second paradox emerges when we realize that precisely by representing the absence of the viewer, the work actually represents the viewer, although negatively (Bal, *Reading* 263).¹⁵ Only the Royals’ reflection, i.e., the viewer’s absent reflection, accesses the canvas. By means of the chiasmic arrangement, di Giorgio develops a structural

analogy with respect to the place and position of the receptors of the visual and verbal messages, the reader and the viewer. If, in Velázquez's canvas, the viewer and the implicit viewers, the Royals, are paradoxically identified, mirroring each other; in di Giorgio's text, the reader and the implicit reader, Eugenio Médicis, are also paradoxically identified. Like the viewer, whose presence in Velázquez's picture is blocked and evoked in absence, the reader's identity in di Giorgio's text is partially obscured by the uncanny double presence of the implicit reader. Therefore, I argue that self-reflection makes the text visual in two obvious ways. Firstly, it creates a visual reference to Velázquez's picture (for which the image of the mirror is crucial for its pictorial identity and position in the history of art) thus appropriating and attaching the image into the text by means of ekphrastic quotation. Secondly, the self-reflection (conveyed by the chiasm) and its connotations, suggests a textual visuality that highlights the *imagetextual* qualities of writing. The wording of the text reproduces the visual effect of the picture; that of the phantasmagorical—simultaneous existence and non-existence—of the receiver of the work (royals and viewer for the picture and implicit reader, Eugenio Médicis, and reader for the text), portrayed only in a specular way.¹⁶

Contrary to what Mitchell believes in relation to the impossibility of ekphrasis to produce, via the reference to the visual, a structural transformation in the text—"the text *may* of course, achieve spatiality or iconicity, but the visual object invoked does not require or cause these features" (*Picture* 160)—this ekphrastic example by di Giorgio produces an iconic effect (that of the resemblance of the visual representation to the textual one expressed in the syntactic mirroring) directly related to Velázquez's visual representation. The iconicity of di Giorgio's text, as portrayed in the mirror effect, might not be "required" by *Las meninas* but certainly depends on Velázquez's picture and it is only comprehended and appreciated in the light of it. Without the ekphrastic reference to

Las meninas, the chiasmic structure would not bear any intermedial connotations and would not produce a comment on the word and image dialectic. In her piece on *Las meninas*, di Giorgio creates an ekphrastic *imagetext* that stresses the analogies between words and images and suggests that the goals of the *ekphrastic hope* (intermedial analogy, resemblance, and reciprocity) might be achieved. As a consequence, this proves that there is still room for a debate on considering ekphrasis to be more than a merely thematic issue affecting texts at their semantic level only. Ekphrasis as a mode of intermedial composition might also produce a visual effect that allows us not only to *read* images but also to *see* texts, constituting a different aspect of the *imagetext*.¹⁷ Consequently, ekphrasis has helped di Giorgio to investigate the ontology of the readership as spectatorship, not as *enargeia*, not as metaphorical analogy, not as seeing with the inner eye, but as seeing with our real, sensorial eyes.¹⁸ We read the chiasm, and we see the mirror represented by it and we recognize the structural affinity of the text with Velázquez's canvas. The intermedial *paragone* is brought to the fore by the fact that text constitutes an *imagetext* on vision and representation which interplays with a picture that, as metapicture, is already embedded in discourse on vision and representation.

There is yet one more key question to ask, who are “the others” implicit in di Giorgio's enigmatic phrase: “I brought you *meninas* as a present. Velázquez's *meninas* and the others”? One possible interpretation is that “the others” refers to other pictures also entitled *Las meninas*, such as the suite consisting on fifty eight oil paintings that Pablo Picasso produced, après Velázquez, in 1957, of which Fig. 6 is an example; or Goya's famous etching, *Las meninas* (Fig. 7), to name only two. In this sense, the text would make reference to other visual representations, real or notional, and, in this hypothetical scenario, the term, “the others”, would embody considerations of the repercussion of a work of art in other works of art: the “effect” and the capacity, of *Las meninas* in this case, to create epigones.



Fig. 6 Pablo Picasso. *Las meninas*. Barcelona: Museu Picasso, 1957.



Fig. 7 Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. *Las meninas*. New York:
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1778.

On the other hand, as studied by Mitchell and exemplified by Carter's radio-play, in di Giorgio's poem ekphrasis proves once more to be related to identitarian, social and cultural aspects of representation beyond the aesthetic realm. The chiasmic arrangement is not the only hint at doubleness and reflection di Giorgio's text embraces. Alternatively, the semantic play with the notion of the specular image and the blurring of the reality/fiction border the mirror implies: "with the mirror they will be double. ... They exist and they do not", also suggests that the phrase "the others" points to the reflection of Velázquez's *meninas* (not the picture entitled *Las meninas* but the maids of honor) in the mirror, to their reflective visual double. Under this second hypothesis, di Giorgio's reinterpretation of Velázquez's painting would shift the power relations executed in Velázquez's picture, displacing the condition of dubious, reflective existence, and the consequent looming invisibility, from the representation of the monarchs/onlookers to the *meninas*, thus accessing a mini reflection on class difference and on the sociological status of the lives of the maidens who live to serve others, and whose destinies are, then, only specular, figurative, immobile and frozen in the mirror image. In this vein, "the others" in di Giorgio's text can refer to the social dynamics represented in the picture, and to the establishment of the *meninas* as "the others" insofar as they are marginalized economically and in terms of social class. The fact that the ekphrastic depiction of the pictorial maids of honor is modified by words such as "immobility", "fixated", and "no destiny", emphasizes this perspective of the limited life prospects of the *meninas* as servants. In fact, the depictive ekphrastic focus is on the presentation of the maids of honor, their garments and possible futures, not on the Infanta, nor on the painter, nor on the royals. This reasoning brings us back to the *ekphrastic ambivalence* as it accentuates ideas of a-temporality in images, thus reinforcing those classic and falsified ideas on the gap between words and images that were also present in Carter's "CUTYS".

By means of exploring Carter's and di Giorgio's ekphrastic examples, I expressed my doubts regarding the idea that ekphrasis can only produce a sort of oppressive and subjugating ventriloquism of the image. Even though I completely agree with the notion that the image cannot be represented by means of words alone and that, certainly, the text cannot translate the image, for the media are not transparent, I have shown examples that argue that the verbal text might rely, depend even, on the visual for its own understanding and be subject to strong affinities with the image. It is precisely because I endorse Mitchell's conceptualization of the *ekphrastic ambivalence* as a fluctuating and ambiguous negotiation of the verbal and the visual that I questioned some aspects of his skeptical perception of ekphrasis as contradictory to his own discourse of oscillation. Additionally, I have demonstrated how his focus on the gaps between the media can be put under consideration if taking into account the vacillation and paradox that ekphrasis implies. In this sense, I propose that ekphrasis, as a mode of intermedial connection, allows not only for staging of the competition between media but also for intersection of the visual and the textual as a form of hybrid and permeable *imagetext*.

In "CUTYS", Carter provided a parodic version of the intermedial *paragone* that, in my interpretation, shows that, although making the picture "speak" is impossible (insofar as it is the text that eventually "speaks" and not the image), the establishment of polyphonic intermedial dialogue is not, and the will to dissolve media frontiers by the use of paradoxes and oxymorons is not either. "CUTYS" is of great aesthetic significance because it not only enacts and conveys the conceptual aspects of the genre of ekphrasis as ambivalent and contradictory (between the promise of intermedial analogy and its utter rejection), but also challenges the constraints and limits of many of its definitions. At first sight, Carter's play seems to be a perfect case to show the verbal imperialism that surrounds ekphrasis and, in that sense, to support Mitchell's perspective that Western culture is pervasively iconophobic. However, the radio-play

can actually be interpreted as mocking Lessing's anti-sister-arts tradition. If, in her favoritism for radio, she prizes the verbal over the visual, the play is also a dramatization of the rivalry between words and images that proposes a decentering of senses and a challenge to Simonides de Ceos's idea that "painting is mute poetry". If, taking into account that the verbal characters also criticize verbal discourses and that they themselves have achieved some kind of voice, showing, by the uses of humor, that, ironically, images are not silent, then, that on its own serves as a challenge to Mitchell's skeptical implications and it offers ekphrasis as a fruitful strategy that serves to better interrogate the productive *mélange* of word and image interaction.

Di Giorgio, on the other hand, questioned the link between ekphrasis and iconicity and offered a poetic text intrinsically collaborative with Velázquez's picture, proposing reading as spectatorship. Through the written word of di Giorgio the latent visual presence of Velázquez's painting is enhanced, producing a kind of re-visualization of the image. However, like Carter, di Giorgio has also been trapped in the *ekphrastic ambivalence*, offering the possibility of realization of the *ekphrastic hope* but truncating that possibility by means of bringing to the fore the classical idea of visual imagery as frozen and a-temporal.

The dialectics of word and image develop on the borders. Ekphrasis opens the media frontiers to re-delimitations and facilitates cross-fertilization and mutual impregnation, allowing us to interrogate Carter's and di Giorgio's representations from a non-restrictive perspective, acknowledging the visual and verbal encounters, the affinities, and also the constant conflict for dominance between the pictorial and the visual.

NOTES

- ¹ Mitchell defines the *ekphrastic fear* in relation to Lessing's fear of literary castration, the feminization of poetry, and the muteness of eloquence (*Iconology* 155).
- ² Heffernan also proposes that ekphrasis thematizes the visual as the "otherness" we fear, establishing a metaphoric duel between male and female in which the male speech strives to dominate and narrate a female, silent image at once alluring and threatening (*Museum* 1).
- ³ The use of the personal pronoun "our" as in "Our confusion with ekphrasis stems, then, from a confusion between differences of medium and of meaning" (*Picture* 159) enhances my critique that, although postulating the ekphrastic ambivalence, Mitchell suggests a contradictory perspective in which his skeptical consideration of ekphrasis is revealed.
- ⁴ Mitchell proposed the idea of the *imagetext* to refer to the unavoidable heterogeneity of representation as residing in the fact that "the interaction of pictures and texts is constitutive of representation as such: all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no 'purely' visual or verbal arts" (*Picture* 5).
- ⁵ Mitchell speaks of *paragone* between words and images in terms of battle and rivalry in relation to Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci's use of the term (*Iconology* 47 and *Picture* 227). Gombrich (and other art historians), uses the term in this manner as well.
- ⁶ The word chosen by Krieger to describe the inter-artistic bond, "equivalent", emerges as highly controversial in this stage of conflictive dialectics in which the possibility of equivalence is ambivalently questioned. See *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*.
- ⁷ Like Dadd, Joshua Reynolds, for example, also depicted Puck as a chubby child in his *Puck or Robin Goodfellow* (n/d). William Blake, however, chose to portray him associated with sexualized the figure of Pan in *Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing* (1786).
- ⁸ For the concept of "demythologization" as a political and aesthetic prerogative see Carter's "Notes from the Front Line": "I become mildly irritated (I'm sorry!) when people, as they sometimes do, ask me about the 'mythic quality' of work I've written lately. Because I believe that all myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologizing business" (38).
- ⁹ For a study on the detrimental consequences of Simonides de Ceos's claims towards the realm of the visual see Wendy Steiner's *The Colors of Rhetoric*: "the asymmetry

behind Simonides' rhetoric suggests that a poem has everything to gain in the pictorial analogy—all of its own symbolic properties and the palpability of a visible medium as well ... But what has painting to gain? It acquires no voice, but some ineffable property termed 'poetic' (6).

¹⁰ See Crofts's chapter "Artificial Biography": *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* and *A Self-Made Man*".

¹¹ If this statement might be said to mobilize the fear of the image, because it implies that is better to speak for the images than to show them; this idea is contradicted by the fact that, when published, the radio-play included Dadd's images. These contradictions and paradoxes enhance the ekphrastic ambivalence.

¹² Mitchell is committed to show that "contrary to common belief, images 'proper' are not stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense; they are not perceived in the same way by viewers any more than are dream images; and they are not exclusively visual in any important way, but involve multisensory apprehension and interpretation" (*Iconology* 13-14).

¹³ This is the translation of the whole prose poem. All translations are mine.

¹⁴ On paradoxes and self-referentiality in *Las meninas*, see Svetlana Alepr's "Interpretation without Representation, or, the Viewing of *Las meninas*." She argues that it was precisely Foucault who turned this picture into a self-referential picture.

¹⁵ For Bal, this possibility of the picture to represent absence is another verbal aspect of the image which is thus able to express negation, a figure traditionally reserved to verbal discourse.

¹⁶ Bal refers to this phenomenon of the overlapping of viewer and the Royals in *Las meninas* as an episode in which the narcissism of the viewer is "wounded because it is not us who we really see, we are displaced" (*Reading* 265) and connects this picture to Rembrandt's *The Artist in His Studio* (1629). Unlike these isolated episodes in the visual arts, one could argue that, in literary terms, the place of the reader and the implicit reader is always overlapped. Nevertheless, what I want to emphasize here is the textual-visual analogy of that overlapping which di Giorgio's text creates by means of a specific link to *Las meninas*.

¹⁷ Iconicity of texts and the possibility to see texts as pictures is, of course, developed by the tradition of calligrams and Concrete Poetry. But the point I am making here is that, in this case, the visual effect of the text is created by means of ekphrasis.

¹⁸ *Enargeia* was considered by Plato and his followers, which defended the superiority of

seeing as knowing, as a virtue to be achieved by the text. This trope is also referred to in Aristotle's *Poetics*, chapter 17. "To create *enargeia* is to use words to yield so vivid a description that they—dare we say literally?—place the represented object before the reader's (hearer's) inner eye" (qtd. in Krieger 14).

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**PLAYING WITH FORTUNE: THE BODY, ECONOMICS,
AND BOETHIANISM IN THE MILLER'S TALE**
BY DEAN TSUYUKI

Much of the scholarship concerned with the *Miller's Tale* places Alison at the margins of the text¹ and focuses more toward Nicholas being the central figure, since his plan with Alison frames the plot. Yet, despite the conclusion sparing any punishment on her, that she is the character around which all the players operate cannot be denied. Gerald Morgan's reading centers her around the fabliau's obscene version of a courtly romance, where, instead of being spared, she is the object of jealousy and lust: "She is not loved, but fucked" (516).² To add to Morgan's argument, she is the reason behind Nicholas's carefully calculated plan that steers the plot.³ Absolon's revenge and the farcical conclusion that follows is based upon his misdirected kiss to Alison's backside. The jealous husband, John, waits within the roof of his home to save Alison from a flood he naively believes is coming. And that Alison sits at the center of this interaction directs attention to the crux of the tale: the wrongful pursuit of an extrinsic happiness—one that distracts these suitors from the true source of happiness found within. To this effect, this misguided pursuit

is a reflection of Boethius's early worldview treated by Philosophy in the *Consolation of Philosophy*,⁴ a discussion Christopher Cannon began.⁵ The relationship between the two texts goes beyond double-plot structures, however. Inasmuch as we consider Boethius to be metaphorically *sick*, I argue that each of the male characters share elements of this same sickness, a misguided worldview. In this sense, these men share a commonality with Boethius as "patients" of sickness, each pursuing a happiness outside themselves, which, by Philosophy's definition, is not a true happiness.

Essential to the application of Boethianism is how this false happiness, one outside the self, is considered in the *Miller's Tale*. Turning to Elizabeth Edwards's discussion of economic value in the text, it is evident that Alison is a commodity falsely made scarce (her sexuality is in abundance) and of which John must hoard, keep caged, and defend through jealousy.⁶ Edwards contends that Nicholas's plot transforms "rage and pleye' ... into clerical work," which, in turn "asserts the value of his labour" (105-6). Absolon engages in an exchange economy where sex can literally be purchased: "he offers wine and wafers ... [and] purports in the end to offer a gold ring for another kiss" (106). This model frames the men within an economic system where Alison's sexuality is raised to the level of purchasable goods, and in doing so, we can purport sexuality along the same lines as the gifts of Fortune. Further, it is Alison who expends this gift, which likens her not to Philosophy,⁷ but as a version of Fortune, not only for her mutability, but, too, as the agency through which the men pursue this false happiness. This interpretation is informed by Philosophy's teaching of good versus bad fortune: "[with her] beaute of false goodes [she byndeth] the hertes of folk that usen hem: the contrarye Fortune unbyndeth hem by the knowynge of freel wlefulnesse" (II, 8.19-23).⁸ And again, in Book III, Philosophy contends, "But I preie that thei coveyten rychesses and honours, so that, whanne thei han geten tho false goodes with greet trevaile, that therby they mowen knowen the

verray goodes” (III, 8.26-9).⁹ In other words, what will bring great travail is coveting false goods, specifically, wealth and honor. In this sense, if we substitute wealth for sex, it is clear that this pursuit of Alison is a false one, an argument found as each of the men are disciplined.

My use of “discipline” or “punishment” in describing the men’s downfall in the *Miller’s Tale* begs clarification, for when using these terms, I am conflating what is, essentially, a component on which this essay relies. In the *Consolation*, Boethius initially refers to Philosophy as his “fisycien” (I, 3.4), signifying the metaphor of the text: Boethius is *sick* and Philosophy is his *healer*. Of course, we know that this metaphor stands in place of Boethius’s need to gain perspective of the world.¹⁰ Acknowledging this healing, Matthew Walz argues that in Books I and II Boethius is anesthetized by Philosophy in order to numb him to Fortune’s mutability.¹¹ Walz contends that “Boethius’s forgetfulness of his true self is no trivial illness, and so there will be no quick cure. Instead, Philosophy must treat him in stages” (502). In other words, this anesthetization is part of a larger effort, which is to cleanse his mind from a wrongful pursuit of happiness and lay the foregrounding arguments that will provide him with greater perspective of the world. As Philosophy’s superficial anesthetics begin to push Boethius inward, we find that more intense treatments are needed. The progression of treatments brought upon by Philosophy resembles how each of the men of the *Miller’s Tale* are disciplined for seeking an outside source of happiness. Interestingly, this progression of treatments follows the very chronology of the tale, beginning with Absolon and ending with John. Thus, the ass-kissing scene between Absolon and Alison signifies a need to understand the bad gifts of fortune and her changeability. The hot coulter of revenge upon Nicholas references not only fortune’s bad gifts, but the inability of wealth to satisfy greed. And in the end, John not only loses the wealth and expended sexuality of Alison, but, too, the laughing community

makes a mockery of his reputation as he lies on the floor with a broken arm. My approach to the *Miller's Tale* considers how the scholarship surrounding the text speaks to *The Consolation of Philosophy*. The basis of this reading relies heavily on framing the *Miller's Tale* with Edwards's discussion of economics in order to qualify sexuality as an extrinsic (to the body) commodity sought after by each of the men. Considering these not as punishments but as treatments to the body, I contend that there is an inherent Boethianism informing the economics of the *Miller's Tale*, which is centered around a version of Fortune—Alison—who expels bad gifts in order to teach each of the men Philosophy's wisdom.

*HEELD NARWE IN CAGE*¹²

Boethius's imprisonment is fundamental to the *Consolation*, for it is within his cell that he imagines the philosophical discussion, which treats his illness. The sequence of Philosophy *coming into* "this solitarie place of [his] exil" (I, 3.10-1) in order to treat Boethius signifies the importance of this space. In all its solitariness, this space is a cell, a prison, a *cage*. Boethius is confined, but this does not debilitate visitors—particularly, Philosophy—to transgress this cage. Access to the outside is restricted, however, and only by coming *into* the space can the cell be transgressed, which displaces this dichotomy between inside and outside. Gila Aloni has posited the term "extimacy" to the interdependent relationship between inside and outside. She suggests that these polarities, public (other) and private (intimate), collapse because the "intimate *is* Other." These realms, she suggests, are continuous, and the "notion of privacy most relevant to the Fabliau ... is not one in which inside opposes outside ... it is a structure that involves internal exclusion" (166). By this, she means that the space not only functions as a demarcation between these two spheres, but it also joins these spaces. In this sense, the inside *is* the outside.

In a similar way, the cage that denies Alison from the outside is the very boundary that determines treatment for each of the men who represent that public realm. A key component to this boundary is the window, both separating and joining the spaces.¹³ In fact, Alison and Nicholas both find themselves occupying two spaces simultaneously during their interactions with Absolon: “And at the window out she [Alison] putte hir hole” (3732), and later, “And up the wyndowe dide he [Nicholas] hastily, / And out his ers he putteth pryvely / Over the buttock, to the haunche-bon” (3801-03). This duality allows their asses to be outside while each of them are still clearly occupying the space inside. Each of the men transgress this intimate space at one point or another. Whether the cage is limited to a single room or the entire house, John’s occupation of the space seems constant; not only is the room his bedchamber, but, too, he is tricked into preparing for a false flood within the roof his home in order to preserve Alison’s wealth of sexuality. It would seem that, technically, Absolon never enters this private space, but he does partake in the “extimacy” in that he represents “something from the outside invad[ing] what should be private, that is, a man with his wife” (Aloni 168). Additionally, what is essential to the Alison’s cage is not the cage itself, but rather the wealth within it that each of the men seek—what defines their very illness. That Absolon never enters the cage may lend perspective to his rather light treatment inasmuch as he seeks the wealth but never actually acquires it. He must be anesthetized from the temptation of Alison’s false goods.

The relationship between the cage of the *Miller’s Tale* to that of the *Consolation* can be found in how Chaucer consolidates this space. Like Boethius’s cage containing the nature of Fortune and Philosophy’s treatment, Alison’s cage is both the source of false happiness and the location for treatment. If we are willing to regard Fortune as, too, occupying the cell of Boethius, the analogy is even closer, since I argue

that Alison is a version of Fortune. Fortune's presence begins in Book II when Philosophy borrows the words of Fortune: "Certes I wolde pleten with the a fewe thynges, usynge the woordes of Fortune" (II, 2.1-2).¹⁴ To this extent, the cage is occupied by Boethius, the patient, and Fortune. Conversely, Alison, a version of Fortune, occupies the space alongside three versions of Boethius: John (who owns and hoards the wealth), Nicholas, (who manages to get his hands on this wealth), and Absolom (who attempts to acquire the wealth but fails). Each of these versions represent degrees of sicknesses that endure a treatment.

*O YE MORTEL FOLK, WHAT SEEKE YE THANNE BLISSFULNESSE OUT OF YOURSELF WHICHE THAT IS PUT IN YOURSELF*¹⁵

Absolom's treatment, which comes in two phases, initiates the importance of senses, especially knowledge and vision. The first phase is given by Alison in the form of mutability. Absolom confidently assumes he will receive a kiss, but because "derk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,"¹⁶ he is unable to foresee that Alison has used a different mouth. Louis Bishop discusses how Nicholas's treatment alludes to four of the five senses of the body,¹⁷ but for Absolom, all five senses are referenced in order to reveal how limited his knowledge really is. Absolom is blind to Alison's ass, he can only acknowledge her saying "thanne make thee redy ... I come anon" (3720). Further, only by feeling does Absolom "abak ... stirte ... for wel he wiste a woman hath no berd ... he felte a thing al rough and long yherd" (3736-39). Smelling Nicholas's fart comes in the second phase when he exacts his revenge, although unintentionally, on Nicholas. As Bishop suggests, "Chaucer uses sensual confusion to poke fun at the limits of human knowledge ... to foreground how humans use and abuse sensual vocabulary to recognize—or kick against—knowledge's limits" (238). For all that Chaucer pokes fun, however, the use of senses to refer to the body and its relationship to knowledge signifies how Cannon has

viewed knowledge as an acquisition of perspectives. That is, treatment for Boethius is about acquiring different perspectives. So, in the case of Fortune, it is not only about understanding the difference between good and bad gifts, but also that all gifts, good or bad, are inherently good. Even for a single thing like Fortune's gifts, the essence of seeing it from a multitude of perspectives is what heals the sickness. Chaucer pokes fun at this idea by exposing the bad gift of Alison through a multitude of senses in order to illustrate this false wisdom of Absolon.

For all the senses that expose Absolon towards seeking a wrongful happiness, his sickness is too preliminary. The "nether eye" upon which he places his lips only humiliates and disgusts him. In fact, the mild treatment finds him trying to purify himself from it: "Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes / with dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with chippes / But Absolon" (3747-49). We might consider this cleansing as a means for Absolon to anesthetize himself from the lustful pursuits in which he was engaged—to anesthetize himself from false happiness—for immediately after this cleansing, it is only revenge that occupies Absolon's mind, not Alison's sexuality. Even revenge, however, would be regarded as misguided in Boethian terms, which is perhaps why the fifth sense, smell, is dispelled by Nicholas upon his face "as greet as it had been a thonder-dent, that with the strook he was almost yblent" (3807-08). The two-phase treatment comes full-circle as the sense of sight that initially hindered the ability to see Alison's ass is revisited, only not by the dark night, but by the force of the fart. Absolon's sickness is his misunderstanding that the bad gifts of Fortune are a reflection of the extrinsic goods he seeks. In order for him to realize this, to obtain a worldly knowledge of intrinsic good, Absolon must learn how his vision of the world is impaired. This does not, however, impede the revenge he seeks.

That the hot coulter was initially intended for Alison's backside

cannot be disregarded. A close Boethian reading of this scene finds that this reversal is necessary for Nicholas's treatment to ensue. An interesting correlation occurs at this point between the *Miller's Tale* and the *Consolation* when Philosophy uses Fortune's own arguments to explain her mutability and criticize greed:

And al be it so that God resceyveth gladly hir preiers, and yyveth hem, as fool-large, moche gold, and apprayleth coveytous folk with no le or cleer honours; yit semeth hem haven igeten nothing, but alwey hir cruel ravine, devourynge al that they han geten, scheweth othere gapynges (that is to seyn, gapyn and desiren yit after mo rychnesses). What bridles myghte withholden to any certeyn ende the disordene covetise of men, whan evere the rather that it fletith in large yiftes, the more ay brenneth in hem the thirst of havynge? (II, 2.10-17)¹⁸

Interestingly, the scene of Absolon's revenge mirrors this argument of Fortune. Carrying his own gift of gold, the hot coulter, Absolon announces, "Of gold ... I have thee broght a ryng" (3794). Nicholas, then, who "wolde amenden al the jape" (3799), is either greedy for entertainment or determined to keep his newfound wealth out of the possession of Absolon. And upon this reversal: "he [Absolon] was redy with his iren hoot / And Nicholas amydde the ers he smoot" (3809-10). It is important to consider the anus of Nicholas as also a mouth, since it was the very anus of Alison that functioned as a mouth in the initial ass-kissing scene of the tale.¹⁹ So we find, then, that the greed of Nicholas opens a new "gaping mouth," that of his anus. There is clearly an association between the false gold ring (hot coulter) "as burning in him the thirst of having," for Nicholas's insistence on *having* ironically burns his insides. The last line of Fortune's criticism referencing "thrust" coupled with "fletith²⁰ [of] large yiftes" evokes images that characterize Nicholas. He cries for water after his anus, a representation of the mouth,

is burned. Further, Nicholas functions as the median in regards to the three men's sicknesses. He does not hoard Alison's sexuality, but he does receive an abundance of it, unlike Absolon, who merely seeks it. "Large yiftes" would thus reference the very abundance of wealth Allison bestows upon Nicholas, tricking him into thinking this extrinsic wealth is good. Glenn Burger considers this same scene as the remasculinization of Nicholas through the medieval medical procedure of cauterization, which, from the perspective of gender, works.²¹ However, if we return to Alison, we find that as a version of Fortune, the scene uses the very reversal of Alison for Nicholas to illustrate Fortune's malleability. Unlike the other two men of the tale, Nicholas undergoes a deep-piercing procedure, which Philosophy foreshadows shortly after using Fortune's own arguments: "whan that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche thynges that percen hemselv depe" (II, 3.22-4). Just as Absolon is unable to see the reversal of Fortune in the darkness, Nicholas, with his back turned, literally does not see his deep-penetrating treatment coming.

Thus far, the body has been discussed as an agency for treating the men who pursue extrinsic sources of happiness. For Nicholas and Absolon, mouths and anuses have exchanged roles, displacing the dichotomy between inside and outside. Instead of the mouth ingesting, Nicholas's anus takes on this role in a "deep penetrating treatment." For Absolon, Alison's unobserved anus is mistaken for a mouth when "derk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole" (3731). The basis of Nicholas's trick on John is solely dependent on knowledge and vision. It is important to contextualize the treatment of John's sickness in order to discuss this knowledge-vision dichotomy. John's pursuit of external happiness is informed by the economics of his marriage. He not only commodifies his wife, but, too, he hoards this wealth. John's treatment of Alison as a possession defines the very illness to which he succumbs. In Book II of the *Consolation*, Philosophy explains how those tangible things

considered to be true happiness (i.e. wealth, power, honor, material possessions) are incapable of bestowing true intrinsic good. In this same section, Philosophy frames the narrative of Nicholas's trick:

“For syn she may nat ben withholden at a manny wille, [and] sche maketh hym a wrecche whan sche departeth fro hym, what other thing is flyttyng Fortune but a maner schewyng of wrecchidnesse that is to comen.”²² (II, 1.78-83)

Here, Philosophy points to several aspects of the *Miller's Tale*. Keeping in mind that Alison represents a version of Fortune, to keep her at will mirrors the very cage in which Alison is present. This analogy is captured when Absolon twice refers to Alison as a “bryd.”²³ In fact, the reference to flight (“flyttyng”²⁴) in the very next sentence alludes to the idea of a “cage,” since it is the noisy free bird of which Philosophy speaks that whispers its songs in sadness when caged.²⁵ The coming disaster, being “fleeing,” further mirrors Nicholas's trick. According to the OED, “fleeing” and “fleet” are both references to water, either by the flow of liquid or floating upon water. John's false foreknowledge of “Noees flood” (I.3518) foregrounds the construction of “knedyng tubes thre [that he will] hange ... in the roof ful” (I.3564-63). According to Philosophy, disaster *is* foreseeable in the sense that men should anticipate Fortune's changeability. However, these specific references to water, disaster, and floating are pointing to the foreseeable disasters of keeping Allison *at will*. The issue for John is how he views his false foreknowledge with a sense of earnestness, when, in fact, this Divine power is outside the realm of mortals.

Nicholas's trick is only part of the treatment of John, whose sickness is not only in hoarding wealth, but exercising power over Alison by the very cage in which he places her. But this power is the very sickness that seeks treatment. In fact, the economic exchange of Alison's sexuality signifies the need for these men to exercise power; that is, wealth is about

an extrinsic source of power. In Book II, Philosophy argues that this power is not only a false gift of Fortune—power is extrinsic since it relies on the inferiority of others—but, too, a false sense of power. To Boethius, she contends:

O, ye erthliche bestes, cosidere ye nat over whiche thing that it semeth that ye han power? Now yif thou saye a mows among othere mysz that chalanged to himself-ward right and power over alle othere mysz, how gret scorn woldestow han of it! ... For yif though looke wel upon the body of wyght, what thyg schaltow fynde more freele than is mankynde; the whiche men ful ofte ben slayn with bytynge of smale flies, or elles with the entrynge of creyng worms into the pryvetees of mannes body? But wher sschal men fynden any man that mai exercen or haunten any right upon another man, but oonly on his body, or elles upon thinges that ben lowere than the body, the whiche I clepte fortunous possessiouns.²⁶ (II, 6.29-48)

While Nicholas's trick relies on the knowledge and sight to illustrate John's misperceptions of Fortune, the focus of treatment here shifts toward the body itself. John's power is based on his possession of Alison, not as his wife but as his commodity. Philosophy's reference to the human body as "feeble" is critical to the mirroring of these two texts. The OED defines it as "of persons or animals, their limbs or organs: Lacking strength, weak, infirm. Now implying an extreme degree of weakness, and suggesting either pity or contempt." That this definition clearly references "limbs" is important to the very feebleness of John, who, at the end of the tale, finds his arm broken: "for with the fal he brosten hadde his arm" (3829). Philosophy's analogy of laughing at mice points to a reversal occurring between John and the community.

The community in the *Miller's Tale* necessarily laughs at John to illustrate a worldly disapproval of exerting authority. In fact, this is why

they not only laugh, but hold him as being mad:

With other grete he was so sworn adoun
That he was holde wood in al the toun;
For every clerk anonright heeld with oother.
They seyde, “the man is wood, my leeve brother”;
And every wight gan laughen at this stryf.
Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf. (3845-50)

There are few references to madness in the *Consolation*. Most important to these is referenced in Book IV’s discussion between Philosophy and Boethius on the topic of the power of good and evil. Philosophy begs the rhetorical question as to whether omnipotence is projected upon humans.²⁷ Boethius replies that unless he is mad would man believe he had such power.²⁸ In other words, only one who is mad would regard a human as omnipotent. The laughter of the community signifies how they perceive John to be mad, for not only does he exert his power and authority by hoarding his wife in a cage, but, too, that he earnestly believes he has the same ability as God to foresee—the only true source of good and omnipotence.

If a more worldly knowledge is attainable through the recognition of false pursuits, the *Miller’s Tale*, in all its obscenity, takes the very cell in which Boethius is treated and applies its purpose to the men of the tale. In order for this to occur, the body is treated as the agency through which Alison, the tale’s version of Fortune, can expend bad gifts. Given that the false happiness sought after by each of the men is the commodity of Alison’s sexuality, having everything to do with the body, it would seem unmatched had the treatment been directed anywhere else but the body. Absolon’s encounter with Alison’s “nether eye,” Nicholas’s anus deeply penetrated, and John’s broken arm are all encounters with the not only the body, but its relationship to knowledge. In each of the punishments, the inability to foresee it coming functions as the basis for the treatment.

Likewise, for Boethius, that he was unable to “see” the false gifts of Fortune as good functioned as the basis for the progression of treatments given forth by Philosophy. In the end, we find Absolon completely absent from the text, John loses his wife, and we never know if Nicholas stays with Alison. So the question will still and always remain: are the men of the *Miller’s Tale* healed of their sicknesses, or does Chaucer leave the text ambiguously open-ended for a reason? Perhaps the Miller, our teller of the tale, was too drunk to remember.

NOTES

- ¹ Aloni, Gila. "Extimacy in the *Miller's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review* 41.2 (2006): 163-84; Blamires, Alcuin. "Philosophical Sleaze? The 'Strok of Thought' in the *Miller's Tale* and Chaucerian Fabliau." *Modern Language Review* 102.3 (2007): 621-40; Burger, Glenn. "Erotic Discipline ... Or 'Tee Hee, I like my Boys to be Girls': Inventing with the body in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*." *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (2000): 245-60; and Walts, Dawn Simmons. "Tricks of Time in the *Miller's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review* 43.4 (2009): 400-13.
- ² Morgan, Gerald. "Obscenity and Fastidiousness in *The Miller's Tale*." *English Studies* 91.5 (2010) 492-518. Further considerations of Alison as a central figure can be found in: Blamires, Alcuin. "Philosophical Sleaze? The 'Strok of Thought' in the *Miller's Tale* and Chaucerian Fabliau." *Modern Language Review* 102.3 (2007): 621-40. In order to make his claim in contrary to much of the criticism surrounding Boethianism and the fabliau, Blamires spends much of his article contextualizing scholarship that negates this fundamental relationship. His main concern is that Chaucer's fabliau is informed by Boethianism, and it is the inherent structure of the fabliau which allows for an epiphany to occur, and thus posit the characters' role in a "providential universe."
- ³ Further reading on Nicholas and his use of time to inform the *Miller's Tale*: Walts, Dawn Simmons. "Tricks of Time in the *Miller's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review* 43.4 (2009): 400-13.
- ⁴ All references to the *Consolation* will be taken from Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., 1987. Translations of the *Consolation* will be endnoted and taken from *Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. Victor Watts. London: Penguin, 1999.
- ⁵ Cannon, Christopher. "The Boethianism of the 'Miller's Tale.'" *Mittelalterliche Novellistik im europäischen Kontext: Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektive*. Ed. Mark Chinca and Timo Reuvekamp-Felber. Berlin: Schmidt, 2006. 326-46.
- ⁶ Edwards, Elizabeth. "The Economics of Justice in Chaucer's *Miller's* and *Reeve's Tales*." *The Dalhousie Review* 8.2 (2002): 91-112.
- ⁷ Christopher Cannon argues that the vertical axis on which the fabliau performs situates Alison in a position of superiority: she is "the 'one ideal' a milleresque philosophy allows itself" (331).
- ⁸ Trans. "With her display of specious riches good fortune enslaves the minds of those

who enjoy her, while bad fortune gives men release through the recognition of how fragile a thing happiness is” (44).

⁹ Trans. “What can I wish you foolish men? Wealth and fame pursue, And when great toil wins false reward, Then may you see the true!” (62).

¹⁰ Cannon further argues that part of what makes the *Miller’s Tale* more knowledgeable of Boethianism (compared to the *Knight’s Tale*) is how it uses vertical axes to illustrate the acquisition of perspectives from not just looking up, but, too, from looking down.

¹¹ Walz, Mathew D. “Stoicism as Anesthesia: Philosophy’s ‘Gentler Remedies’ in Boethius’s *Consolation*.” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51.4 (2011): 501-19.

¹² *Miller’s Tale* (3224).

¹³ See: Brown, Peter. “‘Shot Wyndowe’ (*Miller’s Tale*, I.3358 and 3695): An Open and Shut Case?” *Medium Ævum* 69.1 (2000): 96-103. Brown deconstructs the meaning of the “shot wyndowe.” Considering other arguments of the window as hinged or sliding, glazed or unglazed, Brown finds that the window should be imagined as an unglazed opening with a hinged internal shutter. Chaucer’s use of the word “shot” opens up another avenue through which to consider this window. He finds that the “shot wyndowe” is a “privy window,” one that sits lower to the ground and functions as a vent to the odors caused from defecation. This, Brown argues, is an association to discharge, mainly bodily, adding to the theme of spatial transgression where private spaces are compromised in “*The Miller’s Tale*.”

¹⁴ Trans. “I would like to continue our discussion a while by using Fortune’s own arguments” (24).

¹⁵ *The Consolation of Philosophy* (II, 4.128-30).

¹⁶ (3731).

¹⁷ Bishop, Louis, M. “‘Of Goddes pryvetee nor of his wyf’: Confusion of Orifices in Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.3 (2002): 238.

¹⁸ Trans. “Though God should gratify their prayers / With open-handed gifts of gold / And furbish greed with pride of rank, / All that God gave would seem as naught. / Rapacious greed soon swallows all / And opens other gaping mouths; / No reins will serve to hold in check / The headlong course of appetite / Once such largess has fanned the flames / Of lust to have and hold” (Penguin Classics 26).

¹⁹ See: Bishop, Louis, M. “‘Of Goddes pryvetee nor of his wyf’: Confusion of Orifices in Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.3 (2002): 231-46. Bishop reconsiders how holes are confused in the *Miller’s Tale*. “The greatest confusion

... does not just come from the flesh; it comes more specifically from holes. ... These orifices are confused: ... windows become doors, mouths become anuses and anuses become wounds” (238-9).

²⁰ Benson glosses “Fletith in” as “Flows with.” The MED defines its root word, “Fleten,” as “To flow; to be in a fluid or volatile state; fleting, liquid.”

²¹ Burger, Glenn. “Erotic Discipline ... Or ‘Tee Hee, I like my Boys to be Girls’: Inventing with the body in Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*.” *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (2000): 236. Burger suggests that “according to medieval medicine, the combination of Absolon’s lack of virile heat and lovesickness without relief would actually make *him* the most likely candidate for cauterization. One cure for such humoral imbalance was cauterization.”

²² Trans. “And if it is impossible to keep her [Fortune] at will and if her flight exposes men to ruin, what else is such a fleeting thing except a warning of coming disaster?” (23).

²³ (3726, 3805).

²⁴ Benson glosses “flyttinge” as “impermanent;” however, the root “flit” is defined in the OED as: a removal; spec. do a flit, to decamp; a light movement, as of a bird’s wing; a flutter; a light touch.

²⁵ (III, 2.21-31).

²⁶ Trans. “You creatures of earth, don’t you stop to consider the people over whom you think you exercise authority? You would *laugh* if you saw a community of mice and one mouse arrogating to himself power and jurisdiction over the others. Again, think of the human body: could you discover anything more *feeble* than man, when often even a tiny fly can kill him either by its bite or by creeping into some inward part of him? The only way one man can exercise power over another is over his body and what is inferior to it, his possessions“ (38, emphasis added).

²⁷ “Is there any wyght thanne ... that weneth that men mowen don alle things?” (IV, 2.229-31).

²⁸ “No man ... but yif he be out of his wyt” (IV, 2.231-2).

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HOW DID IT ALL FALL APART? ENTROPY AND APOCALYPSE IN CALIFORNIA

BY SIOBHAN WHITE

There is something uniquely haunting about the California coast. The memories of all the unbridled potential associated with the area, combined with all its romantic associations in the larger cultural consciousness, create a mythologized place that represents specific emotions. From the hopeful idealism of the gold rush, to the lackadaisical attitude of SoCal surf culture, to the glamour and gore Hollywood, California has been romanticized in the American legend to the point of abstraction. What do these stereotypes really reveal? What are these archetypes trying to hide? There has to be something more underneath the golden surface, and looking at the darker representations of California in literature, film, and theory builds a new and more cynical, chaotic, and quite bleak view of this place in Americana where all dreams “can and will” come true. This examination will take examples from Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* and Thomas Pynchon’s novel *The Crying of Lot 49* to show how the dark underbelly of California is strewn with the disillusioned, disenfranchised, and possibly insane, mixing quite contentedly with the mainstream American society ignorant of the more sinister characteristics

of their culture. This combination of elements in West and Pynchon displays a predominance of certain tendencies associated with California, specifically disillusionment with the Hollywood promise, disintegration of communication, and a pervasive meaninglessness that makes the place a specific embodiment of a post-apocalyptic civilization.

It's a common euphemism among the rest of the nation that California is where "the crazies" live. The belief that there is something wild, atypical, and subversive happening in this slice of the American identity often turns much of that "sane" (east coast) nation away from the west, but also attracts a certain character to migrate here. This idea that California is crazy may have some foundation in popular culture and legitimacy in the trends that emanate out from Hollywood, LA in general, and San Francisco, but interestingly the common thread that binds it all together is, while tenuous, very prevalent once identified. The fact that California, as the end of the continent and the place where America focused and thus exhausted its energy through the obsession with manifest destiny, is symbolic of America's apex—the place where all potential was reached. In "Frye, Derrida, Pynchon, and the Apocalyptic Space of Postmodern Fiction" David Robson traces this throughout American history:

If New England failed to resolve into the Promised Land, "some other place" would be found, and the Puritan eschatological hopes would reconstitute themselves as America expanded across the continent invoking a more secularized but still universalist discourse of manifest destiny or progress, which, in time, would entail American returns to the Old World, forays into the Third World, and voyages to the moon. (62)

Thus, examining the dark side of this culmination makes our understanding of American culture all the more complicated. What is this sordid underbelly? What are the pathologies that manifest in California

culture and what do they signify in the bigger picture of the American personality? It's possible that these themes are traces of an obsession with apocalypticism in American culture, specifically manifesting through the subconscious and (probably) pathological exploration of the idea of the disintegration at the end of a continent.

Manifest destiny ruled the American dream for a century. The idea that Americans were predestined to conquer the expanse of a continent from ocean to ocean, and moreover that it was God's will, led to a certain zealous fervor in the appropriation of the land and resources. As this fervor spread and the idea of American exceptionalism and entitlement actually led the charge to the coast, the idea gained momentum. "Go west, young man!" rang across the nation in encouragement and justification. It's easy to imagine how a nation can get so swept up in an idea that it becomes integral to the identity of the people themselves. It was our right and our purpose to own and control all the land available to us on this continent. This much is clear. Less clear, and more interesting, is what happened to the fervor when the goal was achieved. Energy, especially when garnered at those high levels and over such a long duration of time (the "manifest destiny" refrain began in the mid 1800s) does not just dissipate into nothingness. This cultural consciousness focused and channeled energy into a conquest of the west and created multiple myths and notions about the place. Thus, when we accomplished our goal, when we literally ran out of land to conquer, that energy became inverted, perverted, and perverse. It turned inward, and created an association between the location and the psyche of those living at the end of said continent.

The Day of the Locust may not initially appear to be a particularly apocalyptic novel. It does not have the desperate and desolate environments and experiences as some other famous novels, most notably of the sci-fi genre. However, its position outside the canon of post-apocalyptic fiction is what makes it ripe for analysis. Here, West creates a beautiful marriage

of entropy and apocalypse in a story about Hollywood—the place that houses the industry that creates imagery for all things, even apocalypses. In it, West presents a portrait of the denizens of the Hollywood doldrums, where aspiring actors, writers, and bit players of the Hollywood industry try to make a place for themselves in this ultimate no-place of Americana. Hollywood embodies every place because it can create every place, and does in the films it then releases to create American pop culture. Hollywood epitomizes the American apocalyptic landscape—a place where anything and everything can happen and nothing has “truth” or “reality” to back it up because everything is fabricated. West’s protagonist, an artist named Tod Hackett, works in the movie industry, falls in love with a morally unstable and manipulative aspiring actress, and in the final climax of the novel, experiences a riot outside a movie premiere that brings into focus the inhumanity and inherent banality of the people that live in and around Hollywood. For my purposes in exploring a post-apocalyptic locale, *The Day of the Locust* represents the epitome of the American West as an empty, traumatized, pathological society in which neuroses run rampant and cultural and personal apocalypses can happen again and again without substantial recognition by society as a whole.

There are a few traditional elements of the apocalyptic tradition present in *The Day of the Locust*. First is the establishment of a society of lost souls and sinners and second is the establishment of a prophet or overseer of this society. Tod is obsessed with the people that existed behind the “normal” society, the people that were on the fringes of the culture. He walks around the town and notices, “Scattered among these masquerades were people of a different type. Their clothing was somber and badly cut...when their stare was returned, their eyes filled with hatred. At this time Tod knew very little about them except that they had come to California to die” (60). These people are the ones that, for Tod, represent the true Californian. Even though they might have come

there from other places, for different reasons, they represent to Tod the true character of California, one of despair and meaninglessness. These are the characters that represent an apocalyptic society, the lost souls and sinners who have no purpose, no significance, and no hope, except in an empty dream of Hollywood stardom. Tod's role in this examination of apocalyptic society is that of the observer from within—he cannot completely remove himself from the situation, but his role as artist (as a set designer for a studio) sets him apart and gives him a vantage point from which he can see the larger movements of society. Tod's painting of Los Angeles on fire is an example of this disconnectedness from the society: “He was going to show the city burning at high noon, so that the flames would have to compete with the desert sun and thereby appear less fearful, more like bright flags flying from roofs to windows than a terrible holocaust” (118). Tod associates the landscape with what it promises to provide but never does, and thus imagines a complete annihilation of the place. The significance of his painting is more than just Tod's skills as painter; West makes his protagonist an apocalyptic prophet. By the end of the novel, in his depression over the loss of Faye and isolation from any meaningful interaction with others, he is able to see the despair that pervades the city. Tod is able to see beyond the Hollywood dreams of stardom and glamour to the darker underbelly of not just the city, but also the culture that it packages and then disseminates to the rest of the country and the world. Similarly, critic Joseph Dewey describes in his book, *In A Dark Time*, a “southern California wonderland, one rank with façade, artificiality, and theatricality” (37). The location of the novel is absolutely integral to a clear understanding of apocalypse as American, and Western, specifically unfolding in the American West. Dewey goes on to say, “Hollywood, after all, will survive the riot and defy the pain. Hollywood is able to burn fiercely yet never be consumed...In a world where all is sham, all is pretense, all is paper made to look like brick and

steel, there is no urgency in its collapse” (40). Tod exists in this system as someone that helps create the illusion and doesn't seek to become one of its representatives or part of the illusion itself; that is why he is able to remain the detached observer, the traditional role of the apocalyptic prophet.

Tod's role as detached observer is best demonstrated in the mob scene at the end of the novel, where Tod is a passive and helpless member of a riot, but one that can see the less obvious meaning and significance of the whole. For example, in the midst of the mob, he is still able to maintain individual perspective: “He was within only a few feet of the tree when a sudden driving rush carried him far past it. He struggled desperately for a moment, then gave up and let himself be swept along. He was the spearhead of a flying wedge when it collided with a mass going in the opposite direction” (181). The mob continues to manipulate his body and his vantage point, but he maintains clarity, able to see individuals through the crowd. He sees and tries to help a girl being attacked from behind, and he experiences some meta-discourse on the state of the mob by those in it during a brief non-hysterical interlude. In contrast to the girl being attacked just before this, these women are mildly offended at being groped and quite unconcerned about their predicament: “‘The first thing I knew,’ Tod heard her say, ‘there was a rush and I was in the middle.’” (183). This mob is a revelation to Tod, an affirmation of the prophetic image he'd been working on in his painting. Many critics have identified the mob scene as an apocalyptic moment. If it is apocalyptic, the apocalypse that Tod experiences in the mob is anti-climactic at best. Joseph Dewey argues, “There is no better summary of this exhausted apocalypticism than in *The Day of the Locust*. West's southern California demands a biblical purging. But the characters of this modern Sodom are either strangely bored by the reign of the Antichrist, appallingly fascinated by it, or simply in full retreat from its implications” (36).

Dewey is immensely critical of West's apocalyptic vision here, because he feels that the lack of religiosity and redemption promised by a Christian god renders the climactic mob scene impotent. There is no redemption for Tod or for Hollywood because the mob rules over everything, and the book does not offer redemption in the aftermath. Dewey argues that *The Day of the Locust* is "a book that so deliberately draws on the notion of America as a sort of Kafkaesque Disneyland full of frustrated and bored dreamers who are lost to the white-hot energy of feeling, cannot sustain a meaningful apocalyptic moment" (37). While Dewey's discussion here is a reluctant interpretation of the book as apocalyptic, it does serve as an accurate depiction of what a cultural apocalyptic prophecy might look like to a secularized prophet. West's novel, while obviously exploring a catastrophe, ends just short of revelation. Conversely, *The Crying of Lot 49* is concerned with what happens when chasing an elusive revelation, without a clearly identified catastrophic event. The two books, juxtaposed within apocalyptic theory, are evidence of two versions of California as apocalyptic. There is something about this place that resonates with the inversion and perversion of the American dream, while still portraying that dream and ignoring its darker, dirtier truths.

To illustrate this inversion, the idea of entropy, explored by Thomas Pynchon in *The Crying of Lot 49*, helps ground this argument. Pynchon was interested in the idea of entropy, in which energy, when trapped or prevented from growth or forward progress, degenerates into chaos. This idea is based on a scientific theory of thermodynamics, but Pynchon adapted it to illustrate the ways stagnation or purposelessness can, essentially, decompose a society. In *The Bang and the Whimper: Apocalypse and Entropy in American Literature*, Zbigniew Lewicki explains the development of entropy in the scientific realm and attempts to catalogue its development as a literary device. He explains how, scientifically, it is defined as "the ultimate state reached in the degradation of matter

and energy of the universe” and “the irreversible tendency of a system including the universe, toward increasing disorder and inertness” (71). This scientific theory dealt with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and can be applied to literature and the arts through the conveyance of messages and the relation of the meaning of those messages. The meaningfulness of a text relies to a certain extent on a low rate of entropy; conversely, a text that has a high rate of entropy may find difficulty in conveying its meaning to its audience. This concept became a metaphor for coping with the increasing sense of meaninglessness and decay that was pervasive in the late twentieth-century American society.

It is important to note that the entropy that Pynchon’s character Oedipa Maas experiences in *The Crying of Lot 49* is intrinsically related to her location. The sprawling suburban organization of southern California plays as important a role in the development of the story as any character does. Pynchon describes, as Oedipa drives through the landscape: “She drove into San Narciso on a Sunday, in a rented Impala. Nothing was happening. She looked down a slope, needing to squint for sunlight, onto a vast sprawl of houses which had grown up together, like a well-tended crop, from the dull brown earth; and she thought of the time she’d opened a transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her first printed circuit” (15). The description here associates the landscape with a piece of technology, the first hint that all is not as it seems in Oedipa’s mystery. The imagery of a technological circuit adds an element of the uncanny to what has otherwise been presented as a fairly normal locale and begins the theme of hidden circuits and sub-cultural societies working within and underneath the larger, mainstream society. Similarly, looking down upon the scene creates her role as other, like Tod, and as an observer who exists apart from society. As she continues, she finds more and more evidence of an alternate reality, an underground society living amongst her own that rejects and subverts the accepted behaviors and attitudes of the status

quo. Oedipa's search for meaning could not take place in a more entropic location and society than the one that Pynchon uses, and this society influences her search dramatically, as does the increasing interaction with the subcultures that utilize the mail system WASTE.

The themes of entropy and apocalypse work hand in hand in Pynchon's novel. Lois Parkinson Zamora, in her fascinating book *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary US and Latin American Fiction*, explores the theoretical connections between apocalypse and entropy. She first establishes that "Apocalypse is *not* merely a synonym for disaster or cataclysm or chaos. It is, in fact, a synonym for 'revelation'" (10). The distinction is imperative for moving beyond the typical (and, I argue, limiting) understanding of apocalypse as catastrophe, and towards a more comprehensive understanding of apocalypse as prophetic and intellectual. This more comprehensive understanding is essential to seeing a world that can exist beyond the moment of catastrophic apocalypse and thereby being able to study a post-apocalyptic society, which is, in fact, what Pynchon is confronting us with. After constructing Oedipa's role as the observer and the "other" Pynchon makes her a prophet, albeit an unwitting one. As she observes San Narciso from her vantage on the hill, Oedipa has a revelation:

The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios than about Southern Californians, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. There'd seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her (if she had tried to find out); so in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding. (14)

Oedipa, in her very first steps of her journey, is confronted with a

revelation that would eventually change the way she looked at the world and the way the world presented itself to her. This revelation functions as the apocalypse of the book and everything that comes after is an exploration in the post-apocalyptic. Thus, the revelation that “trembled” just beyond Oedipa’s understanding is the moment at which a new truth and a new world attempts to reveal itself to her.

As Oedipa’s search for meaning and truth causes her to interact with a variety of subcultures and disenfranchised groups, her grasp on reality, or what she has previously considered “real,” slips away. Her ability to understand those around her decreases, and she finds herself increasingly isolated and alienated from her previous associations and her new acquaintances. For example, she searches San Francisco all night for signs of the Trystero system: “Last night, she might have wondered what undergrounds apart from the couple she knew of communicated by WASTE system. By sunrise she could legitimately ask what undergrounds didn’t” (101). In this deepening isolation, it becomes clear that she will never discover the full meaning of her search. The layers of entropic disintegration work here on many levels. Oedipa herself, stagnating in an unhappy marriage in the suburbs and dabbling in therapy, is a closed system that loses the ability to communicate effectively with the elements around her. This leads to paranoia and increased isolation. Zamora explains, “Because entropy posits the encroachment of chaos and sameness on all systems of organization and differentiation, paranoia is an inevitable response” (57). While Oedipa, throughout the book, spirals ever closer to meaning, truth, or understanding, entropy stops her from being able to fully understand. The apocalyptic revelation will be forever eclipsed by entropy.

Interestingly, it is generally noticed among critics that entropy is far more depressing than apocalypse: “The eschatology based on the law of entropy is far more pessimistic than conventional apocalyptic eschatology,

for the anthropomorphism of traditional apocalypse, with its implicit sense of a purposeful history...yields to the bleak mechanism of a purely physical world that is irreversibly running out of energy” (Zamora 52). Trystero, the secret and subversive mail system that she investigates, has dissolved into a series of loosely associated sub-cultural communication systems, again reinforcing the idea that without a purpose or forward progress, energy, or a system of energy, will dissolve. Lewicki explains that Trystero “still exists but no longer transmits any meaningful information. ... This is the real end of Trystero: it may have survived wars and revolutions, internal struggle and persecution, but entropic death cannot be resisted. It is an irreversible process, and because the system has lost its meaning, Oedipa’s attempts at uncovering the secrets of Trystero cannot be successful” (92). Trystero is the purpose for Oedipa’s search; it signifies a meaning and a significance upon which Oedipa places her hopes and her sanity. She desperately wants to believe that this signifier does, indeed, mean something and upon finding it she will understand what all the clues mean. However, this is impossible in the post-apocalyptic world that Pynchon has created. Oedipa struggles to accept that there is no true meaning since her quest to understand the mystery of Trystero, and the world, have resulted in the loss of all meaning. The effort she puts into uncovering the truth becomes wasted energy.

Finally, on a larger scale, the interactions Oedipa has with representatives from mainstream society—her husband, her therapist, and Metzger—shows increasingly drastic signs of disintegration of mainstream society itself. Mucho, her husband, is lost to LSD addiction; Hilarious, her therapist, is lost to a hallucination and shooting spree; Metzger, her original partner on this quest, runs away with an underage girl. These instances show that the dominant culture, the one that Oedipa “escaped” from to pursue the meaning in Invarity’s estate, disintegrates into chaos itself: “The search of Oedipa Maas ... for a ‘revelation’ amongst

the roar of electronic popular culture is a central irony of the novel” (Zamora 65). In her desperation in making sense of the seemingly chaotic and meaningless clues, Oedipa tries to see the bigger picture: “San Narciso had no boundaries. No one knew yet how to draw them. She had dedicated herself, weeks ago, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America” (147). Finally, in full isolation and realization of the entropic movement of her closed civilization, she associates the meaninglessness of her quest to the larger society in which she lives. Later, in her final attempts she realizes, “For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy of America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia” (151). Therefore, in this apocalyptic moment of revelation (a redundant but necessary turn of phrase) Oedipa recognizes that her position as prophet (or seer) must be one of disassociation and separateness from the whole. Only through distance does she believe her purpose might become clear, and even then, Pynchon provides no reassurance of wholeness or truth beyond the veil of chaos.

This disintegration of meaning in *The Crying of Lot 49* evinces a clear criticism of late twentieth-century American culture, but does not (perhaps out of necessity) clearly represent what Joseph Dewey identifies as an “apocalyptic temper.” However, the relationship between entropy and apocalypticism is a close one indeed. Lewicki focuses on describing the contrasts between the two themes: “One is physical, the other metaphysical; one is based on moral distinctions, the other on indifferent scientific laws; one promises violent destruction and regeneration, the other slow but irreversible decay” (xv). While Lewicki focuses on the incongruity of these themes, he later emphasizes their cause and effect relationship, particularly within American fiction. He states, “Entropy

has not replaced apocalypse as a metaphor for the destruction of the world. The two concepts co-exist in contemporary fiction, expressing the conviction that people have no ultimate power over the universe” (115). This conflation of the two terms is seen quite aptly in West’s *The Day of the Locust*. Lewicki describes Tod as living “in the closed, self-sufficient, but at the same time self-destructive system of Hollywood” (81). It is this closed system that prevents Tod and the other characters from accomplishing forward progress in their lives; in short, as Lewicki claims, “Inertia and chaos prevail” (81). But these elements are no less present in *The Crying of Lot 49* and, in fact, are even more sharply constructed. Thus, taken as representations of the two modes of apocalyptic tradition, catastrophe and revelation, both books are equally concerned with entropy, the loss of meaning, and revelatory apocalypse, the coherence of meaning. These novels are also dependent on their locations in southern California and the unique landscapes of the region in which their characters exist, through which the authors reinforce their themes. California and the American west are locales that are ripe for apocalyptic representations of American culture.

So what do these revelations about the Western landscape have to do with the argument that we are living in post-apocalyptic society? We need to be able to recognize the traits and characteristic of the apocalyptic to be able to understand what happened and to be able to come to terms with it. As David Robson so eloquently puts it, “If this is an apocalypse of the mind (to borrow Emerson’s phrase) it is not one that reveals the romantic coalescence, unity, and identity of consciousness and nature in an apocalyptic harmony. ... Rather it is almost the inverse of this: the mutual disunity of consciousness and landscape in an uncentered and highly unstable space” (75). Mainstream American culture refuses to recognize the apocalyptic elements at the heart of its consumer and popular culture and its cultural myths. This is true also of our recognition

of apocalyptic tendencies and themes in our society. We, for the sake of our “happiness,” choose to ignore the increasing isolation, entropy, and apocalyptic moments in our lives, both repressing knowledge of them historically and ignoring them as they happen currently. This is particularly true when we explore the knowledge of America’s apocalyptic legacy in the American west. Dewey recognizes this repression and deliberate forgetting when he states, “Turning away from the realities of our history by pretending that the world has not been altered by the secrets of Los Alamos, or even protesting in the streets the existence of the arsenals are both insufficient responses; each implies, in its own ways, that a complicated history can be made to go away” (41). What Dewey does not account for, indeed cannot account for, in his theory is the scientific actuality of entropy—the end result of disintegration, chaos, or disorder within a closed system. The more we try to understand the meanings of our atomic age, the effects it has had on our culture, and the implications this has in our current society, the less we can understand. Oedipa’s world is also our world. While she searches for meaning in an increasingly fragmented and dissociative world, so do we. Her revelation happens very early in her quest, and it hovers just beyond the reach of her understanding; so does ours.

The theory that our contemporary society is actually a post-apocalyptic society is more than a mere possibility; the theory has been posited and explored in both literary and critical theory. The aftermath of WWII, the catastrophic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the revelation of humanity’s ability to bring total annihilation about through our own actions and scientific advancements are all events that, combined, signal an apocalypse of both categories—catastrophe and revelation. Frank Kermode, in his seminal book on apocalyptic theory in fiction, explains that “Beyond the apparent worst there is a worse suffering, and when the end comes it is not only more appalling than anybody expected, but

a mere image of that horror, not the thing itself. The end is not a matter of immanence...but the world goes forward in the hands of exhausted survivors” (82). Yet, we, as a culture, work very hard not to recognize this. Perhaps the trauma is too much to handle or perhaps it takes time to come to terms and face the actuality of such knowledge. Whether or not we, as a culture, ever come to terms with the apocalypse of WWII, is almost irrelevant. The fact remains that it did happen, and the lingering effects are still being worked out in our collective consciousness. Thomas Pynchon and Nathanael West are decidedly apocalyptic writers—Kermode’s argument for the apocalypticism of Shakespeare applies even to these two writers’ works: “They are researches into death in an age too late for apocalypse, too critical for prophecy; an age more aware that its fictions are themselves models of the human design on the world” (88). If we will not recognize the historical apocalyptic events, perhaps by recognizing it in the art and literature of our culture will suffice. After all, the unifying traits of the post-apocalyptic society are precisely the ones that make truly comprehending it impossible. This is the paradox of entropy: as more information arises, the less likely we are to be able to understand it. This paradox is supported by Lewicki; when explaining Oedipa’s desperate search for meaningful and truthful information, he states, “this seems to be Pynchon’s ultimate coup—*The Crying of Lot 49* conveys practically no such information” (93). Oedipa’s fruitless search is, once again, also our fruitless search. While her search for meaning plays out in the novel, our societal search for meaning is continually scrambled and even repressed. Similarly, Dewey, in his analysis of *The Day of the Locust*, explains, “Convinced that violence and illusion dictate the world, [West] concocts his succession of meaningless mock apocalypses—cataclysms that follow without progress, without direction, like frames of an endless movie reel” (38). In my attempts to gather, catalogue, and present evidence to support a theory that this is the post-apocalyptic

society of our imaginations, the post-apocalyptic and entropic nature of our society prevents a clear communication of truth or meaning.

In “The Anorexic Ruins,” Jean Baudrillard also recognizes American culture of the late twentieth-century as post-apocalyptic. He states, “The land, the giant geographic country, seems to be a desolated body whose size is completely unnecessary (and to cross it might be boring) as soon as all events become concentrated in the town, which for their part are, in turn, heading for reduction to a few miniaturized, salient places” (31). The American west is one of those salient places, with its center of energy being Hollywood, and the representation of this unnecessary body being disseminated throughout western civilization through the production machine that is the Hollywood movie industry. Our culture has been reduced to its most essential elements, and Hollywood became of those elements. However, it contributes nothing “true” or any meaningful representations behind its glitter and glamour, as the denizens of Tod Hackett’s world discovered. It mimics but with no substance behind it except despair and desolation. Baudrillard alludes to this Hollywood insubstantiality when he states, “If one really thinks about it, this dual process of lockjaw and inertia, of accelerating in a vacuum and outdoing production while lacking social inputs and goals, reflects the increase in visibility where there is nothing to see” (32). This “inertia” is Oedipus’s tireless search for meaning. It is the ongoing research and development of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. It is the increasingly influential effect Hollywood, celebrities, and the entertainment industry have on the development of our cultural identity. We exist in what Baudrillard calls an amnesia culture: “The maximum in intensity lies behind us; the minimum in passion and intellectual inspiration lie before us. As in a general entropic movement of the century, the initial energy is disintegrating into every more refined ramifications of structural, pictorial, ideological, linguistic, psychoanalytic upheavals” (40). These

upheavals are the result of a subconscious recognition of our post-apocalyptic state. We have managed, over the decades, to learn to cope with the knowledge of our culture's degradation, and we have managed to create modes of communication to represent coherence and meaning where they might not exist. We have become Oedipa at the end of the novel, waiting patiently, though anxiously, for the answer or resolution, but aware that it may not come and that the next revelation might just be yet another clue or yet another mystery.

The elements explored in these novels are interesting in their own right, though they are fascinating when considering the importance of California to a theory that proposes a post-apocalyptic society that has been functional, yet repressing trauma, since the end of World War II. The apocalyptic tradition of the revelation and the catastrophe have been present in American literature since before WWII, as shown in Nathanael West's writing, though this only reinforces the idea that American culture has always embraced a vein of apocalypticism. From the earliest conquests of the Puritans, "American" culture has pushed west farther and farther until it literally ran out of land. This then resulted in stagnation, the creation of a closed system that proceeded to be subject to the entropic effects of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Our culture became a vacuum and thus began to resort to chaos. The resulting chaos, meaninglessness, and cultural apocalypses have led us to our current cultural state—one of confusion, fragmentation, and disillusionment. This is by no means a conscious state of every individual in our society, but it is prevalent enough to be considered a consistent underlying trait or characteristic of our cultural identity. Further identifying and exploring these traits in even more contemporary works will certainly solidify these ideas, and bring to light more traumas, more chaos, and a diversity of neuroses to be explored.

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CURRENT TRADITIONAL RHETORIC AND DEFINITIONS: A SECOND LOOK

BY BRIAN LE

Current-Traditional Rhetoric or CTR, as it is more commonly known, has been the most pervasive pedagogy for the teaching of writing since its creation. But speaking of it like that oversimplifies its origins. It makes it seem like there is a solid start date like the first day of baseball season or inauguration day. The truth is that there is not one. It is more accurate to say that CTR slowly grew out of the practices of those that came before it. Therefore, we are left with the question of what exactly is it? There is a generally accepted definition of CTR that scholars like James Berlin and Sharon Crowley profess. They paint a very specific picture of CTR: it is concerned with the transmission of information not the creation of it. Furthermore, its method of delivery is rote and focuses on correctness. Most modern scholars are of a similar opinion about it; they dislike it to say the least, and this colors some of the scholarship concerning CTR. This is not the only picture of CTR though. There is an alternative but much less accepted portrayal of it, one that is not immediately disparaging that involves what Byron Hawk terms a “vitalism.” To answer what exactly CTR is though, one has to

know where it came from, which is not immediately clear.

THE EUROPEAN ORIGINS OF CTR

Late 19th century Harvard, the home of Charles Eliot, AS Hill, and LeBaron Russell Briggs, is commonly considered the origin of CTR because that is where the practice became prominent. (It is important to note that CTR began as a practice which was theorized after the fact, which is problematic and will be covered later on.) Harvard developed its ideas from somewhere, and like many ideas in America, inspiration came from Europe. In this case, it was the Scottish universities and the philosophical movement known as Scottish Common Sense Realism (Ferreira-Buckley and Horner 180). James Berlin, the scholar best known for mapping the field of Composition, identifies Scottish Common Sense as a form of objective or positivistic epistemology, an epistemology that locates truth in the “material world” in his book *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (7). Its central tenet is that “all knowledge is founded on the simple correspondence between sense impressions and the faculties of the mind” (Berlin, “Major” 769). In other words, truth is external and discovered through a method or process such as the Scientific Method. Therefore, external reality and a person’s experience of that reality can be observed and, through the proper use of language, conveyed accurately without bias. There is a large emphasis placed on the notion of proper use of language because the followers of Scottish Common Sense did believe in bias, which was exacerbated by language because “language and social factors can distort the ‘truth’” (Babin and Harrison 237). It is this emphasis on correctness that carried over into writing instruction.

The most influential of this movement in relation to writing according to Berlin and Albert Kitzhaber, the man large segments of Berlin’s works are based on, are Hugh Blair and George Campbell. They

wrote in the late 18th century. Blair is known for his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), while Campbell is known for *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776). Both of these works arose from the practical experience the authors gained while teaching in the Scottish universities and were used on both sides of the Atlantic well into the second half of the 19th century (Wright and Halloran 224).

Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* is "steeped in classical theory ... but ... revise[d] ... for modern use in view of Enlightenment thinking" (Ferreira-Buckley and Horner 182). Blair's influence contributed to the rise of belletristic rhetoric, a movement that wanted to combine *belles lettres* and rhetoric and unify the work of rhetoric and the work of literature. It focused on the aesthetics of writing or "taste" rather than the invention of ideas (Wright and Halloran 224) and is something that carried over into CTR. The emphasis on taste came from the idea that "whatever enables genius to execute well, will enable taste to criticise justly" (Blair 8). What this meant was that "to learn to criticize is to learn to compose" (Berlin, "Whately" 13). Here we see the movement toward the idea of conveying information that Scottish Realism placed composition into because the belief is that the ideas are already there and arose from individual genius according to Berlin. One must simply choose the proper words and style to fit the particular taste; invention is not a concern.

Blair was not the only influential Scotsman. James Berlin, in his *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, describes George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and his teaching method as mirroring the idea that inductive reasoning is central to knowledge (*Instruction* 20). Berlin places Campbell into a psychological-epistemology, which "rejected the a priori approach to rhetoric found in the classical tradition," and calls this epistemology a "naive empiricism" ("Whately" 13). Language merely attempts to reproduce an original experience that

the writer had (21). Because of this notion of reproduction, proper use of language, as mentioned earlier, is key. Campbell decries “expert artisans, who are ignorant of the six mechanical powers, which, through in the exercise of their profession they daily employ” (xlv). The expert writer is measured by their knowledge of the powers of rhetoric and the ability to produce effects in the audience. And, to produce these effects, one uses the mechanical powers. Furthermore, according to Kitzhaber in his *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*, the focus on grammar and correctness was the “most influential on later rhetorical theory” although Campbell also devoted portions of his book to invention (52). The grammatical purity that Campbell sought was one that avoided things like “solecisms, barbarisms, archaisms” (190).

Along with the Scottish influences on CTR, Berlin and Kitzhaber also note the impact of the Englishman Richard Whately, who wrote in the early 19th century, and his *Elements of Rhetoric*. Like Blair and Campbell, Whately paid more attention to arrangement and style (Berlin, “Whately” 13). And like Campbell, Whately sought a rhetoric that had “explicit principles for demonstrating propositions which have been established outside the rhetorical process” (13-14). There exists certain audiences, and with those certain audiences came specific ways to appeal to them (14). Berlin dismissively attributes the belief that “after all, superficial correctness and elements of style and arrangement, not content, are what count” (14). This sentiment carries over to America and, specifically, Harvard.

CTR, OR THE HARVARD SYSTEM

Before beginning this section, it is important to note the practitioners of CTR at Harvard or anywhere else for that matter never identified themselves as Current-Traditionalists. It is a term defined after the fact by Daniel Fogarty, which will be discussed later.

The two initial figures that developed the Harvard Composition program are Charles Eliot and Adams Sherman Hill. Although they never identified themselves as Current-Traditionalists (in fact the term was not coined until well after their time), what we call CTR is really the Harvard Composition program as designed by a succession of Boylston Professors of Rhetoric near the end of the 19th century that began with Hill and a few others. The man behind the Boylston Professors though was Charles Eliot, a former journalist and lawyer turned Harvard President. He hired Hill in 1872 and promoted him to Boylston Professor in 1876 (Brereton 45).

Hill's influence was two-fold. The first was his role as Boylston Professor and the administration of Harvard's entrance exam. Hill, in his "An Answer to the Cry for More English" illustrates some of the characteristics of CTR when he criticizes the secondary schools and their instruction in writing. High school graduates were unable to "explain the sentence they took to pieces, or write grammatical sentences of their own" (Hill 46). According to Eliot, they need to be able to exercise "an accurate and refined use of the mother tongue" (qtd. in Hill 46). In order to measure this, Harvard implemented an entrance examination that required of students an English composition that is short, "correct in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression" based on a reading list of the Western Canon. Hill and Eliot hoped that by requiring writing that was of sufficient taste as Blair would call it, students would absorb the "better methods of thought and ... expression" (48). This is one example the intersection of Blair's belletristic rhetoric and the correctness espoused by Campbell. The instructions for the exam instructed students to consider what they have to say "before beginning to write" (qtd. in Kitzhaber 200). These directions reflected Scottish Realism and Campbell's idea that one need only to think about what to write, the interaction between external reality and senses, and then

convey that experience with the proper use of language.

Half of the students who applied failed the exam. A small percentage failed because of not knowing or understanding the literary work. Many applicants failed to impress Hill because of “grossly ungrammatical or profoundly obscure sentences, and some by absolute illiteracy” (50). Throughout his article, Hill focuses on the inability of the applicants to craft good sentences. This focus continues under LaBaron Russell Briggs, Hill’s student and successor as Boylston Professor, and a revised entrance examination. In his article “The Harvard Admission Examination in English,” Briggs discusses how students are required to produce a short piece of writing and “correct specimens of bad English” (57). What Briggs meant by bad English was, of course, English that was ungrammatical or “slipshod, or grandiose, or miscellaneously exuberant ... and lack[ing] those qualities with which no elementary work earns a high mark (64). Properly constructed writing was more important for Harvard than stellar literary thought. Because of Harvard’s prestige and the fact that this test was the first of its kind, many other colleges adopted and spread the test and its dogma (Kitzhaber 200). This exerted pressure on all levels of writing instruction; if Harvard emphasizes correctness than everyone else must lest they be accused of not preparing their students for an institution as lofty as Harvard or of not being as prestigious.

Hill’s influence also stems from the publication and widespread usage of his textbook *The Principles of Rhetoric*. According to Kitzhaber, Hill adapted Campbell’s ideas into his discussion of diction in the book (189). In fact, one does not have to go far into the book to find Campbell’s influence. Hill’s definition of rhetoric comes directly from the Scots. According to Hill, rhetoric

is an *art* not a science: for it neither observes,
nor discovers, nor classifies; but it shows
how to convey from one mind to another

the results of observation, discovery, or classification; it uses knowledge, not as knowledge, but as power. (V)

The first line of the first chapter of the book states, “The foundations of rhetoric rest upon grammar; for grammatical purity is a requisite of good writing” (1). The breakdown of the book reflects this. The first half is about the emphasis on correctness, which Hill inherits from his predecessors across the Atlantic. The second half of the book focuses on the different modes: description, narration, and argument. It is easy to see why scholars categorize CTR as a pedagogy obsessed with producing a final, correct product. What is not picked up on though is that Hill says this is the “first requisite of discourse,” not the only (2). Hill recognizes the truth of an external reality like the Scottish Realists did, but he makes sure to note “the ways of communicating truth are many” and should be tailored to the audience (V-VI). No one is particularly sure of how this book was utilized in Hill’s classroom. Was it a supplement to practices we still consider valid? Or was it rote? Current scholarship seems to lean toward the idea that this book was a prescription for the writing class. Maybe it was written into a book not because it was the best practices of CTR but because it was the only practice that could be easily transmitted through print.

This portion of the paper is by no means a complete description of the American origins of CTR. If one were interested, the works of another Barrett Wendell, another Harvard Professor, as well as Fred Newton Scott and John Genung, who were separate from Harvard) should be looked into although history has been more kind to Scott and Genung than any of the people associated with Harvard.

AFTER THE FACT, OR MODERN DISCUSSIONS OF CTR

Now that the actual practices and writings of the Current

Traditionalists' earliest practitioners have been discussed, it is important to note that much of the secondary scholarship by people like Berlin are written with the intent of presenting an alternative that is perceived to be better. In fact, Daniel Fogarty's *Roots for a New Rhetoric* in which the term Current-Traditional Rhetoric is coined has the expressed purpose of creating a new rhetoric to replace the current traditional theory (4). Writing before the emergence of an alternative, legitimate challenger to CTR in 1959, Fogarty characterizes the goal of CTR as one that taught "young people 'correct' grammar that was ... necessary for social acceptance" (20) and nothing more. Fogarty presents a table listing the characteristics of the "Current Traditional" theory, focused on a prescriptive list containing grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics as well as the modes of discourse, style, communication, and genre (118-19).

In discussing CTR, Fogarty writes about how CTR was a practice that became a philosophy since it came, at least partially according to Berlin and Kitzhaber, from the practical experiences of instructors like Blair and Campbell and the testing requirements of Harvard. This is reflected in the chart by an empty space for where the philosophy of CTR should be. This grounding in the practical and mechanical was not a hindrance until it became the focus. And this is where CTR lost its way. The philosophy of rhetoric became disconnected from the teaching of rhetoric, and the practical took over; therefore, the goal for the new forms of rhetoric was to transform the philosophy of rhetoric into the teaching of rhetoric. Fogarty ascribes more abstract and more descriptive characteristics to the new forms of rhetoric that he presents. One is based on I.A. Richards's scholarship; one is based on Kenneth Burke's idea of the pentad, and one is based on the General Semantics Movement. All three have practices that reflect their philosophy. Fogarty wanted the new rhetoric to be the "science and art which provides understanding of the

basic presuppositions underlying the functions of discourse” (134). This is in direct contrast to Hill’s definition whereby rhetoric is conveyance rather than understanding and discovery.

James Berlin expands on Fogarty’s classification of CTR as a prescriptive and limited rhetoric. In multiple works, Berlin classifies it as an objective and positivistic rhetoric. Like Fogarty though, Berlin openly admits to a bias against CTR in his article “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories.” He believes that the pedagogical approach of the New Rhetoricians is the most intelligent and most practical alternative available, serving in every way the best interests of our students” (Berlin, “Major” 766). After this open admittance, Berlin separates the current major pedagogical theories into four groups: Neo-Aristotelians or Classicists, the Positivists or Current-Traditionalists, the neo-Platonists or Expressionists, and the New Rhetoricians. For the purposes of this literature review, the focus will be on the Current-Traditionalists.

Berlin defined the aim of this form of rhetoric as teaching students “how to adapt the discourse to its hearers ... [because] the world readily surrenders its meaning to anyone who observes it properly ... [and] the speaker or writer... need only provide the language which corresponds” with the world (766). This aligns with the epistemological world views claimed by the Scottish Realists. To practice adapting discourse, writers utilize the different modes and appeals and must be concerned with “the communication of truth that is certain and empirically verifiable” (770). At the end of the section on CTR, Berlin expresses his disappointment with the fact that even after brilliant minds like Freud and Einstein, college writers are forced into “a view of reality based on a mechanistic physics and a naive faculty psychology--and all in the name of a convenient pedagogy” (771). Because much of Berlin’s scholarship was derived from Kitzhaber, a dissection of Kitzhaber’s views yield ones

similar to Berlin's, but there exists theorists who share Fogarty, Berlin and Kitzhaber's disdain for CTR but discuss it in a different way.

Sharon Crowley's book, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric* was published in 1990, well into the entrenchment of Process Pedagogy. Her stance on CTR is not hidden; there is a chapter titled "So What's Wrong with Current-Traditional Rhetoric, Anyway?" with a subsection titled "The Intellectual Poverty of Textbooks." Crowley claims CTR works not because it is an exceptional pedagogy but because it meets "certain institutional needs" (140). She accuses CTR and its practitioners of producing textbooks whose saving grace were that they "could be efficiently memorized, taught, and studied" (142). The textbooks of people like Hill continued the flawed epistemology of Scottish Realism in writing as practiced by Blair and Campbell. This eventually led to a system predicated on how easy it was to reproduce results. If one method worked in one place, others would copy it into their textbooks and "cash in on the huge sums that could be made from a best-selling textbook" (146). Books that did not fit into this system "fell into oblivion" (146). So unlike Berlin and Kitzhaber who have been discussed and Richard Young and Maxine Hairston who will be discussed, Crowley attributes CTR's persistence to a certain level of meeting a basic need and human greed. This is, of course, not a flaw of CTR but a bureaucratic one.

For Crowley, the flaw in CTR is squarely on the classroom practices. It condenses the writing process into the linear path of "select, narrow, and amplify" (148). (Ironically, some practitioners of Process Pedagogy, the dominant pedagogy to replace CTR, condense Pre-Write, Draft, Revise, Draft, Edit into a linear process also.) Writing amounted to tell the reader what will be written about, write about it, and, lastly, tell the reader what was just written about in a five paragraph theme, much like the Jane Schaffer five-paragraph essay many students now learn to write in

secondary schools. This writing method and it is a method or procedure not a practice or style develops no voice or authority within the writer and emits no voice or authority (149). It produces a product without regard to the rhetorical situation of the writer or reader. Consequently for Crowley and many others, CTR possesses two things: “intellectual emptiness and ... artificial pedagogy (149).

There is a light at the end of the dark CTR tunnel, though. One of the most cited works when it comes to a discussion of CTR is Richard E. Young’s article “Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention.” He presents the idea that there are alternatives. Young begins by defining a paradigm as “a system of widely shared values, beliefs, and methods that determines the nature and conduct of the discipline” and the presence or absence of certain topics, which in turn reflects the perceived value of said topic (29), which is one of the many definitions that Thomas Kuhn provides for paradigm. Young claims that although there are varied and disparate Composition programs, they share a common paradigm, the Current-Traditional Paradigm. He recognizes the difficulty of discussing CTR or any paradigm for that matter when one has been brought up in it, a concept not too dissimilar from Michel Foucault’s ideas of epistemes and discourses. The presence of the CTR paradigm, though, can be seen in complaints about textbooks being nearly identical because a textbook can serve to stabilize and perpetuate a paradigm (31). (This notion is challenged by Robert J. Connors in his article “Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Thirty Years of Writing with a Purpose,” which will be discussed later.)

Young pays special attention to the absence of invention in CTR (32), which was present in Campbell’s work but was less popularized than his work in grammatical purity as Kitzhaber notes in *Rhetoric in American Colleges* (52). The source of skill for invention is not found in writing but in the other disciplines (Young 33). The omnipresence of CTR has led

to a crisis because invention and its attached skills do nothing to develop “an art of discovering and developing warrantable beliefs” (34). In other words, CTR does nothing to fulfill a glaring hole in its rhetoric, so a new paradigm of rhetoric is needed, one that does promote conveyance of knowledge at the expense of the development of knowledge.

Like Fogarty and Berlin, Young presents possible alternatives to the continuation of CTR. He raises the possibility of a partial return to Classical Invention akin to that practiced by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Another possibility is Kenneth Burke’s Dramatistic Method which is also supported by Fogarty. A third possibility is D. Gordon Rohman’s prewriting method based on analogies. The last alternative is Kenneth Pike’s Tagmemic Invention that involves a series of exercises based on a heuristic exploration of the language. It is a three-step process designed for the “retrieval of relevant information ... analysis of problematic data, and discovery of new concepts and ordering principles” (39). The first step in this process harkens back to Blair and Campbell, but the subsequent steps are a departure. Ultimately, an alternative is needed to CTR before instructors are willing to surrender the comfort and safety via familiarity that it offers.

Like Young, Maxine Hairston discusses CTR using Kuhn’s idea of paradigms in her article “Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing.” It was written four years after Young. And like Young, Hairston sets up the idea that “paradigms are not necessarily immutable ... [it] begins to show signs of instability” as its practitioners encounter situations that the paradigm does not explain. This gradual change from one paradigm to another is a paradigm shift. Like any change though, the shift will be met with resistance from conservative forces that eventually give way in the face of mounting criticism. This article was written well into the “Process Revolution,” but Hairston points out that at the time and in the current time of 2012,

most writing instructors have been trained in literature. They are “putting in their time” before they can go teach, what they perceive as, the “real” classes, literature. Thus, they hear “writing is a process” and repeat “writing is a process” but do not truly understand it. This leads them to use the Current-Traditional paradigm and the focus on things like proofreading and editing, which have “largely discredited” (80) as good pedagogy, while proclaiming their devotion to process by just requiring a linear progression of multiple drafts. The textbooks being utilized only serve to reinforce the discredited pedagogy because textbooks, as Young and Kuhn note, are conservative by nature.

Unlike Young though, Hairston argues that there are already signs of a change on systemic level. At first, *ad hoc* changes were used to try to “fix” what was wrong with CTR rather than discarding it. These fixes included writing centers, of which Hairston is dismissive. Another was individualized instruction. She even lumps expressive writing into an attempt at fixing CTR. Hairston deems all of these fixes to be ineffective and inadequate for one reason or another without providing much justification. It is a tiny portion of her article because, like all the other modern scholars mentioned so far in this literature review, Hairston claims that there is a “basic flaw in the traditional paradigm” (82). This basic flaw is addressed by a new, emerging paradigm that is descriptive (like the possibilities presented by Fogarty) rather than prescriptive like CTR or, at least, like how it is portrayed. It *merely* amounts to a more wholehearted embrace of Process Pedagogy if this review were to describe it in the manner similar to how some scholars describe CTR.

Unlike Berlin, Kitzhaber, Crowley, Young and Hairston, Robert J. Connors is not immediately dismissive of CTR in his article “Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Thirty Years of Writing with a Purpose,” which was written in 1981. He does not paint an immediately disparaging picture of it because CTR is “not ... a coherent, static whole ... it is a dynamic

entity forever in flux” (208). It is not the monolithic portrait painted by most scholars; it is “all of the struggle between inertia and experiment implied by teaching” (208). In the end though, Connors does support the need for a new rhetoric to maybe not supplant CTR because it seems impossible but to supplement it. A common source of complaint between Crowley, Young, and Hairston are Current-Traditional textbooks, which is also discussed in Connors’s article. Instead of claiming textbooks are a conservative force, Connors identifies them as adaptive works that have changed to “meet the demands of a changing culture” (209). He specifically examines James McCrimmon’s *Writing With a Purpose* that was published by Houghton Mifflin. The book had seven editions over the course of 30 years from 1950-1980. (This points to the type of book Crowley decries as often imitated.) These editions changed to meet changes in the universities, e.g. the influx of GI Bill students, but, like the textbooks described by Crowley, are “bound by iron marketing law” (211).

There was still a focus on “good grammar and correct usage” (210) in the books, but this focus did nothing to contribute to “desired goals of unity, variety, etc.” (210). McCrimmon, according to Connors, attempted to walk a path between conservative forces and revolutionary ones, between, as Young and Hairston would say, paradigms. Each new edition attempted to incorporate a facet of a new theory. How successful these incorporations are are debatable though, and they usually came at the expense of something else. For example, pre-writing is incorporated into the 4th edition of McCrimmon’s, but, according to Connors, nothing but the term is utilized. The essence of it is left by the wayside in favor of the three step process of “choosing-restricting-selecting.” There is no mention of revision. In its last edition, *Writing With a Purpose* remained essentially the same, and it became apparent “that the new material has been grafted onto the text not because the author really believes in it, but

because mentioning it is a necessity, a sop to the ‘theory people’” (215), the marketing law hinted at by Crowley and expanded on by Connors at work again. For Connors, CTR, for all its flux and change, “could not complete the effort [of adopting new ideas], and relapsed into traditional treatments of almost everything” (215).

MAYBE CTR IS MORE THAN GRAMMATICAL PURITY

Although the bulk of the scholarship on CTR is disparaging, there are some voices out there that ask writing teachers to hold on a second, to take a second look at the work from the early 1900s to the 1960s during what many in the field call the Dark or Stone Age of Composition. These questioners do not advocate for the complete dismissal of the work of people like Berlin but advocate against the tacit agreement that plagues the field of Composition. Robin Varnum, in the article “The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations” written in 1992, is one of these scholars. She questions Berlin’s classification of CTR under the influence of a Burkian terministic screen and disparaging CTR while presenting his preference for the New Rhetoric. Varnum then proceeds to critique Kitzhaber whose work shaped Berlin’s histories. Because of Kitzhaber’s influence on Berlin and other scholars as one of the earliest scholars that mapped the field, his characterization of pre-1960 as a time that “can hardly be called a particularly distinguished time in the history of rhetoric” (Kitzhaber 97). This negativity, based on “loose and damaging generalizations,” shaped and continues to shape composition.

After tackling Berlin and Kitzhaber, Varnum addresses Young and Hairston’s paradigm discussion and how it is misguided in a way because it attempts to frame Composition as a scientific field instead of an art and science. The essential flaw in all this derision of CTR is that, as Mike Rose puts it, “good teachers” skip around a book and adopt and adapt techniques appropriate for the class (Varnum 44). In other words,

Varnum is not arguing for an embrace of CTR. She is essentially arguing for conclusions that Fogarty and Connors present. Fogarty's claim about CTR being a practice before a philosophy is exactly what Varnum and Rose fit into what Varnum wants; scholars need to examine the practices of CTR in the classroom and not just the text. In fact, most scholarship on CTR only looks at textbooks. Connors claims that CTR is not a monolith; Varnum wants scholars to examine the tiny tributaries and streams that flow into a bigger CTR river.

Byron Hawk's book *A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity* (2007) continues Varnum's idea that perhaps current scholars are oversimplifying CTR. He focuses on Fogarty, Young, Berlin and, directly and by extension, Kitzhaber in the first two chapters because of the enormous impact they had in shaping the discussion about CTR and casting it "as a scapegoat paradigm" (54). According to Hawk, they, especially Young and Berlin, oversimplify invention in CTR. The source of invention is vitalism, but this was conflated with genius and became "repressed content, the spectre, of Berlin's maps" (60) thus "reduc[ing] rhetoric to a managerial art" (52). While Varnum's article reads like a defense of pre-1960 writing instruction, Hawk wants the field of composition and its scholars to not so readily take the claims of Berlin et al. as indisputable fact.

DIG, RATHER THAN DISCARD

This literature review began as an exploration of CTR and its treatment of audience, but as I did my research and wrote about CTR, I realized that I did not have a clear picture of what CTR is. Like many others, I had the picture painted by people like Berlin but no alternatives. It is in my personality to question something so easily accepted and digested by large groups of people without paying attention to nuances. Essentially, most accepted the basic idea CTR = bad without any sort of doubt, all

the while continuing to practice certain parts of CTR if not CTR as a whole and only superficially including new theories as McCrimmon did in his textbook. It leads me to think that maybe we should take a second look, make a more grounded decision on our own, and, as Mike Rose said, adapt the good parts that fit for our classes. During a presentation of this literature review, I was asked if CTR has been around so long because there is something good in it or rather if CTR is good because it has been around for so long. The answer I gave then and the answer I have now are one and the same: I do not know. Again, I want to do what Varnum and Rose suggest: dig through it for things I find useful.

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