Wide Angle

a journal of literature and film

Volume 7, Issue 2
Spring 2018

Published by
Department of English
Samford University

Mission Statement

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing one issue each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, and screenplays.

Contents

Essay

Sydney Berry

Colonizing Neverland: Mothers of the British Empire in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

Introduction: The History of British Imperialism and *Peter Pan*

In 1851, inside London's Kensington Gardens, a temple of British power entranced the nations. The Great Exhibition featured artifacts from around the world and drew in crowds from far away at a time when travelling abroad was inaccessible to many. The building, made of glass, was symbolic of the nation and the time in which it was built. Within this temple of British dominance, "nationalism and internationalism were played out to form and define Britain's national identity for years to come" (Van Vugt, n. pag.). Shaping a national identity further developed an overarching sense of elitism in the British popular mindset. Historically, Great Britain had colonized North America, Oceania, and some of Asia, giving rise to the proud phrase, "the sun never sets on the British Empire." From this nationalism grew imperialism, a "rule by a superior power over subordinate territories" (Kumar, n. pag.). Imperialism was enacted through colonization, the formation of territories by a mother country through military conquest, which imposed a Western model of civilization on conquered peoples. This societal ideal grew into a cultural narrative, perpetuated by the Great Exhibition, and was engrained into British citizens at the height of the British Empire during the Victorian Era, taking place throughout the mid-to-late 1800s.

Emerging from the Victorian era, the Edwardian period still held on to many imperialist values established in years prior. For a Scottish playwright, the most effective way to address these power-hoarding values was through children's literature. J.M. Barrie was born in Scotland

nine years after the construction of the Great Exhibition. In 1885, he moved to London, where he was at the epicenter of British pride and imperialism, even if he never visited the Great Exhibition in person (Vaughn, n. pag.). Eventually, before his death in 1937, Barrie would move to Kensington, just outside of Kensington Gardens (Britannia, n. pag.). This same location where the Great Exhibition was housed[1] would later be home to a statue of Barrie's most notable character, Peter Pan. The two attractions of Kensington Gardens are symbolic of a culture that was rapidly changing during Barrie's lifetime. The world's largest monument to colonial power burned down in 1936, while the Peter Pan statue still stands in the heart of the park today. Peter Pan, though certainly a cultural idol of childhood, was originally one Scot's effort to change the narrative of imperialism in Edwardian Britain. J.M. Barrie's 1911 novel *Peter Pan* subtly addresses the subjugation of native peoples and the harmful perspectives of the English Edwardian people through the tension-diffusing medium of children's literature.

Within *Peter Pan's* varying cast of characters, women are influential storytellers that preserve the culture of imperialism and send out the next generation of young men. These women send out white men, namely the Lost Boys, Peter, and the Darling brothers, to colonize the Other, represented by the native tribe of Neverland. These women are redefined as imperial mothers, who are women who tell the story of imperialism to men through their position as caretakers. Acting as imperial mothers, Mrs. Darling and Wendy control the selection of stories that are told in order that men may grow from the savagery of childhood. This savage youthfulness is a state from which the Other never matures, whereas the imperial men transform into proper English gentlemen who will teach the Other the Western model of civilization. Using the same method of storytelling, Barrie counteracts the imperial mothers' narrative by presenting

[1] The Crystal Palace, the building that housed the Great Exhibition, was moved to greater London in 1854 and subsequently burned down in 1936 (Arnold-Baker, n. pag.).

the danger of omitting stories and manipulating the preexisting, true narratives. With his narrative, Barrie shows the harm that this type of storytelling can cause to Others, represented by Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell. By using *Peter Pan* as an extended metaphor for the flawed English imperialist mindset, Barrie employs Wendy's method of storytelling himself to change the colonial narratives impressed upon English children.

Said and Spivak: Assertion of Colonial Editing of Story

The world of *Peter Pan* is characterized by the telling of stories within the larger story. Edward Said in *Orientalism* and Gayatri Spivak in *Nationalism and the Imagination* acknowledge the importance of constructing narratives as an imperial power. The framework of postcolonial theory is founded on the mysteriousness of the Other, as Said explains. However, the Other is ultimately understandable through Spivak's idea of "equivalence," wherein women are the most central cultural storytellers.

Edward Said recognizes the unconscious division that exists between Westerners and Easterners, the former seeing the latter exclusively as an Other. Said argues that, in an effort to define the Orient through Orientalism (the external study of the Orient), Westerners "not only defined but edited it" (167). Attempting to explain what Barrie calls "the puzzling East" (7), Westerners put human complexities into definable terms and edited them into what ultimately became a different truth altogether, creating the flawed Western understanding of the Oriental.

Cultural editing begins with the exploration of "pilgrims," Said's word for those explorers who essentially work as modern crusaders, going to the East not for the East's sake but for some personal reason, either internal growth or external expansion of colonial power. The experience of pilgrims "usually (but not always) resolved itself into the reductionism of the Orientalistic" (169). The pilgrim's power to tell the Orient's story allows him or her to also

manipulate its meaning through reduction of the truth, leading to a simplified understanding of the Other. Said notes in particular English pilgrims who made their pilgrimage to the once-British colony of India: "Already, then, the room available for imaginative play [for the colonized] was limited by the realities of administration, territorial legality, and executive power" (169). Here, "imaginative play" is the freedom to interpret one's own cultural narrative. Through the three mediums mentioned by Said, the "imaginative play" of Easterners is conquered by the overbearing power of the Westerners. The pilgrims thus engage in imperial storytelling, indeed using "imaginative play" as they define, edit, and distort the holistic narrative of Orientals. In short, Westerners, even when living in the context of the East, exert their power over the Other through the selective narratives told.

Gayatri Spivak expounds upon the imagination as an important factor in perpetuating or counteracting nationalism. She argues that, through the neglect of a practice that she calls "equivalence," one's imagination can continue to edit another's culture to a mere reduction of the truth. On the point of equivalence, she is clear: "Here is equivalence. It is not equalization, it is not the removal of difference, it is not cutting down to the familiar. It is perhaps learning to acknowledge that other things can occupy the unique place of the example of my first language" (30). Equivalence is translation without mutation of the cultural nuances that make up another's narrative. While Western equalization would require forsaking a culture previously understood in order to fully grasp another, Spivak's equivalence endeavors to combine cultures and create a "unique place" within the mind of each individual. The idea recognizes that the power of imagination, while often used for perpetuating nationalism, can heal the imperialist mindset.

Imagination historically served as a tool for power, as Said argues, but Spivak further clarifies that the imagination can also be used for restoration in understanding the Other. Spivak

states: “Imagination feeds nationalism, and going forward towards the literary imagination . . . [it] go[es] beyond the self-identity of nationalism towards the complex textuality of the international” (20). According to Spivak, studying the literary has the potential to turn the nationalistic imagination away from itself and into empathy for the international. While many novels from the Victorian era perpetuated the imperialist narrative, others, like *Peter Pan*, can point out where the narrative fails and act as literary agents of change. As displayed in *Peter Pan*, self-preserving, nationalistic storytelling acts as an assertive power over Neverland natives, but there is an undercurrent of hope in the metanarrative as the audience understands the danger of enacting the narrative.

Within the world of the novel, imperial power relies on the proselytization of the next generation of colonizers by the cultural storytellers: women. Spivak comments on the necessity of women in colonization narratives: “The role of women, through their placing in the reproductive heteronormativity that supports nationalisms, is of great significance in this general temporizing narrative . . . we [as children] can think ourselves into the falling-due of the future by way of it” (41). Because of their familial positioning near their young, mothers wittingly or unwittingly instill the imperial narrative into the minds of their children, who will think and act in accordance with it as the next generation of potential settlers. Through his female characters, Barrie frames the imperial narrative within the larger story of the novel, enacting Spivak’s theory that fiction is a cure for nationalism.

Childhood in the Tension of Savagery and Innocence

Barrie establishes the need for instruction in the imperial narrative by setting up a sharp divide between child and adult, in which the child represents savage tendencies, and the adult represents civilization by Western standards. The entirety of the plot of *Peter Pan* is based in

viewing the Darling children and the Lost Boys enacting "adulthood" in Neverland as an example of the Other. In forming such a dichotomy, Barrie reemphasizes the need for children to be trained in the imperialist narrative so that the empire will have generations of colonists to live out their mission in order to indoctrinate the Other.

The main recipients of imperial storytelling in the novel are Peter, the Lost Boys, and the Darling brothers. Repeatedly, these young boys are described in terms of infancy and youth that highlight their incivility and thus their need for imperialism within the text. Peter and the Lost Boys are "coded as child-like and only faintly tinged with a sweet, fey wildness that hints at the romanticism of childhood innocence during the Victorian era" (Kim 27). Playing on the idolization of youth in the Edwardian era, Barrie uses Peter and the other children as recognizable characters of the Victorian childhood. Juxtaposed with the "sweet . . . wildness" of childhood and the boys' savage tendencies, their Otherness would be seen as a threat to the narrative of the British Empire.

From his first appearance, Peter displays how dramatic the distinction between child and adult really is: "When he saw [Mrs. Darling] was a grown up, he gnashed the little pearls at her" (Barrie 15). Peter's hostility toward adults is immediate. The action of gnashing his teeth at her is barbaric, though it is not with sharp, adult, or even animal teeth that he does so. Peter "had all his first teeth" (Barrie 15). The image of baby teeth juxtaposed with the savage action of gnashing at an adult accentuates Peter's distinction as a child in need of the imperialist narrative.

The Lost Boys, like Peter, are explicitly aligned with savagery towards the beginning of the novel. The group voluntarily identifies with the Neverland natives in a session of imaginative play: "'I'm a redskin to-day; what are you, Tootles?' And Tootles answered, 'Redskin; what are you, Nibs?' and Nibs said, 'Redskin; what are you, Twin?' and so on; and they were all redskin"

(Barrie 73). This activity is natural for the Lost Boys; they never align with any other people group in Neverland. In fact, their image is so important that "They are forbidden by Peter to look in the least like him, and they wear the skins of bears slain by themselves, in which they are so round and furry that when they fall they roll" (Barrie 49, 50). Animal skins are another image that emphasize the boys' barbarity. Into their midst, Wendy and her brothers come, the former coming with the narrative of imperial civilization.

Wendy's own brothers are still in need of the same narrative as part of the next generation of white English settlers. Even though they have received some training from Mrs. Darling, they are still children and need the influence of the imperial. John and Michael have interests that lead toward the savage at the beginning of their time in Neverland. In the Victorian-Edwardian context, such an obsession "is no surprise then, that during this same period of real imperial expansion, there would be a boyhood fascination for savage 'natives,' pirates, and lush, uncharted territories yet to be explored (along with the implicit suggestion that these places have yet to be conquered and 'civilized') that would find its expression in *Peter Pan*" (Kim 48).[2] What may merely seem to be "a boyhood fascination" for the exotic is actually an orientation of childhood with the savage. While Wendy has overcome these tendencies with her feminine childhood and with time, John and Michael learn the proper narrative for Englanders throughout the course of the novel.

For the Darling brothers, the obsession with the native Neverland inhabitants is inherent and natural. John has a pre-experiential knowledge of the native culture: "I'll tell you by the way the smoke curls whether [the natives] are on the war-path" (Barrie 42). Michael, on the other hand, imagines a Neverland where he will live "in a wigwam" before meeting Peter Pan (Barrie

[2] Other novels also highlighted this fascination, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's 1882 novel *Treasure Island* and Rudyard Kipling's 1894 novel *The Jungle Book*.

12). Whereas Wendy's ideas about Neverland focus more on Peter and living on the island, her brothers' interests are centered on the natives, affiliating them with the Other. Because the Darling brothers, the Lost Boys, and Peter are still children, the adults of society that have already been endowed with the imperialist message must impart it to them.

Women's Narrative Construction Defining the Power of Colonization

In a cast of characters that is almost entirely male, Barrie places a lot of importance on women in *Peter Pan.* Within this cast of women, Barrie emphasizes the significance of mothers even further. In the opening moments of the novel, he briefly mentions Peter and Wendy, and then moves on to a page-long description of Mrs. Darling (Barrie 7). Mrs. Darling is the only true mother in the story; however, other characters, mainly the Lost Boys, redefine the term "mother." Instead of simply being a woman who has children, the imperial mother is a woman who is still a caretaker but is primarily the teller of stories. Women must become these narrative definers because, as Bradley Deane notes, in the shift towards Victorian imperialism, "the individual male was no longer the privileged reader of his own story," but was instead the reader of the Other's story; thus, the imperial mother becomes a necessity (702). Among the four main women characters, Mrs. Darling, Wendy, Tinker Bell, and Tiger Lily, it is only the two Englishwomen, Mrs. Darling and Wendy, who succeed in being considered "mothers."

Peter, prior to meeting Wendy, makes numerous visits to the Darlings' household in order to hear Mrs. Darling's stories. In the nursery, Peter admits to Wendy that he does not "know any stories. None of the lost boys know any stories" (Barrie 31). Gayatri Spivak's concept of the mother as the essential cultural storyteller is demonstrated as Barrie reinforces the societal need for mothers in a foreign land. Wendy ultimately goes with Peter to reshape the narratives of the Lost Boys, resulting in their eventual rule over the natives. Wendy gains this

power from Mrs. Darling, drawing attention to the narrative of colonial power as it moves through the generations.

Mrs. Darling is, above the other women in the novel, an exemplar of the imperial mother. Her daughter is able to carry on the imperialist ideals to the Lost Boys, and her sons go on the adventure of settlement to Neverland. Her most central moment as an imperial mother is at the beginning of the novel, wherein she, in singing her children to sleep, "was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning" (Barrie 10). Though ambiguous, this metaphorical action of sorting thoughts is done by telling the children stories as they go to sleep, essentially changing their individual stories, thus changing the narrative of their thoughts about the world.

While the specifics of how Mrs. Darling goes about sorting thoughts are not presented, Barrie does assign specific language to her actions as she sings her children to sleep. Later in the aforementioned scene, Mrs. Darling finds "things she could not understand, and of these quite the most perplexing was the word Peter. She knew of no Peter, and yet he was here and there in John and Michael's minds, while Wendy's began to be scrawled all over with him. The name stood out in bolder letters than any of the other words" (Barrie 12). The descriptors of Mrs. Darling's procedure are based in editing and writing. Instead of identifying Peter as a name or a person, Mrs. Darling does not recognize "the word Peter." Wendy, like a blank sheet of paper, is "scrawled all over." Peter's name is visually depicted as bolder than others, meaning that Peter Pan is just one name in the midst of a larger narrative to which Mrs. Darling has access. Using her editorial authority, Mrs. Darling "maintains her place of influence within the home while retaining her ties to Neverland and childhood freedom. The kiss [the motif Barrie uses for Mrs.

Darling's awareness of childhood] symbolizes both Mrs. Darling's importance, [and] a token of her present maternity" (Fitzpatrick 20). Her influence and closeness to her children allow her to proofread their thoughts and confront her with the childhood savagery that threatens her narrative. Like an editor, Mrs. Darling seizes the imagination of her children, crossing out what does not align with the imperial narrative and adding in what is needed for the imperialist mission to flourish.

As Mrs. Darling straightens some thoughts and removes others, she fulfills the responsibilities of a mother in the height of British imperialism. Throughout the Victorian era, "the development of the child thus recapitulated the central metanarratives of liberal imperialism: the civilizing mission, the enlightenment of the heathen, and the march of progress . . . British boyhood was subject to the same intensity of revision as the British imperial mission" (Deane 690). The revision of a child's thoughts through the bedtime story validates Mrs. Darling as a successful imperial mother and the source of colonization that takes place throughout the rest of the novel.

Wendy, in due time, becomes like Mrs. Darling, telling stories and playing the role of "mother" to the Lost Boys and Peter. When Peter and Wendy meet for the first time, Barrie says that "Wendy was every inch a woman" (27). Because she is a woman and the power of the narrative is exclusive to mothers, Wendy has stepped from girl to woman to mother after meeting Peter, as symbolized in her subsequent departure from the nursery to become the Lost Boys' mother. Wendy's practice of imperial storytelling occurs frequently throughout the novel. Beginning with the aforementioned scene, Wendy manipulates Peter's emotions by introducing him to thoughts he had never had before: "He felt for the first time that [Peter Pan] was a shortish name . . . Peter had a sinking feeling. For the first time he felt that perhaps [Neverland]

was a funny address" (25, 26). The language and superior tone of Wendy's conversation bends the way the story continues in her favor, making her comparatively long name and realistic street address seem greater. In fact, Barrie's form points to the indoctrination of children through colonialism. As Maureen Farrell states, for Barrie and other Victorian authors, "childhood is bound up with magic and fantasy and with features more recognisably Scottish: alienation, uncertainty of the self and the unconscious" (130). These three qualities are exactly what Wendy inspires in Peter through her influence of narrative.

Though she is capable of telling the imperial narrative, Wendy is not cognitively aware of her purpose as an imperial mother; rather, because of her upbringing under Mrs. Darling, she completes the colonial storytelling naturally. In her first exchange with Peter, Wendy follows a predetermined social script that models imperialism. She notices that Peter is taken aback from her commenting on his address: "'I mean,' Wendy said nicely, remembering that she was hostess, 'is that what they put on the letters?' [Peter] wished she had not mentioned letters" (26). Wendy remembers the set of Western societal manners exemplified for her through her mother and models them for the uncivilized Peter Pan. As Theresa Fitzpatrick writes, "Wendy's adept repair of Peter's shadow . . . mirrors the scene in which Mrs. Darling ties Mr. Darling's tie—both quietly fulfill a need, and both are quickly forgotten afterward. Emulating her mother's attitude toward her father, Wendy takes pride in this role, even in the thanklessness of it" (10). Thus, Wendy's following of her mother's example is a natural, desirable, yet largely unconscious action. However, in her attempt to make Peter more at ease with his address, Wendy actually brings up a topic he was avoiding, as he cannot relate to the experience of getting letters. Though shaming Peter into becoming more British may not have been Wendy's conscious goal, because of the imperialist narrative that has been rooted into her, Peter builds a house in Neverland

exactly to Wendy's instructions, establishing her as the Lost Boys' mother (65). Even through something as simple as children's interactions, the imperialist purpose is accomplished, even at the subconscious level.

Barrie references Wendy's storytelling generally throughout the novel, but specific instances of this practice are depicted only twice. The first is Cinderella. Wendy finishes the story for Peter, who had heard the beginning of it from Mrs. Darling (31). The second is Wendy's telling of the story of how she and her brothers arrived in Neverland, including a resolution wherein the three of them have returned to London and are grown up. Notably, the story is told as a fiction, as a simple bedtime story with elements that change from the true story. Farrell notes that Barrie is interested in one of the "key features of Scottish literature . . . the explanation of the imagination" (132). Details of Wendy's story point not only to the creative omission of details, but also to the imaginative embellishment of the truth of the story. Wendy leaves out the important addition of Peter Pan to her narrative, yet she includes the Lost Boys. She also asks her audience to "consider the feelings of the unhappy parents with all their children flown away" (99). She concludes with her projection of the future for her and her brothers. Though elements of the story are true, the fictional framework of the telling of the story displays Wendy's skill in changing the narrative through exercising imagination. Said and Spivak's commentary on the imagination as a necessary tool for narrative imperialist power is relevant here. Wendy is more powerful because she has more imagination. She does not simply articulate the story, but in telling it, she imaginatively expresses her own desire to return home and for the others to feel some emotional response as well. Wendy accomplishes her goal, and the Lost Boys want to go home with her so that they may grow up and escape the savagery of childhood, thus fulfilling the imperialist narrative.

The story infuriates Peter, and he responds with his own story, in which his biological mother closes the window upon his return. The narrator is "not sure that this was true, but Peter thought it was true; and it scared" the Lost Boys and the Darling children (101). Peter is using the same techniques to elicit an emotional response that Wendy uses in her story. The power of imperialism comes full circle: the teller of stories is now impacted by the stories of the one that came after her. Peter's story fails to do what he wishes; however, because he uses manipulative imperialist techniques to fight the imperialist purpose. This form of storytelling is separate from the indigenous storytelling of which Peter had previously been capable. An indigenous story, as displayed through Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell, endeavors to accomplish something depending on the situation in which it is told, largely empathy from Westerners. In contrast, the imperialist narrative always seeks to accomplish a specific end: perpetuating the story to new colonists and civilizing the Other. Though Peter's goal is to make the children stay in Neverland, his use of the imperialist narrative, inevitable since Wendy indoctrinated him with it, makes Wendy want to leave for England even more urgently because that is the only end that it can accomplish: the returning to England.

Peter is not a mother; therefore, he is not British society's designated teller of stories, yet the imperialist narrative instilled in him ultimately succeeds. It is Peter's story that makes the Darling children return home, taking the Lost Boys with them. The Lost Boys, children that have up until this point been living in a tension between propriety and savagery, finally become true Englishmen by choosing to return to the "mainland."

As seen in the final chapter, the cycle will continue even beyond the next generation: "When Margaret [Wendy's granddaughter] grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on" (159). Mrs. Darling's storytelling has created an

imperialist thread that is carried through her daughter and her progeny indefinitely. As Peter will continue to take "mothers" from the mainland, the power of the imperialist narrative will continue to subjugate the natives of Neverland.

Failed Storytelling: Discounting the Other's Narrative

Barrie highlights the two Englishwomen in the novel over the two women from Neverland as an example of what Edward Said calls "Orientalism," rejecting the self-proclaimed narratives of the Other in place of a pilgrim's retelling of the Oriental experience (1). Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell are the only two characters that have no origin on the mainland with whom the children have a connection. Both are present before Wendy comes to Neverland, yet Peter and the Lost Boys never recognize them as storytellers. The obvious difference is that Wendy is a "civilized" Englishwoman who comes from a storytelling tradition. However, despite their backgrounds, Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell do tell stories and attempt to reframe their own narratives, but the unwillingness of the Lost Boys, who are the pilgrims, to listen halts their efforts and ultimately allows for the framing of their narrative by these settlers.

Tiger Lily is the only member of the native tribe of Neverland to be described in great detail. Amid a long description of the tribe, Barrie notes, "Bringing up the rear, the place of greatest danger, comes Tiger Lily, proudly erect, a princess in her own right. She is the most beautiful of dusky Dianas and the belle of the Piccaninnies[3], coquettish, cold and amorous by turns; there is not a brave who would not have the wayward thing to wife, but she staves off the altar with a hatchet" (53). Behind this glimpse of Tiger Lily, Barrie establishes that she has been born in and never removed from Neverland and is thus a truer native of the island than the Lost Boys or Peter. The entirety of her history is based in Neverland at least for a few generations, as

[3] "Picaninny" is an archaic, derogatory word that refers to "a black child" (*Merriam-Webster*).

she is the "princess," or daughter of the chief. For this reason, she is highly significant in her home culture. She walks on the war path in "the place of greatest danger," a position which shows her skill as a warrior within her society. Her status contrasts her with Englishwomen, as fighting was a position that belonged exclusively to Englishmen during the Edwardian era, emphasizing her Otherness. She is valued within her own society, though, because she protects her people and is trusted by them to do so. She is held in a powerful and unique position within her tribe for a specific purpose: to tell the narrative of her people's safety.

However, the story that is being told within this vignette is not one where Tiger Lily is the main character. In fact, she is hardly given any self-defining qualities at all. Tiger Lily's actions, voice, and physicality are never self-defined. All of her characteristics are described for her by Westerners, in the form of the Lost Boys, Peter, and the Darling children, within the narrative. Tiger Lily never speaks for herself except when worshipping Peter: "'Me Tiger Lily . . . Peter Pan save me, me his velly nice friend. Me no let pirates hurt him'" (91). Tiger Lily's native language is never represented, and her one statement is broken and stereotyped in dialect. Though Tiger Lily may have said more to Peter during this scene, Barrie highlights the omission of her holistic character by erasing the power and quantity of her language. The only narrative Tiger Lily expresses in the novel is the submission to a Westerner, recalling Said's theory of pilgrimage, wherein the stories told for and of the Other are selectively filtered by the pilgrim for some personal use.

In depicting Tiger Lily this way, Barrie does not ignore the harmfulness of this storytelling. Tiger Lily is described in the narration in a unique, generally positive way: "Tiger Lily, the Indian princess, presents another interesting case as she fits into neither the maternal role nor that of the 'bad girl.' She is strong, beautiful, proud, independent" (Fitzpatrick 15). At

the end of Tiger Lily's dialogue, the narrator comments, "She was far too pretty to cringe in this way, but Peter thought it his due, and he would answer condescendingly" (91). The image is an uncomfortable one. Tiger Lily, despite being an Other, is described in terms of beauty throughout the text, much like Wendy. Her beauty is juxtaposed with negative words like "cringe," while Peter is the agent of this condescension. Peter is acting out the power given to him as a white Westerner by the narrative he has learned from Wendy. This shift in his own personal narrative renders him unable to understand the Other. The narrator directly states that this sort of power is "not really good for [Peter]" (91). The subtext is that Tiger Lily, though depicted as submissive, is actually being manipulated under Peter's control. As Ann Wilson writes, the depictions of Tiger Lily as beautiful yet manipulated highlight the fact that "Lurking in that unconscious is an anxiety about female sexuality as dangerous and, in the case of aboriginal populations as they are subjugated in the colonizing enterprise of imperialism" (n. pag.). Tiger Lily's beauty magnifies the tragedy brought not just to herself but also to her entire tribe.

The power of appropriated stories, especially in Tiger Lily's case, extends beyond her own personal narrative. This expressed submission to Peter affects Tiger Lily's tribe at large. Due to their devotion to Peter, the tribe camps outside of the Lost Boys' home in order to protect them from the pirates. This decision ultimately leads to their demise by the pirates: "[It was] a massacre rather than a fight. Thus perished many of the flower of the Piccaninny tribe" (108). The tribe is significantly weakened by this interaction and is not mentioned in the text again. Though the narrative of the tribe has been deleted for characters within *Peter Pan*, Barrie's representation of the tribe as a group of massacred, tragic victims within the text fulfills Spivak's

theory of equivalence through reading literature. Within the world of the story, however, Tiger Lily is not a mother because her narrative is ignored by the white men in power.

Even closer to the Lost Boys than Tiger Lily is Tinker Bell, the companion to Peter Pan and most vehement opponent of Wendy. Tinker Bell is a secondary character, yet she provides a necessary contrast with Wendy, as her "femininity, exotic otherness, and magical energy combine to make her an object of fascination" (Meyers, et al. 102). Despite being highlighted by Barrie in such a way, her narrative is largely ignored by Peter and the Lost Boys in the novel, though the entirety of her identity is placed in them. Barrie describes Tinker Bell and Peter's relationship through Peter's translation of and dialogue with Tinker Bell: "'She is not very polite. She says you are a great ugly girl, and that she is my fairy" (29). While her impoliteness is contrasted against Wendy's polite social script, the most important part of Tinker Bell's introduction to Wendy is that she is Peter's fairy. A portion of her self-proclaimed identity is that she belongs to Peter, despite the fact that she cannot be Peter's fairy because he is "'a gentleman and [Tink] is a lady'" (Barrie 29). In spite of this statement from Peter, he never treats Tinker Bell as if she did not belong to him. She returns in many scenes throughout the book, showing that Tinker Bell is often included in Peter's everyday life.

Unlike Tiger Lily, Tinker Bell has a language that the Lost Boys and Peter understand. To the Edwardian British reader, "Barrie's Tinker Bell [would be an] impulsive, pre-linguistic fairy" (Meyers, et al. 112). Much like Barrie's largely Western audience, Wendy is never able to understand Tinker Bell's language, except for her common catchphrase, "You silly ass." Towards the end of the novel, Barrie writes, "She had said it so often that Wendy needed no translation" (96). This instance is the only one where Wendy comprehends the fairy language on

her own. It is but a nominal understanding enforced through repetition, and Wendy does not change her ideology of imperialism or negative opinion of Tinker Bell.

Regardless of how familiar she is with the Lost Boys, because of the divide between her as a Neverland inhabitant and the boys as Englanders, she is still viewed as an Other and not as a storytelling mother. While Tinker Bell and Wendy establish no relationship, except a few argumentative encounters, Tinker Bell is so integrated into the lives of the Lost Boys that she has a room in their home: "There was one recess in the wall, no larger than a bird-cage, which was the private apartment of Tinker Bell" (70). Barrie drives a deeper social divide between Tinker Bell's living quarters and her character. Her name is directly linked to "her work as a mender of pots and pans—a typical gypsy trade in the British society of Barrie's time and one that linked her character to pre-industrialized spirituality and a marginalized people" (Meyers, et al. 105). Her living quarters reframe Tinker Bell's lower-class Otherness into the Lost Boys and Peter's Englishness, but this reframing does not award Tinker Bell motherhood. In fact, when Peter suggests, "'Perhaps Tink wants to be my mother?'" Tinker Bell simply responds, "You silly ass!" (96) Neither Tinker Bell nor the Lost Boys consider her their mother, and thus they will not ultimately act out her cultural narrative.

Prior to Wendy's integration into the Lost Boys' household, however, Tinker Bell tells one story that the Lost Boys enact: shooting down Wendy. As soon as Wendy arrives in Neverland, Tinker Bell flies ahead of Peter and the Darling children to tell the Lost Boys that "'Peter wants you to shoot the Wendy'" (59). The boys, because they have never seen a white girl before, mistake Wendy for "'a great white bird'" and shoot her down with bows and arrows (58). The boys are quick to act on their childish, savage tendencies and listen to Tinker Bell's

narrative. Their actions point to their need of the imperial story, as they understand the narrative of the Other through Tinker Bell better than they do a woman of their own nationality.

Peter is furious when he learns of Tinker Bell's twisted narrative and nearly kills one of his own Lost Boys: "He raised the arrow to use it as a dagger [on Toodles]" (61). His anger is evidence that Wendy is valuable to him as a mother. Peter has listened to Mrs. Darling's stories prior to this scene and is thus indoctrinated enough with the imperial narrative to want a mother for himself in Neverland, even if it costs him one of his own men, Tootles, or his old friend, Tinker Bell. Peter says to Tinker Bell, "I am your friend no more. Begone from me forever" (62). Even though Peter does not force Tinker Bell to carry out her punishment, he and the Lost Boys do not listen to Tinker Bell's false narratives anymore, and Wendy becomes the primary storyteller. This action signifies the shift from childhood savagery to adulthood, represented through the distrust of Tinker Bell to accepting Wendy as mother.

The dismissal of the Lost Boys further harms Tinker Bell as the narrative of her native Neverland starts to change with the arrival of Wendy.[4] Though this new imperial narrative has taken the place of Tinker Bell's narrative, she continues to live amongst the Lost Boys because she still holds on to them as part of her identity. However, being subverted under a narrative that calls for the subjugation of the Other ultimately puts Tinker Bell in a dangerous and vulnerable position.

Even as Wendy and the Lost Boys leave Neverland for London and are captured by the pirates unbeknownst to Peter, Peter continues to live out the imperial notion of propriety, as displayed in his drinking of medicine. Tinker Bell, however, knows that the medicine has been

[4] In fact, in Tinker Bell's first scene in the novel, she is shown as being trapped: "In [Peter's] delight he forgot that he had shut Tinker Bell up in the drawer" (Barrie 25). Though this initial image of entrapment is not as important as the second, where Tinker Bell drinks Peter's poison, it foreshadows the peril that is to befall her for her devotion to Peter.

poisoned by Captain Hook. Because Peter no longer listens to Tinker Bell's narratives, true or untrue, he does not listen to her warnings, so she drinks the medicine to save him: "No time for words now; time for deeds, and with one of her lightning movements Tink got between his lips and the draught, and drained it to the dregs" (117). Her worship of Peter drives her actions and very nearly causes her death. This moment is "Tink's moment of shining glory when she does something for Peter which Wendy has not. . . . Tink is, for a brief moment, the superior female character'" (Fitzpatrick 18, 19). The issue is that the imperial narrative has so distorted Peter's viewpoint that Tinker Bell nearly dies as a result, even if she does display a worshipful act of heroism. In order to save her, Peter is drawn back into childhood savagery and calls upon "boys and girls in their nighties, and naked papooses [or Native American children] in their baskets hung from trees" (118). The listing of the two groups alongside each other visually connects and compares them. Both Western children and indigenous children are recognized by Peter Pan as helpful for erasing the harm of the imperial story upon the Other. He does not call upon the help of adults to save her, as only the help of savage children can restore to life the narrative of the Other, in this case, Tinker Bell.

As a result of this experience, Peter stays in Neverland and remains a child at the end of the novel. Though he was a part of the imperial narrative for much of the novel, he is finally forced to confront the harmfulness that Wendy's narrative can inflict on the Other. Though this toxicity may have pushed Peter towards a temporary revelation, he will eventually forget Tinker Bell entirely due to her death and Peter's characteristic forgetfulness, yet he will return for Wendy's progeny. In the last chapter of the novel, Peter asks, "'Who is Tinker Bell?' . . . 'There are such a lot of them,' he said. 'I expect she is no more now'" (152). Regardless of Peter's

epiphany of equivalence, the imperialist narrative will live on through him as he seeks the motherhood of the Darling women.

The definitive difference between the Darling women and the two native Neverland women is their narrative, caused by their background. The Darling women, as white Victorian Englanders are tellers of the imperial story, where Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily are non-white (or non-human) Neverland natives who live in a culture that reinforces the savagery of childhood. This is why the Darling women are seen as mothers by the white, English Lost Boys, while the Neverland women are ignored as Others. This distinction is harmful, hurting the native women because of the nature of the imperial narrative as one that rejects Spivak's equivalence and cultural understanding. Peter, however, is the fulfillment of the novel's opening line: "All children, except one, grow up" (7). Though the Darling brothers and the Lost Boys choose the imperial narrative permanently, Peter will forever live in the tension between savage child and young imperialist as he travels between visiting England and colonizing Neverland, much like the generation of young readers to whom Barrie wrote.

Conclusion: Mothers Sustaining or Changing the Imperialist Narrative

In 1911, the Great Exhibition still stood in London, and Barrie novelized his most famous play, creating *Peter Pan* (Britannica, n. pag.). In such a rapidly changing culture, it was not coincidental that J.M. Barrie, a Scottish writer, wrote a novel for children with mystifying themes centering around characters like the Lost Boys, the Darling children, fairies, and native peoples of Neverland. Imperial indoctrination was at the heart of British Victorian and Edwardian culture, though there was a distinct unrest amongst Scottish members of the British people. A mere nine years after the publishing of *Peter Pan,* "a literary group known as the Scottish Literary Renaissance, led by Hugh MacDiarmid, argued strongly in favor of Scottish

independence" ("Scottish Nationalism," n. pag.). From there, the idea of a separate Scottish identity arose centuries after the joining of Scotland and England as Britain in 1707 ("Scottish Nationalism," n. pag.). As time marched on, the Scottish Nationalists would gain popularity and momentum, resulting in discussions of Scottish independence that still take place today. To a Scottish writer living in London, the hub of British imperialism, such a movement may have inspired a new work that represents the overtly nationalistic culture of England over all.

J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is haunted by the Victorian era's imperialist culture. Barrie writes Wendy and her mother to be cultural influencers and colonial proselytizers that bring the Lost Boys from a life of living amongst the Other in their childhood to growing up within the bounds of English propriety. Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell fail at this because they are non-English Others who are marveled at yet ignored. *Peter Pan* is an attempt to turn away from Said's pilgrim towards Spivak's equivalence, in which the hurt caused to non-Englanders is tragic but redeemable. The fascination with *Peter Pan*'s whimsy enthralled Edwardians and modern readers alike, but the poor treatment of the Other in the novel continues to astound and confuse. *Peter Pan* offers an allegory within the genre of children's literature so that Edwardians, once familiar with the world of Neverland, might be able in time to understand their own world. Like the Scots, and indeed, like Barrie himself, the Other in Neverland continue to tell their stories, working for an ultimate change in narrative, starting with a call to empathy.

Works Cited

Arnold-Baker, Charles. "Great Exhibition (1851)." *The Companion to British History*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2001. *Credo Reference*.

Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan*. Consulting editorial director, F.D. Bedford, introduction by Amy Billone, Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.

Deane, Bradley. "Imperial Boyhood: Piracy and the Play Ethic." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 689-714. Indiana UP, 2011. *Literature Resource Center*.

Farrell, Maureen A. *Culture and Identity in Scottish Children's Fiction*. University of Glasgow, 2009. *British Library EThOS,* http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.501529.

FitzPatrick, Theresa J. "Sacred Kisses and Profane Thimbles: Dual Female Identity in J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan." *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature*, no. 126, Western Kentucky University Research Foundation, 2014, pp. 9-22. *Literature Resource Center*.

"J.M. Barrie." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Nona Strong and the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, contributors, 10 Jan. 2016, https://www.britannica.com/biography/J-M-Barrie.

Kim, Jeena. "Tea Parties, Fairy Dust, and Cultural Memory: The Maintenance and Development of Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan Over Time." Bowling Green State University, 2014. *OhioLINK*.

Kumar, Krishan. "Colonialism." *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, edited by Bryan S. Turner, 1st ed., Cambridge UP, 2006. *Credo Reference*.

Meyers, Eric M., et al. "Remediating Tinker Bell: Exploring Childhood and Commodification through a Century-Long Transmedia Narrative." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, vol. 6, no. 1, University of Winnipeg Centre for Research in Young People's Texts and Cultures, 2014 pp. 95-118. *Literature Resource Center*.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* Vintage Books, 1978.

"Scottish Nationalism." *Encyclopedia of Nationalism: Leaders, Movements, and Concepts*, edited by Alexander J. Motyl, 1st ed., Academic Press, 2001. *Credo Reference*.

Spivak, Gayatri. *Nationalism and the Imagination*. Seagull Books, 2015.

Van Vugt, William E. "Great Exhibition 1851." *Reader's Guide to British History*, edited by D. M. Loades, 1st ed., Taylor & Francis Books, Inc., 2003. *Credo Reference*, Routledge.

Vaughn, Jack A. "James M. Barrie." *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century*, edited by Steven R. Serafin, 3rd ed., St. James Press, 1999. *Credo Reference*, Gale.

Wilson, Ann. "Hauntings: Anxiety, Technology, and Gender in Peter Pan." *Modern Drama*, vol. 43, no. 4, U of Toronto P, 2000. *Literature Resource Center*.

Essay

Bailey Bridgeman

Logic Un-Donne: Syllogism, Seduction, and Social Strife In

"The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress"

Introduction

Seventeenth-century London experienced the full effects of the English Reformation as tensions increased among Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans. The Stuart Dynasty persisted throughout the entirety of the century, except for the eleven years during the Interregnum, yet each Stuart monarch maintained a different view on how to propagate the effects of the English Reformation and, in turn, on how to treat Catholics. For the majority of the century, there was an underlying suspicion of Catholics because of their allegiance to the Pope, a foreign authority figure who could challenge the authority of the English monarch. In an effort to bolster the authority of the English monarch, many English institutions made efforts to limit the social mobility of Catholics. For instance, both the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge withheld degrees from any student who was a professed member of the Catholic Church. As distrust towards the Catholic Church grew, the intellectual philosophies that were traditionally practiced by members of the Catholic Church became less popular as well. In particular, the practice of Medieval Scholasticism, a method of scholarship frequently used by Church Fathers during the Middle Ages, became less favorable and Renaissance Humanism, a more secular philosophy, replaced it in the academic circles of Renaissance England.

Metaphysical poets John Donne and Andrew Marvell wrote during a time when the strict logical syllogisms of Medieval Scholasticism gave way to Renaissance Humanism's emphasis

on individual agency and the personal quest for truth. Donne's poem, "The Flea," was published in 1633, and Marvell's poem, "To His Coy Mistress," was published in 1681. Both poems are dramatic monologues, within which the speakers address the transience of life as they try to seduce their mistresses. Both poems use the structure of a hypothetical syllogism, a logical form codified by Aristotle and often used in Medieval Scholasticism. While it may appear that these poems are aligned with the Medieval Scholastic tradition because of their strict logical structure, they are actually working in opposition to it. A closer analysis of the logical structure of the poems reveals their fallacious nature, thus emphasizing the inability of logic to provide a sufficient explanation for the transience of life. In light of this failed logic, the poems resort to the power of desire to the cope with the eventuality of death. However, the power of desire also disappoints, for both speakers fail in their attempt to seduce, as is seen in the refusals made by both mistresses. Neither logic nor desire provide reconciliation in light of what Marvell calls "Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (line 22). Critics often attribute the speakers' failed seduction to the tenants of carpe diem philosophy, an ancient perspective of the world that is often interpreted as nihilistic by modern audiences. Although logic and desire fail to properly formulate a philosophy of death in "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress," these poems do not reflect a nihilistic perspective of the world. Rather, these poems celebrate the Renaissance Humanist concept of autonomy, seen in the speakers' will to choose seduction in light of their eventual deaths as well as the mistresses' will to refuse the speakers' entreaties.

The philosophical climate surrounding these poems informs their form and content. In order to reach a better understanding of any literary text, it is important to understand the philosophical or intellectual climate within which it is created. Martha Nussbaum considers the intimate relationship between philosophy and literature when she says, "Literary form is not

separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content—an integral part of content, then, of the search for and the statement of truth" (3). She further states that neither philosophy nor literature is adequate on its own when it comes to understanding "the world's surprising variety, its complexity and mysteriousness, its flawed and imperfect beauty" (3). The work of philosophy interprets the world through a wide lens and asserts general truths about reality. Literature, on the other hand, focuses on minute instances of human experience—sometimes even focusing on a single moment in time experienced by an individual. Literature and philosophy rely heavily on one another because philosophy asserts the larger implications within a narrative, and literature develops the philosophical assertions found in treatises and recreates them in "forms themselves more complex, more allusive, more attentive to particulars" (3). The philosophical schools that were popular during seventeenth-century England were Medieval Scholasticism and Renaissance Humanism. Therefore, in order to engage in an informed reading of these poems, it is necessary to develop an understanding of these two schools of philosophy.

In terms of chronology, Medieval Scholasticism precedes the work of Renaissance Humanists. Medieval Scholasticism is a method of scholarship that was popularized through the works of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century ("Scholasticism," n. pag.). It was an intellectual tradition that was practiced within many of the academic monasteries in the Catholic Church. A majority of the authors who wrote under this tradition were associated with the Catholic Church and benefitted from its robust educational system. When learning to become a member of the priesthood or a monastic order, individuals practiced the techniques of Scholasticism because it was considered the proper way of teaching theology in schools throughout the Middle Ages. The academic style "include[d] an emphasis on technical precision in the definition of terms and logical order in the subdivision and organization of topics. . . .

[thus] reflect[ing] an underlying methodological concern for clarity and order in theological scholarship" ("Scholasticism," n. pag.). Most importantly, Scholasticism emphasized the importance of Classical logic, which young scholars learned by studying the works of Aristotle.[1] Further, it is important to note that Medieval Scholasticism was an activity that was inherently theological. While some works in Scholastic texts may reflect on the natural world, the belief was that "the reality of the natural world, constituted a necessary foundation for advanced religious contemplation" (Tarnas 175). Practicing in the tradition of Medieval Scholasticism during the Modern era meant maintaining a deep connection with the long-standing tradition and authority of the Catholic Church.

Renaissance Humanism, on the other hand, developed at the beginning of the Modern Era with the writings of early humanists, such as Petrarch. Renaissance Humanism also depended upon a Classical foundation like Medieval Scholasticism, yet Humanist thought marked a clear break from any religious connection to the ancient Greco-Roman world. Renaissance Humanism asserts "the spirit of intellectual freedom by which man asserted his independence from the authority of the Church" ("Humanism," n. pag.). This form of scholarship rejects the ability of institutions, such as the Church, to impose limits on the intellectual boundaries of individuals. Under this new philosophy, thinkers no longer sought knowledge under the paternalistic guidelines given by institutions of authority, but rather individuals were encouraged to reach beyond the parameters and expectations that accompanied proper scholarship during the Middle Ages. Humanist thought emphasized the importance of individual agency and the ability to search for truth according to one's own intellectual convictions.

[1] During the Medieval Era, the Western world lost access to many Classical texts from antiquity, especially the works of Plato. However, the Catholic Church rediscovered Aristotle's texts in the twelfth century and incorporated his writings into the church tradition (Tarnas 176). Evidence of Aristotle's influence on Church writing is most clearly expressed in the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Social conflict in London during this century allowed for progressive philosophies, like Renaissance Humanism, to take hold. The uncertainty surrounding traditional sources of authority created "a revolutionary potential for redefining the relations between the authority of power and an alternative source of authority that resides in conviction, knowledge, and the competent use of language" (Weimann 168). Traditional sources of authority, like the church and the state, were facing constant upheaval and internal conflict, which created an intellectual atmosphere that celebrated the agency of individuals.

It is important to understand the foundational distinctions between Medieval Scholasticism and Renaissance Humanism when approaching a close reading of "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" because these were the two schools of thought that pervaded intellectual circles in London during the seventeenth century. Both poems use elements that are reminiscent of both philosophies that inform a complex reading of the poems.

Poems as Syllogisms

Scholasticism and Humanism both placed an emphasis on Classical texts and the use of Aristotelian logic; however, the rationale behind using logic differed between the two schools of thought. For Scholasticism, logic was an integral tool for demystifying the world and supporting Christian doctrine. Humanists acknowledged the importance of logic yet wanted to use it in a way that rejected religious attachments and emphasized its original use in an ancient, pre-Christian context. Proof of logic's lasting impact on this century is seen in the "proliferation of logic textbooks which are by far the most common type of printed philosophy text throughout the period" (Hutton 35). One of the foundational texts that inspired logical textbooks was Aristotle's *Organon*. The logical syllogisms spelled out in Aristotle's *Organon* were foundational to an English student's education during this time. The *Organon* is a collection of

treatises on logical and scientific method. The third text in the collection is called the *Analytica Priora*, within which Aristotle demonstrates his assertions on logical syllogisms and deductive reasoning. Aristotle provides the groundwork for hypothetical syllogisms when he says, “If B’s being follows necessarily from A’s being, B’s possibility will follow necessarily from A’s possibility” (Aristotle, n. pag.). A simple outline of a hypothetical syllogism is:

Premise 1: If X is true, then Y is true.

Premise 2: X is true.

Premise 3: Therefore, Y is true. (“Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens,” n. pag.)

The simple structure of a logical syllogism would have been a familiar concept to any educated person in London during this time. The formal logic, taught in schools, informs the frequency with which metaphysical poets incorporated Aristotle’s work into their verse.

Donne and Marvell structure “The Flea” and “To His Coy Mistress” in the form of a logical syllogism. Both poems consist of three stanzas and follow the structure of an Aristotelian hypothetical syllogism. In "The Flea," the syllogism unfolds as follows:

Premise 1: If we are of one blood, then we are married: "pampered swells with one blood made of two" (line 8).

Premise 2: We are of one blood because this flea sucked both of us: "It sucked me first, and now sucks thee / And in this flea our two bloods mingled be " (lines 3-4).

Conclusion: Therefore, we are married: "We are almost, nay more than married are" (line 11).

The speaker concludes that he and his beloved are already married. The reader can intuit that the speaker wants to engage in sexual intercourse with the mistress because in his mind that type of

action is required within the bond of marriage. This claim is supported by the sexually charged imagery seen throughout the poem, which is discussed in the next section of this essay.

Marvell expands upon Donne's use of syllogism by incorporating a similar logical structure in "To His Coy Mistress." The structure of the syllogism is as follows:

Premise 1: If we had endless amounts of time, then your coyness would not be a problem: "Had we but world enough and time, / This coyness, lady, were no crime" (lines 1-2).

Premise 2: We do not have endless amounts of time: "But at my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (lines 21-22).

Conclusion: Therefore, we should engage in sexual intercourse: "Now let us sport us while we may" (line 37).

The speaker says that if he and his mistress had all the time in the world, then they would slowly enjoy each other from afar. Next, he reflects on the transience of life, which makes his advances more urgent. Their consummation no longer becomes a slow-growing endeavor, but a race against Time itself. The speaker concludes that the only rational conclusion to this problem is to engage in sexual intercourse "like amorous birds of prey" (line 38).

While it may appear that these poets are harkening back to Medieval Scholasticism, "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" actually use logic in an untraditional manner because both syllogisms commit a logical fallacy. In "The Flea," the fallacy occurs in the second premise, when the speaker equates sharing physical blood through a flea bite with the idea of "being of one blood" as a metaphor for marriage. Equating these terms is a logical equivocation, within which the power of the argument depends on equating the literal mixing of blood with the metaphor of becoming one flesh, which is found in matrimonial vocabulary. In "To His Coy

Mistress," the fallacy occurs in the conclusion. The conclusion that the "lovers" should engage in sexual intercourse does not follow from the premises. This final conclusion is a non sequitur. The accurate conclusion to the syllogism would have been: "therefore, the mistress's coyness is a problem." The issue of coyness could have been remedied through many solutions, not strictly having sexual intercourse. Therefore, the speaker unnecessarily narrows the mistress's options and provides her with a single solution to her coyness in the face of "Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (line 21). These poems undermine the Medieval Scholastic perception that logic was a solution to the mysteries of the world. Both poems grapple with the mystery of death and try to remedy the issue by means of logic; however, as stated above, their logic is fallacious. Therefore, the poems have to resort to another mode of coping with the transience of life, namely the power of desire.

Poems as Desire

Even the most cursory reading of these poems highlights their attempt to use the power of desire, particularly in the form of seduction[2]. The seductive tone in “The Flea” and “To His Coy Mistress” fills in the rhetorical gaps where logic fails. If the speakers cannot accurately persuade their mistresses through logic, then perhaps their use of sexual imagery will work.

“The Flea” contains sexual imagery throughout the poem that calls for intimacy between the two individuals. The speaker proposes the possibility of sexual activity by dwelling on the flea's sucking action throughout the poem. In line 3, the speaker says in reference to the flea, "It sucked me first, and now sucks thee" (line 3). Further, in line 22, the speaker continues to dwell on the action of the flea by saying, "Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?" (line 22).

[2] Seduction was a common theme in literature during the seventeenth century in England and America. The popularity of erotic verse is often attributed to the strict Puritan code, which was becoming more prominent in societies during this time. The Puritan suspicion of bodily misconduct permeated the culture and became a common topic of discussion in literature.

This sexual image is paired with the intermixing of their blood in a single vessel, which the poem highlights in the following phrases: "in this flea our two bloods mingled be" (line 4), and "pampered swells with one blood made of two" (line 8). The speaker highlights the sexual benefits of marriage in line 11 when he says, "we almost, nay more than married are" (line 11), and in line 13 when he defines the flea as "our marriage bed, and marriage temple"[3] (line 13). All of these images subtly suggest that the speaker wants to engage in sexual intercourse with the woman.

In "To His Coy Mistress," the speaker's entreaties are more explicit than those made by the speaker in "The Flea." The poem employs imagery and enjambment to create a seductive tone in the poem. The speaker uses subtle flattery at the beginning of the poem by utilizing endearing imagery such as "our long love's day" (line 4), "my vegetable love" (line 11), and "Nor would I love at lower rate" (line 20). These love-filled images quickly deteriorate into lustful ones: "And into ashes all my lust" (line 30), "like amorous birds of prey" (line 38), and "tear our pleasures rough with strife" (line 43). The speaker begins by trying to woo his mistress but reveals his lust-filled intentions as the poem progresses. Further, the speaker uses enjambment to narrow the metaphorical space that divides the two characters. Without consideration of the line break, the speaker tells the mistress that she is "by the Indian Ganges' side" (line 5) and that he resides "by the tide / of Humber" (line 6-7). Geographically, the distance between the Ganges River and Humber River spans over two continents and thousands of miles, thereby creating immense distance between the speaker and the mistress. However, the poem uses enjambment to

[3] The marital images in this portion of the poem suggest a clandestine marriage, which was a common avenue toward marriage in seventeenth-century London. Clandestine marriages allowed for young people to get married in secret. Donne was familiar with this form of marriage because it was the mode by which he wed his wife, Anne More, in secret. Clandestine marriages were rendered illegal as a result of Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753, which was an Act of Parliament that "made it illegal to marry without a church service, . . . and transferred the control of marriage from the ecclesiastical to the secular courts" ("Hardwicke's Marriage Act," n. pag.).

suggest that the speaker and his mistress are not as far apart as the language might suggest. In line six, the poem says, “Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide” (line 6). According to the logic of the poem, the phrase, “Shouldst rubies find” (line 6), modifies what the mistress will be doing on the shores of the Ganges River. The line break undermines this logic by placing the speaker’s action on the same poetic line. If the sixth line of the poem is then read as its own unit of meaning, then the speaker is the one who is looking for rubies from the Ganges River, thereby narrowing the geographical distance between the mistress and the speaker. By using enjambment in these lines, the poem blurs the lines between the shores of Humber and the Ganges. Showing the mistress her proximity to the speaker gives the speaker a greater chance of bewitching her under his enchantments. The speaker makes his mistress proximal, which increases the chances of her sympathizing with his plea.

A closer look at the images in these poems reveals their complex relationship to the entirety of the poem. While both poems use traditional romantic imagery, as stated previously, the poems also use non-romantic imagery in their attempt to convey romantic ideas. In "The Flea," the speaker uses the image of a bug bite to entice his beloved. This entirely unromantic image appears strange within this context. If the speaker wishes to romantically woo his mistress, then it is expected that he would use a more enticing image than that of a barn animal parasite. Likewise, in "To His Coy Mistress," the speaker incorporates images such as "worms shall try / That long-preserved virginity" (lines 27-28) and "vegetable love" (line 11). The reminder that worms will eventually feed on the mistress’s decaying body lacks romantic value. Love poetry typically uses language with a romantic connotation. References to worms and the word "vegetative" do not fit within that expectation. Scholars argue over the meaning of "vegetable

love."[4] Jules Brody suggests several options for how to interpret this phrase. On the one hand, it could be using the philosophical denotation of the word, meaning "sub-animal and sub-rational" (Brody 54). On the other hand, it could align with the sexually charged tone of the poem, about which Brody states, "the reader who arrives at the words 'vegetable love' and thinks 'erection,' would certainly not be violating the spirit or the final thrust of Marvell's poem" (54). The multiplicity of potential meanings behind the image proves its cryptic, unromantic, and unpersuasive nature. These images fall outside the expectation of typical love poem images.

The peculiar images in "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" are difficult to understand because they are actually conceits. A literary device used often by metaphysical poets, a conceit is a "figure of thought, . . . which ingeniously compares dissimilar things and ideas, cultivating thereby surprise, followed, ideally, by admiration and insight" ("Conceit," n. pag.). The use of conceits adds to the unpersuasive nature of the poems because it introduces obscurity into the poems, which works in opposition to the assumption of clarity and intimacy found in romantic literature. The speakers place the burden of interpretation on their mistresses. J.V. Cunningham notes the far-fetched nature of conceits and suggests that they are perhaps unintended to be visualized in the mind. Cunningham states, "There seems to be relatively few [images] in the poem if one means by 'image' what people usually do—a descriptive phrase that invites the reader to project a sensory construction" (Cunningham 35). The complexity of these images works in opposition to simplicity and adds a sense of confusion and undue density to the poems.

The speakers in both poems ultimately fail at using the power of desire to persuade their mistresses to engage in sexual intercourse with them. Both poems are dramatic monologues,

[4] Marvell evokes Aristotle in his imagery by using the phrase "vegetable love." It is particularly interesting that this phrase appears in the poem because it evokes the three types of souls proposed by Aristotle: vegetable, animal, and rational. Aristotle creates a gradation of being with the vegetative soul being the most rudimentary form of existence and the rational soul being the most complex.

which means that the female voices are not physically written on the page; however, the reactions of the speakers suggest that the women were not tricked through persuasion. In “The Flea,” the speaker exclaims, “yet thou triumph’st” (line 23), which suggests his mistress’s refusal. The mistress’s reaction in “To His Coy Mistress” is not as explicit at the mistress’s reaction in “The Flea,” yet the assumption that she rejects the speaker is illustrated when the speaker acknowledges the mistress’s enflamed complexion as a result of his entreaties.

Action, Reaction, and Agency

In “The Flea” and “To His Coy Mistress,” neither logic nor desire has the ability to produce a sustainable perspective on how to cope with the transience of life. The speakers’ persuasion fails and the transience of life remains a mystery. This realization appears to forward a nihilistic perspective of the world where the realities of human experience are unintelligible to humans. On the contrary, the poems actually reject a nihilistic conclusion because they emphasize the agency of the individuals presented in the poems. The seemingly inconclusive endings do not deter the characters from their will to choose. Both speakers contemplate death as a reality that all will eventually encounter; however, this realization does not lead the speakers toward despair. Rather, in light of death’s certainty, they choose to act—their action being seduction. While they cannot control the length of time they will live, they reclaim their agency by choosing how they are going to live their lives.

In response to the speakers’ will to seduce, the mistresses in both poems exercise their autonomy by refusing to accept the speakers’ advancements. In "The Flea," the speaker acknowledges that the mistress has killed the flea when he says, "Cruel and sudden, hast thou since / Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?" (lines 19-20). When the mistress crushes the flea, she also crushes their "marriage bed, and marriage temple" (line 13). Further, in "To His

Coy Mistress," the speaker acknowledges his mistress blushing when he says, “Now therefore, while thy youthful hue / Sits on thy skin like morning dew” (lines 33-34). The poem does not reveal if her red complexion is rooted in embarrassment or anger. It can be assumed, however, that her flushed reaction is in reference to the speaker’s language, which threatens her will to remain coy. The use of the word “coy” to describe the mistress in the title of the poem suggests prior situations in which the mistress reacted with coyness to the advances made by the speaker. Her coyness begins to define her in such a way that highlights her will to refuse. The mistress’s label as a coy woman and her reaction in defense of her coyness highlight her agency in the situation. The emphasis placed on agency in these poems is not nihilistic but rather aligns with the celebration of autonomy found in Renaissance Humanism.

The celebration of agency is crucial to understanding the tenets of Renaissance Humanism. English intellectuals developed an understanding of the autonomy found in Renaissance Humanism by reading English translations of works from Italian thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola and Petrarch. English scholars also encountered Renaissance Humanist texts and Classical texts by learning Latin during their school years. In these texts, English citizens read literature, namely *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux* and *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, that explores the limitless heights people can reach through their own agency. Reading the foundational texts of Renaissance Humanism introduced the English people to the autonomy that characterized the movement. During the English Renaissance, scholars began to realize the tenets of Humanism, “the definition and celebration of the human individual, as a being in whom certain rights inhere precisely by virtue of being human” (“Humanism,” n. pag.). The celebration of autonomy found in Humanist texts pervades the situations in “The Flea” and “To His Coy Mistress.”

Especially in these poems, Renaissance Humanist autonomy is expressed through carpe diem philosophy. Donne and Marvell's use of carpe diem philosophy develops out of the Classical Tradition and specifically comes from Horace's *Odes*, within which the words "Carpe Diem" (Horace 1.11.8.) are addressed to a woman and are "an injunction to abandon attempts to predict the future in order to savor the present; . . . and sexual pleasure is implicitly part of what is at stake" ("Carpe Diem," n. pag.). Carpe diem philosophy acknowledges the eventuality of death and the uncertainty of an afterlife but does not dwell on the futility of death. Under a Classical interpretation, carpe diem is not a call toward despair in the face of death, as is seen in nihilistic philosophy. Rather, carpe diem is an indictment to act and express one's will to choose. It is a philosophy that acknowledges that there are things in life people cannot control; rather than letting that knowledge become debilitating, carpe diem asserts that individuals should claim agency over the things in life that they can affect through their actions. This perspective is supported in "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" as the characters in both poems assert their agency in light of the realization that they will eventually die. Neither logic nor desire can provide explanation or consolation for the mystery of death, but human agency and individual choice provide purpose for those who choose to act.

Conclusion

While the logical structure of "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" appear to place these poems within the Medieval Scholastic tradition, the poems actually are aligned with the Renaissance Humanist tradition. The poems incorporate fallacious syllogisms and unpersuasive romance that undermine the ability of logic or desire to cope with the transience of life. Through this realization, the speakers and mistresses maintain their autonomy and refuse to embrace nihilistic conclusions.

It is important for a modern audience to strive toward a philosophical understanding of "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" because these poems were created during one of the most revolutionary periods of Western intellectual history, namely the Renaissance. This period created a unique intellectual climate as scholars began rediscovering texts from ancient Greece and Rome. These rediscoveries occurred within the tense political and religious climate in Europe during the Reformation, which created an increased sense of autonomy. As the Medieval world gave way to the Modern era, the way people perceived the limits of human nature changed as well. The Modern era placed more of an emphasis on the limitless of human capacity, which encouraged creativity and inventiveness in individuals. The creative climate during the Renaissance produced culturally rich artistic artifacts, which demonstrated the shift between Medieval and Modern thought. Artists paid homage to the traditions of the past, while simultaneously embracing the spirit of the Modern era. During this shift, Renaissance thinkers began laying the foundation for Modern intellectual thought by thinking of new ways to incorporate the Western world's Classical foundation into Modern ideas about personhood.

When approaching texts from distant historical periods, such as the Renaissance, it is crucial to develop an honest interpretation that does not skew the cultural integrity of the text. The work of metaphysical poets is often unduly criticized because people believe it supports a modern interpretation of carpe diem philosophy, which sees carpe diem as a destructive and nihilistic interpretation of the world. On the contrary, the carpe diem philosophy in these poems reflects the Classical interpretation of carpe diem and actually maintains an uplifting perspective of the world. Further, it is important to develop an educated understanding of the metaphysical poets because of their important contribution to the English literary lineage.[5] Interpretations of

[5] The metaphysical poets had a profound effect on the writings of modern poets, T.S. Eliot in particular. T.S. Eliot enjoyed the style of metaphysical poetry so much that he began incorporating some of its methods into his own

these poems that are not well researched create the potential for misinterpreting more modern texts that use techniques and language originating in metaphysical poetry, as seen in "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress."

Works Cited

Aristotle. *Prior Analytics*. Translated by A.J. Jenkinson, MIT Classics, 2009, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/prior.html.

Brody, Jules. "The Resurrection of the Body: A New Reading of Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress.'" *ELH Journal*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1989, pp. 53-79.

"Carpe Diem." *The Classical Tradition*, edited by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis, Harvard UP, 2013, Credo Reference.

Cioffi, Frank. "Intention and Interpretation in Criticism." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 64, 1963-1964, pp. 85-106.

"Conceit." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Roland Green, et al., Princeton UP, 4th edition, 2012.

Cunningham, J.V. "Logic and Lyric." *Modern Philology*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1953, pp. 33-41.

Donne, John. "The Flea." *The Riverside Anthology of Literature*, edited by Douglas Hunt, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, p. 473.

Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." *Collected Poems*, 1963, The Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/44212/the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock.

poetry. In his famous poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot alludes to the opening line of "To His Coy Mistress"—"Had we but world enough and time" (line 1)—when the speaker of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" feverishly repeats, "There will be time" (lines 23, 26, 28, and 37). Frank Cioffi acknowledges this connection in his critical essay, "Intention and Interpretation in Criticism."

"Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753)." *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of English Literature*, edited by M. Wynne-Davies, Bloomsbury, 2nd edition, 1997.

"Humanism." *The Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, edited by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Jennifer Speake, Market House Books Ltd, 1987.

Hutton, Sarah. *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford UP, 2015.

Marvell, Andrew. "To His Coy Mistress." *The Riverside Anthology of Literature*, edited by Douglas Hunt, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, p. 494.

"Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens." *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, Britannica Digital Learning, 2017, Credo Reference.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature.* Oxford UP, 1992.

"Scholasticism." *Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by I.A. McFarland, D.A.S. Fergusson, K. Kilby, Cambridge UP, 2011.

Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our Worldview*. Ballatine Books, 1991.

Weimann, Robert. "'Bifold Authority' in Reformation Discourse: Authorization, Representation, and Early Modern 'Meaning'," *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory*, edited by Jane L. Smarr, U of Illinois P, 1993.

Essay

Special Topic: Gender

Bridget Rose

Gender Identity in *The Passion of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity*

Vibia Perpetua was a young Roman woman of noble descent living in Carthage in the early third century. She belonged to a prominent family, received a good education, and held a conventional place in society. Yet, at the age of twenty-two, Perpetua was arrested along with a female slave named Felicity and three other male catechumens for defying the emperor's edict that Roman citizens must not convert to Christianity. While in prison, Perpetua kept a diary—the earliest extant Christian literature written by a woman—that offers an intensely personal account of her arrest and the visions she had as she awaited execution, including one in which she had to be transformed into a man to achieve her victory. In the days leading to her death, Perpetua rejected her traditional roles of wife, daughter, and mother to claim a new identity in Christ, raising important issues regarding faith and gender.

The Passion of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity "consistently draws attention to sex and gender, men and women, the masculine and the feminine," even as the very title, which names only the two women, encourages reading through lens of gender (Williams 56). A more accurate title, in terms of the work's content, would have included Saturus, not Felicity, alongside Perpetua. As the catechumens' teacher, Saturus plays a prominent role in the narrative and, like Perpetua, has a vision that is recorded and preserved after his death. Ironically, while the title excludes a major male figure, "Perpetua's diary as a whole almost entirely excludes other women," including the

titular Felicity (Williams 62). It is not Perpetua but the unknown redactor, or narrator, who records the story of Felicity's pregnancy and pre-term delivery in prison. Without this addition, Felicity would appear only in the title. These complicated shifts, which include and exclude gender in curious and unexpected ways, should alert us to the radical repositioning that informs the text as a whole.

As a daughter of Rome in the late second century, Perpetua had a particular upbringing, education, and family life. Her father, who was likely a high-ranking local official, would have been the undisputed head of the household. In upper-class Roman homes in particular, the father-daughter bond would be especially strong, and Perpetua was her father's only daughter. She would have felt the weight of her father's (and society's) expectations for her: marry well, raise a family, and be respectable—forging, as Joyce Salisbury notes, "political and social ties for the *pater familias*" (6). Such respectability was viewed as the foundation of Roman society and was taken very seriously. There were Roman fathers who killed their daughters rather than allowing them to bring shame to the family name. For instance, the historian Livy recounts the stories of two women sacrificed for family honor and the good of the state. The first is Horatia, slain by her brother Horatius for mourning her fiancé, an enemy of Rome. Though Horatius is punished for his crime, the siblings' father proclaims that "his daughter had been killed for [a worthy] cause" (Livy 32). The other young Roman woman is Verginia. Her death in 451 BCE is compared to the death of the noble Lucretia, which led to the founding of the Roman Republic in 509 BCE (185). Yet, Verginia does not die by her own hand, as Lucretia does. Her father kills her in the forum rather than allowing her to be sentenced to slavery and given over to a corrupt official. Livy records the father's final words to his daughter before he stabs her through the heart with a knife he has grabbed from a nearby butcher: "I am asserting your freedom in the only way I know

how" (189). Her death prompts an outcry among the people at "the *necessity* that had driven her father to commit such an act" (Livy 189-190; emphasis added). To protect a daughter's honor and the honor of the family, such extreme and horrific actions were, if not admired, at least justified in the Roman Republic and the early days of the Empire. As a good daughter of Rome, Perpetua would have known these stories and embraced these lessons.

It appears that, until the age of twenty-two, Perpetua had done exactly what was expected of her. Her diary reveals that she is thoughtful, obedient, and well-educated; moreover, she has produced a male heir. The narrator's description of Perpetua in Thomas Heffernan's 2012 translation is that she is "well born, liberally educated, and honorably married" (126). Craig Williams points out that the narrator's words emphasize Perpetua's sex "by means of the threefold feminine participles, while the third of the three adverbs asserts her gendered status as *matrona* or respectably married woman" (59). Though we know nothing of Perpetua's husband, we can assume that their marriage, like most in Roman upper-class society, was arranged with her father's blessing. While the father could transfer authority over a daughter to her husband, the marriage itself did not necessarily effect such a change. And it appears this transfer does not occur with Perpetua. Retaining his role as *pater familias*, her father, not her husband, comes to her in prison and demands obedience to himself, the Roman law, and the national gods.

Among the most poignant passages in the *Passion* are those in which Perpetua's father pleads with her to renounce her faith. He comes to her first while she and her fellow catechumens are still under surveillance. Using a water pitcher lying on the table nearby as an illustration, she explains to her father that, just as that object can be only what it is, "In the same way, I am unable to call myself other than that which I am, a Christian" (126). As Elizabeth Castelli notes, Perpetua uses "rationality and logic" to combat the emotional appeals of her

father's argument; she demonstrates "striking clarity about her identification as a Christian" and she never wavers (87). A few days after this encounter with her father, she and her companions are baptized. And a few days after that, they are taken to prison.

Esteemed among her fellow prisoners, Perpetua seeks to discern on their behalf whether their imprisonment "be suffering or freedom" (127)—a passion or deliverance; in response to her prayer, God grants her a series of visions. The tone of this request is remarkable and indicates Perpetua's ascendancy within the Christian community. She does not ask in a submissive manner, but rather she speaks with the sense of a forceful demand, as if requesting something to which she is entitled (Castelli 88). Perpetua's first vision is of a magnificent ladder stretching into heaven. The foot of the ladder is guarded by a dragon or serpent-like beast. All along the ladder are sharp objects so that, Perpetua tells us, "if any that went up took not good heed or looked not upward, he would be torn and his flesh cling to the iron" (127). Urged upward by Saturus, who is not originally arrested with the group but who later turns himself in, Perpetua steps on the head of the great serpent and ascends the ladder unharmed. Though neither she nor the narrator directly cites the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, the language of the text implies a connection. Rather than considering Perpetua as a type of Mary, for she is explicitly not a virgin, perhaps she is better understood in this vision as a Christ figure who triumphs over evil and mediates that victory for her fellow believers.

Immediately after her first vision, her father comes to her in prison: "Give up your pride; do not destroy us all" (127), he pleads from what Perpetua acknowledges as his fatherly love for her. Here we see a stunning reversal of roles as the *pater familias* grovels at the feet of Perpetua with tears in his eyes. Perpetua understands the significance of this moment, noting that "he no longer called me daughter [*filia*], but lady [*domina*]" (128). It is clear at this point, Castelli

writes, that "the power dynamics between father and daughter have shifted" (89). When the personal appeals fail, Perpetua's father speaks to her not just as a daughter but as a citizen; he challenges her to offer a sacrifice for the good of Rome. But to his repeated entreaties, Perpetua replies, "I will not" (128). Upon further questioning by the authorities, she gives the reason for her refusal: "I am a Christian" (128). Though she acknowledges grieving "for [her father's] unhappy old age" (128), she cheerfully accepts her sentence of death in the arena and reports that she is supernaturally freed from her need to nurse her child; her breast milk literally dries up "as God willed it" (128). Here, a tension emerges for modern readers who may be bothered by her abandonment of her child. Yet for early Christians, "maternity remain[ed] tied to feminine sexuality and its reproductive potential"; it was "regarded as necessary and yet simultaneously suspicious in relationship to personal sanctification" (Weitbrecht 157). It is only once she has severed the ties with her father and son and claimed a new identity that we see her concerns become those of the "*civitas Dei*" (Castelli 91).

Additional visions follow during her time in prison: a vision of her younger brother who died of a disfiguring disease, first in torment and then refreshed and restored through her prayers, and another vision in which she transforms into a man to defeat an ill-favored Egyptian. This is probably the most frequently discussed and most perplexing of Perpetua's four visions, but she interprets it for her readers with striking simplicity: "And I understood that I should fight, not with beasts but against the devil; but I knew mine was the victory" (130). It is easy to point to this passage as an authentication of Perpetua's complete and final gender transformation. She has rejected her female roles of daughter, wife, and mother. Gail Corrington (along with Margaret Miles and others) concludes that Perpetua has made herself male in order to achieve spiritual

empowerment. Perpetua "has terminated all of her social roles," Corrington writes, "and only as a male athlete is she victorious" (24).

Of the original five catechumens arrested, one dies in prison, but the other three men become the first to face the wild beasts: a leopard, a bear, and a wild boar. The redactor records, "For the young women, however, the devil had prepared a wild cow—not a traditional practice—matching their sex with that of the beast" (134). But when the crowds see them stripped, as was customary at such events in order to further humiliate the accused, they cannot bear to look on their nudity, and the women are called back to be clothed. Not only are the women *not* virgins, but the description also emphasizes the results of their sexuality through recent childbirth and lactation. Though Perpetua and Felicity have both rejected their traditional gender roles and are facing death in a masculine fashion, the crowd still sees them as young women and "shudders" (134). According to Williams, this "encounter with the cow puts both their femaleness and their femininity . . . quite brutally on display" (67). Perpetua is the first to be thrown by the heifer, and, rising from the ground, she becomes more mindful of her appearance than any pain. Surviving the encounter with the beast, Perpetua herself, alone among the martyrs, must guide her slayer's hand to her throat after he initially misses and strikes a bone. She faces death with a typically gladiatorial boldness, and the narrator tells us that one so great could not be slain had she not willed it. In her work *Carnal Knowing*, Margaret Miles suggests that "Perpetua's body could represent 'male' heroism, commitment, and courage even while it remained the object for the male gaze" (61).

Throughout this martyrdom account and the hagiographical celebration of the martyrs' masculine bravery and sanctifying deeds, there remains, according to Latinist Craig Williams, "an accumulation of feminine participles and adjectives" that, in turn, is held in tension with

other "details of the language [that] suggest the concealing and hiding of sexually charged [feminine] parts of the body" (67-68). Moreover, as Williams notes, "Perpetua's compelling blend of masculine and feminine has usually been read in connection with early Christian imagery, in particular women 'making themselves male'" (69),[1] and yet, "Perpetua also invites being read against the backdrop of narratives of women with masculine qualities in the Latin literary tradition" (Williams 69), such as Lucretia, Horatia, and Verginia. Clearly, then, it is impossible to engage this text without confronting the myriad repositionings and recontextualizations that emerge around questions of sex and gender, questions which, rather than being answered, seem only to raise more questions.

Works Cited

Castelli, Elizabeth A. *Martyrdom and Memory*. Columbia UP, 2004.

Corrington, Gail Paterson. *Her Image of Salvation: Female Saviors and Formative Christianity*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.

Livy. *The Rise of Rome: Books 1—5*. Translated by T. J. Luce. Oxford UP, 1998.

Miles, Margaret R. *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*. Wipf & Stock, 2006.

Perpetua. *The Passion of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity*. Translated by Thomas J. Heffernan. Oxford UP, 2012.

Salisbury, Joyce E. *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*. Routledge, 1997.

[1] Here, Williams notes a reference to the Gospel of Thomas, in which Jesus says he will make Mary male, as well as the martyrdom accounts of Thecla and Blandina.

Weitbrecht, Julia. “Maternity and Sainthood in the Medieval Perpetua Legend.” *Perpetua's Passions: Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to the* Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis, edited by Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano. Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 150-166.

Williams, Craig. “Perpetua's Gender. A Latinist Reads the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*.” *Perpetua's Passions: Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to the* Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis, edited by Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano. Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 54-77.

Essay

Special Topic: Gender

Katie-Bryn Hubbard

Go Wes, Young Man: Masculine Relationships in Wes Anderson's *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited*

Introduction: Nuancing the Cinematic Depiction of the Masculine

In response to an interview question about the production of his first feature film, *Bottle Rocket*, Wes Anderson said, "[a] lot of it was our attempt to capture what we felt we were experiencing right then. It's one of those films where the people in the movie were the same people it was semi-about right at that moment in time" (Seitz 63). Whether or not the characters in Anderson's films are intended to represent real people, it is important that Anderson develops the perspectives of men and the relationships they have with each other from real life. According to the *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, "Men . . . are usually depicted in high status roles in which they dominate women" (Jacobs, n. pag.). The representation of men in American film is dictated by the patriarchal system, which determines that men must engage in strict performances of traditional masculinity. The men in Anderson's films, however, behave differently. The encyclopedia article goes on: "Few studies have found any movement toward more realistic, nuanced, or diverse media depictions of gender roles . . ." (Jacobs, n. pag.). However, David Buchbinder remarks that there is some contemporary cinema that seems to be enacting "a re-evaluation of gender performance and of masculinity, in particular" (234). This is the niche into which Anderson's films fall.

David Green writes that the number of films carried by two male protagonists has risen since the late 1980s. He suggests that this trend indicates "that the burden of male representation must be carried by two stars rather than one" (22-23). Anderson uses the multi-protagonist format to explore a variety of issues relating to masculinity. He takes men and their relationships as his subject in many of his films, including the two that are the focus of this thesis. While he often focuses on relationships between problematic father figures and their children, some of his most insightful character studies concern friendships and brotherly relationships between male characters that are "more realistic [and] nuanced" (Jacobs, n. pag.). Anderson crafts male characters that exhibit traditional masculine behaviors concerning physical aggression, sexual maturity, and suburban living/fatherhood. However, the interactions between the male protagonists depicted in Anderson's films—characters Anthony, Dignan, and Bob in *Bottle Rocket*, and Francis, Peter, and Jack in *The Darjeeling Limited*—assert that men can overcome these impulses and anxieties by engaging in emotionally supportive and validating friendships. These relationships restore masculine power, indicating that men both can and should extend friendship to each other to overcome the anxiety associated with gender performance.

As with many developing auteurs, Anderson's earlier work is less refined in its treatment of this thematic material, but he establishes this perspective of male relationships in his first release *Bottle Rocket* and later hones it to a fine point in *The Darjeeling Limited.* I will take this development as a structuring device in this thesis. The first section will establish the theory of gender, drawing on the work of Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, to provide a framework within which I will proceed with my investigation. The following section will explore Anderson's depictions of masculine physical aggression and the ways in which men overcome this impulse within friendship with each other. The following two sections will conduct similar investigations

regarding masculine anxiety concerning sexual maturity and participation in suburban life and fatherhood. From these investigations, I will draw conclusions regarding Anderson's "more realistic [and] nuanced" depiction of masculinity and how it may be applied to men in contemporary society (Jacobs, n. pag).

Gender Performance and Homosociality

Before launching into an investigation of Anderson's male characters, it is important to understand gender from a theoretical perspective. Gender theorist Judith Butler asserts the idea that gender is not inherent, but rather is constructed by an individual's pattern of behavior. Butler writes, "[Gender] is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again . . ." (526). When she says, "[Gender] is an act which has been rehearsed," Butler refers to the social construction of gender. When a man performs a masculine "act," it is because men as a whole have been rehearsing—that is, practicing and repeating—that action. As a result, it has become typical of masculine behavior. When a man responds to a threat by performing a violent act, it is because men have rehearsed this reaction for generations, and it has become the socially accepted correct masculine response. Masculinity is not innate, and therefore must be constantly performed and maintained. Each action must be calculated (whether consciously or unconsciously) to establish one's gender.

This performance of gender is inherently public. Butler says, "it is clear that although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is immediately public as well . . . indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame" (526). Butler's theory of gender thus takes on its performative aspect. Gender consists of acts which are performed and which

publicly define one's gender, rather than being inherent. Society punishes and ostracizes those whose gender performances fail to conform to one side or the other of the gender binary. This necessity of successfully performing one's gender creates anxiety, particularly as it affects men, and this anxiety all too often dictates relationships between men.

Eve Sedgwick investigates the effects of this anxiety on what she terms "homosocial" relationships (referring to relationships between individuals of the same gender). Sedgwick states, ". . . much of the most useful recent writing about patriarchal structures suggests that 'obligatory heterosexuality' is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a necessary consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage" (698). In other words, men are required to engage in homophobic acts to maintain their coding as heterosexual. For example, two heterosexual men must take care to use homophobic language and engage in strictly heterosexual behaviors to ensure their status as masculine men. They also must not appear to be too friendly with each other for fear of being perceived as homosexual. Within such a system, failure to engage in "heterosexual marriage" as a "performative act" of the type Butler describes constitutes failure to perform masculinity within the social system. As Butler states, "Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments . . ." (528). This failure results in one's being labeled homosexual or effeminate, as the opposite of heterosexual. Homosexuality, therefore, takes on a negative connotation, and that negativity generates homophobia.

Sedgwick contrasts this dichotomous nature of masculine relationships with the less polarizing nature of feminine relationships. Sedgwick writes, "the diacritical opposition between the 'homosocial' and the 'homosexual' seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men. . . . an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and

valuations links lesbianism with other forms of women's attention to women" (697). It seems that female relationships do not fall into such distinct categories as either "straight" or "gay," but rather exist along a continuum. This more fluid conception of gender performance within female relationships allows women to engage in relationship with one another and maintain their heterosexuality without also engaging in homophobic acts. Relationships between women are allowed to serve as structures that promote intimacy, vulnerability, and community between women without fear of being socially "punished."

The relationships between men in Anderson's films are structured more along the lines of the continuum Sedgwick describes as structuring feminine relationships, rather than the dichotomy of homosexuality vs. heterosexuality that dictates male-male relationships. His films posit that men can relate to one another in such a way that promotes vulnerability and community without fear of ostracizing. *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* in particular explore this idea by demonstrating how men can overcome impulses toward violence as well as sexual and socioeconomic inadequacy by entering into relationships with one another.

Relationship Structures

Both *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* revolve around relationships between three central male characters, rather than having one protagonist. Brannon M. Hancock writes, "Anderson's films are ensemble pieces, focusing not exclusively on a single protagonist struggling against a single antagonist, but rather on a cast of characters who find the identification and meaning they seek in communion with others" (9). The structuring of these narratives around three central characters rather than one establishes the theme of male relationships as central to these characters' lives and identities. Additionally, "communion with others" is a means of seeking "meaning." In the context of gender identity construction, this

meaning refers to masculine identity and the attainment of masculine power, albeit through the formation of friendships rather than through performing masculine signifiers.

The triangles of characters in *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* take different forms, growing more sophisticated between releases. The men of Anderson's debut film, *Bottle Rocket,* can almost hardly be said to be men at all. Rather they are young boys trying to perform the part of grown men; their relationships have a child-like quality. Dignan is the head of the little triumvirate, as the leader of their coming enterprise in crime. His plans for said crime spree, as well as the next several decades of his and Anthony's lives, are outlined in magic marker in a spiral-bound notebook, insinuating the childishness with which Dignan approaches his life. Anthony is likewise immature—he lacks direction from the moment he leaves his mental hospital in the opening scene (00:00:45). He lacks knowledge of how to function on his own in a world where "[He] can't come home. [He's] an adult" (00:10:12). Finally, the third member of the group, Bob Maplethorpe, is perhaps the most belittled of them all. Bob is rich, but his larger and meaner older brothers bully him nevertheless. All three men lack the ability to function as adult men and act more like overgrown children.

Their response to this state of uncertainty about adulthood is to remain unwaveringly loyal to one another. For example, the film opens with Dignan helping his friend, Anthony, "escape" from a mental hospital (00:00:45). As Anthony explains to the doctor who comes to see him off, Dignan does not understand that his stay in the facility was voluntary—anything that distracts from the ultimate goal of becoming mob bosses is outside the realm of Dignan's thoughts. Nevertheless, Anthony is Dignan's best friend, so out of loyalty he will aid his friend in his daring "escape," complete with a rope made of sheets and bird-call signals. From the opening scene, therefore, their relationship is defined by Dignan's loyalty to Anthony. This

loyalty manifests itself in a childish display—Dignan treats the rescue mission with the seriousness befitting a genuine prison break—but it is loyalty nonetheless. Bob, meanwhile, just wants to be part of the group. He strives to be a team player, and he seems to genuinely like spending time with Dignan and Anthony, even if he goes along with their crime scheme only for lack of anything better to do.

The Whitman brothers of Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited* also have a tightly knit friendship, but their intimacy is made even more complex and mature by the traditional nuclear family structure the men assume. Indeed, within the system of on-the-nose symbolism the film employs, each of the boys assumes a role that corresponds to a role in the traditional nuclear family unit. Francis Whitman, the oldest, has taken on the role of the mother. His name, which can fit both a man or a woman, long hair, and two different shoes are only the most obvious implications of the dual male and female roles Francis occupies as a brother and a mother figure. Peter Whitman is the counterpart to Francis; he occupies the role of the father within the relationships between these three brothers. Peter has a unique relationship with his pair of glasses, which is revealed to have belonged to their father, complete with his old prescription. Peter literally and figuratively tries to see the world as his father did, despite the fact that attempting to conform to this example of masculinity is—quite literally—giving him headaches. Finally, Jack Whitman is the child of the family. Multiple shots situate Jack as a child looking to one of his figurative parents for comfort or for an example. After a particularly hard evening, Jack insists that Francis shift over that he might lie down on the bed next to him, akin to a child climbing into bed with his mother after having a bad dream (00:19:08). Shortly thereafter, Peter leans down over them, visually defining him as a father figure leaning over as a protector. These three men make up the most intimate unit of community there is—a family.

Masculinity and Physical Aggression

Wes Anderson's first film, *Bottle Rocket*, revolves around characters who are struggling to grow up. The characters exhibit a child-like propensity for throwing temper tantrums and striking at one another both verbally and physically. Acts of lashing out in anger are traditionally considered performative of masculinity. However, the characters in *Bottle Rocket* respond to such aggressions with renewed friendship. Far from coding the characters as homosexual or effeminate, however, this displaces the source of masculine power from the performance of traditional masculine traits to the friendships, and that allows the men to heal. The harm done to the relationships is overcome, and the friendships experience renewed intimacy.

There is a scene early in *Bottle Rocket* where Dignan, Anthony, and Bob go out to practice shooting and pick out the gun they will use to commit the first of a string of robberies (00:13:52). Several elements of this scene define these characters—Dignan in particular—as young boys trying to perform their manhood. In each of these shots, the characters are pointing and shooting their guns from right to left. All of this is accompanied by lively guitar music.

These formal elements define the innocence and boyishness of these characters. The guns themselves can be read as phallic images, indicating that the boys are seeking the most and best masculine power they can find. However, the boys practice shooting their guns pointing from the right side of the frame to the left. Lateral motion in that direction, since it is the opposite of the direction in which we read, can function within Western cinema to represent an aberration (Renée, n. pag.). The fact that Dignan, Anthony, and Bob point their guns in that direction, visually signifies their lack of knowledge of how to wield weapons; they are boys playing at being men but not, as yet, succeeding. The lighthearted music emphasizes the innocence of the scene, as the boys attempt to assume masculine power for themselves. Thus the characters are

defined as overgrown boys who are attempting to take manhood by force by performing such a traditionally masculine act as gun wielding.

Dignan is further cemented into his role as the over-eager ringleader when he waves around the largest of the guns and mouths, "This is it" (00:14:18). Here the gun functions as a phallic image; Dignan has chosen for his mission the biggest weapon, and presumes to possess the most masculine power. Dignan goes on to play with the gun for a few extra seconds, brandishing it like a character in an action movie—he appears to be a child pretending to be a man. This renders Dignan a somewhat silly character, or, in the words of David Buchbinder, a schlemiel. According to Buchbinder, the schlemiel is "a sort of cosmic fool" (229). This definition fits Dignan—his boyishness more often than not translates into foolish optimism.

A "cosmic fool," however, cannot successfully achieve masculine power merely by wielding a gun. He must attain his masculinity through other means. Buchbinder goes on: "Narratives that represent the inadequately . . . masculine male may be read . . . [as] indicating another way of being male that is not dependent on traditional notions of the masculine" (234). *Bottle Rocket* seeks to depict this "other way" by forcing Dignan to rely on his masculine friendships to maintain his masculine power. The following scene depicts Dignan throwing his first temper tantrum, which culminates in Anthony's extension of friendship to him and the film's first demonstration of friendship as a healing agent for masculine power. The target practice scene cuts to an interior shot of the boys sitting at a table planning their mission (00:14:30). Dignan sits at the head of the table and in the center of the frame, in the leadership position, again indicating his assumption of manhood. As he lays out his plans for the first official robbery that will lead the boys down the path to financial success and easy living, Bob cannot resist playing with the gun. This annoys Dignan—Bob's attempt to wield the gun for

himself indicates a threat to Dignan's absolute masculine authority in their organization. To make matters worse, Bob reminds Dignan that he paid for the gun, injuring Dignan's masculinity as it is defined by material wealth (a traditional signifier of masculine power). Appropriately, Dignan becomes angry. "He's out" he declares to Anthony in reference to Bob; "You're out too." He says, again to Anthony, "And I don't think I'm in either," and with that he storms off (00:15:42). A commotion of yelling and fighting can be heard off screen—Dignan is acting out physically on his anger. In this context, these words and actions constitute an act of aggression. When Dignan's masculinity is threatened, he responds aggressively toward the group—he dissolves it out of anger—and by continuing to rant and rage off-screen.

What solves the problem, however, is Anthony's going and bringing Dignan back to the group and demonstrating the healing power of masculine friendship. Anthony, Dignan's best friend, follows Dignan outside and within seconds he is ready to come back. When he does, he immediately apologizes for his "poor leadership" and expresses his concern that "the team is not really gelling" (00:16:37). To these statements Anthony replies, "Hey, we are a team." Bob chimes in: "Yeah. Team." This establishes the pattern that the major male characters in both *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* follow: When one man acts impulsively on his anger toward another man, the way that relationship can be healed is by discontinuing the performative act toward aggression in favor of reentering the relationship. When Dignan grows angry and performs violence upon his team, rather than respond with more anger, Anthony rises to bring him back to the group. Dignan then releases his own anger, and the three men are a team once again. The friendship is reestablished, and Dignan is restored to his position of masculine power.

Note, however, that the three characters are not portrayed as homosexual as a result of their restored friendship. Rather, the status quo is reassumed. Anthony reinstates Dignan to his

seat at the head of the table and his position in the center of the frame, and Dignan continues leading the group in their exploits while his friends continue to follow along as his loyal companions. Dignan has not lost any of his masculinity from giving up his impulse. Rather than code him as a homosexual, the film (as well as Anthony and Bob) allows him to return to his position of power. This implies that Dignan attains his power not from a successful performance of traditional masculinity, but from his successful relationships with his friends. The bond of friendship and increased loyalty between these men is renewed for their having survived a conflict with each other. Thus the characters resist the typical structure of masculine kinship systems Sedgwick observes, and instead move along a continuum of intimacy without any loss of masculine power. The equation is clear: responding to physical aggression and verbal violence by restoring a friendship does not result in males being considered homosexual. Rather, such a response results in healing, and this healing comes without loss of masculine power.

That equation is not so explicit in *The Darjeeling Limited*, but it is nevertheless in operation. The narrative of *Darjeeling* revolves around the Whitman brothers—Francis, Peter, and Jack—who embark on a "spiritual journey" (or so Francis names it) through India, despite having not spoken to one another since their father's funeral a year prior. The film starts on a note of tension; these brothers are not friends, and they have not been for some time. Rather than the sudden explosions of Dignan's outbursts in *Bottle Rocket*, however, the tension in this film takes time to build. This more gradual boiling of emotion indicates that the relationships between these characters are more sophisticated than the boys of *Bottle Rocket*, but the result is the same.

The tension between these three characters has been building for a while by the time Francis starts picking a fight with Peter, acting on the masculine impulse for aggression (00:39:48). At the moment, Peter happens to be wearing their father's glasses and shaving with

his razor, both of which are items he seems to have appropriated for himself. Peter stands shirtless in front of a mirror, a clever set up that allows Jack to be in the shot as well, as a reflection in the mirror. The shot depicts Peter as the most patently masculine figure among the three of them. Peter appears to be performing his masculinity via his external appearance through such physical objects as the glasses and the razor. When Francis approaches him and begins attacking him for using these things, he is explicitly attacking Peter's performance of the masculinity that his father modeled for him. It is fitting with the masculine behavioral pattern that Peter becomes violent. Peter takes offense and aggressively throws his belt at Francis's already injured face. Immediately, Peter's face registers his shock at his outburst, but by now Francis is angry enough to retaliate.

Just before he does, however, a quick shot-reverse-shot reveals a crucial change in Peter (00:40:47). The two single shots—which isolate each of these characters within their frames, emphasizing the discord between them—depict first Francis as he is hit, but then Peter's face faltering. The second the belt makes contact with Francis's bandaged nose, Peter's eyes widen and he loses his look of aggression. It is a subtle shift, but Adrien Brody's performance allows the audience to register the crack in Peter's façade of masculinity. Causing physical harm to Francis—a very traditionally masculine thing to do—has caused Peter to lose his nerve.

Peter's wavering as he engages in the performative act of physical aggression allows for perhaps the most key piece of dialogue in the film and reveals his vulnerability in this moment. As Francis wrestles Peter to the ground, his words reveal the unspoken anxiety that he has felt concerning Francis up until this point: "You don't love me!" (00:41:11). Peter, however, immediately responds, "Yes I do!" This is in reference to an earlier scene, where the brothers first meet on the train. Francis speaks to each of his brothers in turn: "I love you Peter. . . . I love

you Jack" (00:05:50). While Jack is able to respond, "I love you too," Peter merely says, "Thank you." At that early stage of the film, Peter is more concerned with performing their father's version of masculinity than with salvaging his brotherly relationships. However, now that the performance of traditional masculinity has reached the climax of causing physical harm to one another, Peter breaks down. His gender performance can no longer hold up in the wake of causing injury to his brother, and he admits that he loves Francis.

As the scene progresses, the relationship status of the three brothers appears to worsen, but this admission allows for hope of reconciliation. In this moment, Francis and Peter are both on the ground, and Jack makes things worse when he says "I love you too, but I'm gonna mace you in the face!" just before spraying his brothers with mace and running down the train yelling, "Stop including me!" (00:41:30). In this moment, the relationships between the brothers would be destroyed, were it not for Peter's admission: Peter loves Francis, Francis loves Peter, Jack loves his brothers, and this unwavering familial affection will ultimately bind these three together and allow each one of them to be restored to his masculinity.

Masculinity and Sexual Maturity

As boys grow up, the issues facing them develop from the relative simplicity of the impulse for physical aggression to the more complicated issue of sexuality. The next masculine anxiety dealt with in these two films, therefore, is anxiety concerning sexual maturity. Indeed, Sedgwick specifically mentions "heterosexual marriage" as a component of the patriarchal system in which American society operates (698). By logical extension, an important aspect of masculinity that must be performed is the achievement of sexual maturity. This is the end to which Anthony and Jack strive throughout their respective narratives.

Cinematic representations of men achieving sexual dominance over women often rely on the principle of the male gaze Laura Mulvey defines. Mulvey writes, "[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy [*sic*] on to the female figure which is styled" (808). This "male gaze," in the cinema of a patriarchal society, essentially refers to the male domination of a woman by the act of looking at her.

When Anthony meets his eventual girlfriend, Inez, she is subjected to Anthony's male gaze, but not dominated by it. When Anthony, Dignan, and Bob leave town after their first real robbery, they end up in a cheap motel, where Anthony encounters the pretty housekeeper (00:24:33). He is immediately entranced. A short shot-reverse shot montage demonstrates the male gaze. The sequence cuts between shots of Anthony and shots of Inez as he observes her beginning her work as a housekeeper (00:24:36). Inez here is depicted as a goddess: she gracefully pulls her hair up as her white dress rustles in the breeze and the camera lingers on her dainty bare feet. Traditionally, Anthony's power as a male gazing at a female would make him the dominant member of the exchange. *Bottle Rocket*, however, subverts the traditional by allowing Inez to look back at him (00:25:12). Inez turns and stares down at Anthony, who appears very small as merely a head visible over the edge of the swimming pool (00:25:17). Anthony has failed to properly embody the masculine ability to perform the male gaze upon Inez and project his sexual fantasy on her by simply looking at her.

As Anthony continues in his effort to attain Inez, he finds that not only is he immediately incapable of sexually dominating her, but he is incapable of communicating with her effectively as she cannot speak English. Anthony must use the motel's dishwashing boy, Rocky, to translate for them. During a key scene, Anthony asks Inez to run away with him and Dignan via Rocky's

translation. Anthony's plight must be filtered through communication between two men before it can be delivered to Inez. Anthony is incapable of completely winning Inez to himself on his own. Rather, he needs a male, Rocky, to be fully successful in this endeavor.

This depiction of a male-male relationship as a vehicle through which Anthony can come to full sexual maturity with Inez is taken even a step further when it becomes necessary for one of Anthony's close friends to be involved. While the conversation Anthony has with Inez expresses his genuine care for her, Inez does not communicate her love to Anthony until Dignan is involved in the conversation. As Anthony and Dignan go to leave the motel, Inez gives Rocky a message in Spanish: "Tell Anthony I love him" (00:48:29). Rocky does his best, but is only able to get the message to Dignan. However, Rocky's unfortunate wording of this message leads Dignan to believe that he, Rocky, is claiming love for Anthony. Dignan disregards this declaration as insignificant.

It is vital that Dignan does not dismiss Rocky as an inferior male despite the fact that he believes Rocky to be gay. In a later conversation with Anthony, he mentions that "Rocky struck [him] as kind of a weirdo," but this is all but irrelevant in Dignan's mind, as evidenced by the fact that he has ignored this information until this moment (01:08:53). This acceptance of Rocky's potential homosexuality is evocative of the social continuum Sedgwick outlines as the structure of feminine relationships, as opposed to the heterosexuality versus homosexuality binary that structures masculine relationships (696). Dignan does not even go so far as to use any homophobic language; his perception of Rocky as a "weirdo" stems more from the seeming randomness of the declaration of love than from a homosexual impulse. This implies that the men in Anderson's films truly do not need to ostracize men considered to be homosexual in order to maintain a strictly heterosexual identity.

Nevertheless, Dignan and Anthony leave the motel without Inez, and Anthony has no opportunity to win her back until Dignan effectively communicates her message. Unfortunately, however, the two men get into a fight shortly after leaving the motel. They get back out onto the road, and Anthony informs Dignan that he gave Inez five hundred dollars—almost all their money. Dignan is immediately incensed, and the two men separate for a time. Eventually, however, they reconcile. The reconciliation scene is the first appearance of Dignan's yellow jumpsuit, which he wears for much of the rest of the film. According to Vaughn Vreeland, "Yellow is often a color of optimism in the films of Anderson . . . [and] is also symbolized in many of his films as a color of peace" (41). The yellow here actually serves both functions. It yellow represents Dignan's relentless boyish optimism as well as the peaceful reconciliation between him and Anthony. Finally, Anthony is able to ask Dignan what he thinks of Inez, "as a girl" (01:08:38). This leads to Dignan relaying Inez's message, and at that point Anthony calls Inez. This time she gladly informs him that she loves him. At this point, Anthony has succeeded—he has won the woman's affection—but only through his relationships with Rocky and Dignan.

Jack Whitman does not have such a simple time, but his eventual sexual maturing, like Anthony's, comes about as a result of his relationships with his brothers, Francis and Peter. Jack's ex-girlfriend emasculates him in *Hotel Chevalier*, the short film prequel to *Darjeeling*. From this position of inferiority, Jack reunited with his brothers in *The Darjeeling Limited* in order to regain his masculine power. In *Hotel Chevalier,* Jack is unable to maintain any façade of masculine power before his girlfriend, an unnamed character played by Natalie Portman. One of the opening shots of the short film depicts only Jack's feet on the edge of his bed, mirroring an image of a group of dead soldiers' feet on his television (00:00:16). By matching him with the

image of the dead soldiers—traditional personas of masculinity who have been killed—the film foreshadows Jack's emasculation. Then his ex-girlfriend calls him, claiming that she's on her way but that the hotel "won't give [her his] room number" (00:00:45). This woman assumes she has full rights to access Jack at any time; she is the dominant member of their relationship. When she arrives, she is outfitted to look even more like a boy than he is—her long gray coat matches his gray jacket, and her short, boyish haircut is even more evocative of masculinity than his longer style (00:02:55). All of these visual elements speak to the ex-girlfriend's gender performance—she is performing the masculine, dominating role; this robs Jack of his masculinity.

This emasculation, ironically, extends to the actual act of having sex. As Jack and his girlfriend move to the bed, he notices that she has "bruises on [her] body" (00:08:58). It seems she has been involved in a physically violent exchange, but the important aspect of this is that she seems unconcerned. She is more eager to achieve sex with Jack than she is to discuss her injuries. Rather than giving Jack, the male character, the sexually controlling role, the narrative gives that position to the girlfriend. This further solidifies her identity as a masculine character and affirms Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity: if gender is strictly performative, not inherent, then it would be possible for a biological female to out-perform a biological male at masculinity.

Jack's inferior masculine performance in relation to his ex-girlfriend leaves him emasculated when he reenters the family unit comprised of himself and his brothers at the beginning of *The Darjeeling Limited.* Note that, throughout the feature film, Jack continues to wear his "Hotel Chevalier" bathrobe as well as go barefooted through the entire narrative of *Darjeeling* as visual reminders of the emasculation that has taken place. One particular scene

depicts him reflected in the mirror behind his older brother, Peter, as he shaves, indicating a boyish attempt to mirror the father figure in the masculine act of shaving (00:39:44). This demonstrates Jack's continued attempt to perform his masculinity properly, despite his bad experiences with his girlfriend.

In keeping with the established pattern in Anderson's films, however, Jack does eventually seek comfort from his brothers. The most poignant example is when Jack returns to them after listening to his ex-girlfriend's messages; he finally realizes the extent of his unhealthy dependence on her and instead seeks validation from Francis and Peter. Shortly after checking the messages, Jack returns to the train compartment and bluntly states, "I don't feel good about myself" (00:20:40). Francis and Peter immediately respond with kindness. Francis's first instinct is to demand that the group "not split into factions" and that Jack come to him for help if he needs it. Until this point, the film has been cutting back and forth between a shot of Jack framed alone in the doorway and a reverse two shot of Francis and Peter, but finally the camera lingers on this latter shot and Jack steps into the frame, symbolizing his reentrance into a masculine relationship with Francis and Peter (00:20:59). The conversation goes on, and Francis and Peter convince Jack to destroy the bottle of perfume the ex-girlfriend has snuck into Jack's suitcase. As soon as he does, the train starts to move, signifying the forward motion Jack has begun in actual progress toward regaining his masculine power.

Jack does not, in the run time of this film, achieve sexual dominance over a woman, but he does make significant progress in regaining the masculine power he lost to his ex-girlfriend. The film establishes fairly early that Jack has a plane ticket that he plans to use to leave India early, abandoning his brothers, to meet the ex-girlfriend in Italy (00:18:09). By the end of the film, however, Jack offers to read a short story he has written to Francis and Peter (01:22:47).

They agree to listen, and he reads an exchange of dialogue, which the audience recognizes as the exact exchange that took place between Jack and the ex-girlfriend in *Hotel Chevalier*. This rendition of the conversation includes an extra note of Jack's own narration: "He would not be going to Italy" (01:23:14). At this late point in the narrative, Jack has regained enough confidence and found enough support from his brothers to resist the temptation to seek out his old destructive relationship. He has not yet achieved sexual dominance, but he refuses to be sexually dominated, and that is a step in the right direction.

Suburban Living and Fatherhood

As the boys continue to grow up, they eventually find that there is life after love. Anthony and Jack achieve success concerning their sexual maturity, but life goes on, and successful traditional gender performance dictates that men must establish themselves as functioning adults. They must have jobs, homes, and families. As with all aspects of gender performance, however, the attainment of these things comes with anxiety, and these are what Anthony and Peter face in the remaining parts of their stories.

In the intermediate time between Anthony's fight with Dignan and the restoration of their friendship, Anthony returns to a state similar to his life at the beginning of the movie. He does not return to the mental hospital, but he is left without anywhere to go and without any means of supporting himself. As he walks away from Dignan through an empty field some miles away from their hometown, the audience is unsure of what Anthony will do next (00:53:53). For the moment, Anthony is framed in a long shot with Dignan far off in the background, visually emphasizing their broken relationship and Anthony's loneliness in the world.

His loneliness is not complete, however, and through male friendship he manages to construct an adult life for himself. He goes back home to resume his old friendship with Bob,

and through that friendship develops into a stronger and more responsible masculine character. The following scene depicts Anthony and Bob as they begin constructing a new lifestyle for themselves. They work three jobs to support themselves as well as help Bob's brother, Futureman, pay off his legal debts. Anthony even starts coaching a children's soccer team, reinforcing his new role as a classic suburban dad figure. During this time, Anthony stays at Bob's house, and remarks that although "Bob in particular isn't suited for this kind of work . . . [they] keep each other company" (00:54:29). Anthony and Bob find in their friendship the strength to grow up and face the reality of working and earning money without stealing it in the high-energy capers Dignan invents.

This particular montage formally represents Anthony and Bob's new lifestyle. The rhythmic cutting from shot to shot and from job to job evokes the grind of the daily routine into which Anthony has fallen. Further, Anthony narrates as he writes a letter to his younger sister, Grace. Early in the film, Anthony has a conversation with Grace in which she acts more like an adult than he does. Anthony arrives at her school playground looking rather like an overgrown child himself and finds Grace standing with a friend (00:07:25). "Could you excuse us for a minute, Bernice?" Grace requests in a manner more befitting of an adult woman than an elementary-aged child. She goes on to express her disapproval of Anthony and his aimless wandering through life, scoffing at his claims to have been exhausted when he has "never worked a day in [his] life" (00:08:21). His letter serves to revert the two back to normal: Grace is a child at summer camps, and Anthony is an adult. He sits in a comfortable chair at Bob's house in his bathrobe, calmly writing, and even exhorting his sister to "learn a foreign language," further evoking his new grown-up attitude toward life (00:55:22).

This increased friendship with Bob gives Anthony a new stability. No longer is he drifting without any purpose in life. Rather, he has a routine that makes him act and feel like a fully functioning man in his suburban context. He has achieved masculine power through economic security and emotional maturity. Unlike Dignan, Anthony does not need to seek adventure or financial riches, he simply needs to stick to his schedule and enjoy life with Bob. That is why, when Dignan does return home and implore Anthony to join him in his next robbery, Anthony can do so without fear of losing that established pattern to which he adheres. Anthony has found his purpose and is satisfied for the present. The only reason he needs to join in Dignan's scheme is to comfort his friend after Bob's brothers bully him (01:01:00). Anthony's act of kindness, taken in this context, is even more revealing of the importance of friendship for these men: Anthony fulfills Dignan's need for masculine relationship in order to resist the insults to Dignan's masculine power. He, therefore, extends his friendship so that Dignan can also be secure in his masculine power.

The idea of homosocial relationships that restore masculinity is also present in *The Darjeeling Limited* as the middle brother, Peter Whitman, grows into fatherhood. In that film Peter seeks and eventually attains the same type of stability Anthony achieves. Of the three brothers in *Darjeeling*, Peter is the most closely associated with the performance of the masculine behavior model inherited from his father. The opening scene establishes his strict adherence to male gender performance. The instant he sits down with Jack upon his arrival at their train compartment, Peter sits down and rubs his forehead to dull the headaches he develops from wearing their deceased father's glasses (00:03:36). Indeed, the glasses serve as something of a comfort-blanket for Peter throughout the film, as he tends to wear them in moments of particular anxiety.

Peter's preoccupation with modeling himself on his father has yet another layer, as one such moment of anxiety is certainly when Peter confides to Jack that his wife, Alice, is seven-and-a-half months pregnant back home. "I'm trying not to get too caught up in it right now," he says to Jack. "Don't tell Francis" (00:11:57). Despite his strict devotion to the model of masculinity and fatherhood, Peter is anxious about becoming a father himself. He is trying to maintain distance from his wife and coming child, for fear of inadequately performing his masculinity and succeeding in his familial roles.

This anxiety remains strong until the film's most action-packed moment, in which Peter fails to rescue a small boy from being killed and is forced to confront his worst fears about being a father. As the Whitmans come up on three boys trying to cross a river, they notice that the pulley system they are using to pull their raft is about to break. Immediately the rope snaps, and raft capsizes, and the boys fall into the river. The Whitmans throw off their bags and run into the river in a chaotic attempt to save them, and Francis and Jack are successful. As Peter tries to hoist himself up high enough to help the third boy, they both fall over a short waterfall. A jump cut depicts Jack running from right to left, indicating a negative situation, as all noise save a sound track of a running train that resembles a beating heart is silenced (00:49:38). The tension of the scene is maintained at this high level until Jack shouts, "He's all bloody!" (00:49:48). Quickly Peter comes into view, his face covered in blood and the now dead boy in his arms. "He's dead. He's dead. The rocks killed him" he says quickly, "I didn't save mine" (00:49:55). Peter is visibly shaken; his worst fear of failing to protect the child in his charge has suddenly been realized.

At this moment, Peter lacks masculine power, but his reentrance into masculine camaraderie will be his salvation. The difference between *Darjeeling* and *Bottle Rocket*,

however, is that this reentrance is largely nonverbal. The two remaining little boys lead the three men back to their village, where they are welcomed. A long take containing several pans depicts the Whitmans as they are integrated into this community (00:51:05). One man of the village reaches out and shakes Peter's hand and then Jack's, visually and symbolically representing a joining together in relationship with one another (00:51:35). Subsequent shots depict Peter sitting next to a baby in a cradle and later holding the baby (00:52:15, 00:53:03). He looks around somewhat nervously, but at the encouragement of the man sitting next to him gradually regains his confidence. The Whitmans are also actually invited to the young boy's funeral, further indicating that the small village has accepted them. The encouragement from the men of this community strengthens Peter to accept his coming role as a father.

The funeral sequence also contains a flashback to their father's a year prior; this scene fully defines the origin of Peter's anxiety and makes way for his catharsis. As the Whitmans make their way through the village to participate in the funeral, they climb into a small car (00:56:19). A match cut jarringly takes the story back to one year earlier, when the Whitmans are on their way to their father's funeral. Peter is anxious—he insists on stopping at the mechanic shop to pick up their father's car in order to take it to the funeral (00:56:16). This insistence establishes Peter's emotional dependence on physical objects that represent his father. The car, however, is not ready to be picked up, and Peter is forced to leave without it. Peter's inability to take on his father's position in this moment marks the foundation of his masculine anxiety and explains why the prospect of becoming a father is so terrifying to him.

The film just as jarringly cuts back to the present moment of the funeral in India, and the following sequence depicts Peter finally overcoming his anxiety (01:02:18). As the attendees to the boy's funeral bathe themselves in the nearby river, the boy's real father fails to maintain his

nerve and faints. Peter immediately runs over to help him (1:03:26). This action redeems him as the boy's pseudo-father figure. This community has accepted Peter, and so he is able to rescue the boy's father and demonstrate that he is the stronger of the two father figures. Peter is able to forgive himself for his previous failure. Shortly thereafter the film cuts to a shot of Peter sitting awake while a boy sleeps behind him (01:03:46). He smokes a cigarette, a traditional symbol of masculine power, indicating his new confidence in his masculinity. The following scene depicts the Whitmans leaving the village, and a medium shot depicts them serenely smiling at one another, indicating their newfound peace with each other (01:05:39). Peter has confronted and overcome his anxiety, and he is ready to become a father.

Confronting his anxiety in this way gives Peter the confidence to contact his wife and begin to accept his imminent role as a father. He calls her from the airport and discovers that his wife is going to give birth to a boy (01:08:53). Peter bears this news with joy, as he informs his brothers and proudly shows them the vest he bought for his child (01:09:21). Before going back home, however, the boys must finish their so-called spiritual journey through India; they are depicted on a motorcycle—Peter drives, indicating his new assumption of his role as a leader and father figure—and the boys literally ride off into the sunset, leaving the audience in calm anticipation of the positive future before them.

Conclusion: Masculine Relationships and "Powerman"

Wes Anderson's *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* displace the source of masculine power from gender performance to masculine friendship. This kind of nuanced depiction of masculine relationships breaks down the traditional hetero/homo binary of sexuality, allowing the friendships to exist without sexual implications. These relationships need not be

coded as homosexual; rather, they allow men to don their masculinity and simultaneously maintain heterosexuality.

The end of *The Darjeeling Limited* depicts the Whitman brothers running to catch their last train to the sound of the song "Powerman" by The Kinks. The refrain of the song is only two lines long, but it sums up the character development of all six characters discussed in this thesis: "It's the same old story, it's the same old dream, / It's power man, power man, and all that it can bring" (Davies, n. pag.). *Bottle Rocket* and *The Darjeeling Limited* do not mark a departure from the "same old dream"—Anderson's male characters seek masculine "power." The difference is that characters in these two films cannot display the signifiers of masculinity well enough to attain it for themselves. Like real men, Anderson's protagonists have faults; it is in admitting their vulnerabilities to each other and offering support that these men overcome their weaknesses. Jesse Fox Mayshark, commenting on *Bottle Rocket*, asserts, "[it] is a movie about friendship and about learning . . . how to live in the real world" (119). Indeed, despite being fictional themselves, the characters in these films offer a new way for men to "live in the real world," and in so doing answer the call for a more "realistic and nuanced" depiction of male-male relationships (Jacobs, n. pag.).

Works Cited

Bottle Rocket. Directed by Wes Anderson, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1996.

Buchbinder, David. "Enter the Schlemiel: The Emergence of Inadequate or Incompetent Masculinities in Recent Film and Television." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, no. 2, 2008, p. 227. *Edspmu*, EBSCOhost.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004, pp. 900–911.

Darjeeling Limited, The. Directed by Wes Anderson, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2007.

Davies, Raymond Douglas. "The Kinks Lyrics-Powerman." *Azlyrics.com*, Musixmatch, www.axlyrics.com/lyrics/kinks/powerman.html.

Greven, David. "Contemporary Hollywood Masculinity and the Double-Protagonist Film." *Cinema Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2009, pp. 22–43. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25619726.

Hancock, Brannon M. "A Community of Characters – the Narrative Self in the Films of Wes Anderson." *Journal of Religion and Film*, vol. 9, no. 2, Oct. 2005, edigitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol9/iss2/3/.

Hotel Chevalier. Directed by Wes Anderson, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2007.

Jacobs, Ronald N., and Gayle Sulik. "Ethnic and Gender Stereotyping." *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, edited by Donald Johnston, Elsevier Science & Technology, 1st edition, 2003. Credo Reference. Accessed 20 Oct 2017.

Mayshark, Jesse Fox. "Wes Anderson." *Post-Pop Cinema: The Search for Meaning in New American Film*, Praeger Publishers, 2007, pp. 116–136.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings,* edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 1999.

Renée, V. "Left or Right? Why a Character's Lateral Movement On-Screen Matters in Film." No Film School, Nonetwork, LLC., 15 Feb. 2016, nofilmschool.com/2016/02/left-or-right-why-characters-lateral-movement-screen-matters-film.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP, 2016.

Seitz, Matt Zoller. *The Wes Anderson Collection*. Abrams, 2013.

Vreeland, A Vaughn. "Color Theory and Social Structure in the Films of Wes Anderson." *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2015, pp. 35–44, http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/research/vol6no2/04_Vaughn_Vreeland.pdf

---

Essay

Katie-Bryn Hubbard

Spotlight on Filmmaking: Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight* and the Search for Truth

---

Film is one of the most pervasive mediums of storytelling in use today. It is the means by which cultures examine and confront their fears and problems. It is the device individuals and communities use to create narratives to understand the world and inspire others to action. Tom McCarthy's Best Picture Winner *Spotlight* is a perfect example. The film is a response to the scandal wherein numerous priests in the Boston Archdiocese were sexually molesting children and the higher-ranking church clergy were covering up this abuse. In the wake of this controversy, the public needed a way to process these events and find a moral truth behind them. For this reason, Tom McCarthy masterfully employed the audiovisual film form to turn real events into a story to explore the theme of the defense of the innocent.

Spotlight is a tightly structured film; events follow each other in logical progression. This works in context of the investigation—the Spotlight team had to deepen their investigation as each new finding allowed. However, the filmmakers do an excellent job of selecting other events and placing them within context of the investigation to deepen the impact of the story. For example, early in the film, the Globe hires a new Senior Editor, Marty Baron. Baron, according to a Boston tradition, sits down for a meeting with Cardinal Law (00:29:06). During this meeting, Baron and the Cardinal have a tense conversation, and the Cardinal presents Baron with a copy of the Catholic catechism. The episode does not directly pertain to the investigation, but it does deepen Baron's resolve to discover whether or not the man sitting across the table from him is guilty. This event causes Marty to return to the office with renewed determination to uncover

the scandal, and the effect is that the whole team works even harder to discover the truth. Each narrative event is chosen specifically to further the condensation of the real-life events into a coherent narrative and drive home this idea that "truth will out."

The key to the telling of this particular story, however, is in the formal elements specific to film, such as mise-en-scène, which McCarthy and his crew employ in the telling of this story. The mise-en-scène beautifully accentuates the feeling of urgency so intrinsic to this narrative. Throughout the film, numerous scenes depict characters interacting in the foreground, while a large church looms over them in the background, literally casting a shadow on the reporters and the lawyers who would dare to contradict the clergy. One character—Joe Crowley, a victim of one of the delinquent priests who is interviewed by Sacha Pfeiffer early in the film—even notes this fact: "Of course, there's a church right there" (00:43:48). The characters are constantly aware of the immensity of the investigation they are conducting, and this is represented in the constant presence of church buildings.

For another, smaller scale example, the filmmakers are very particular about the composition of objects and actors within the frame as they tell the story. In a scene where Robby and Baron attend the Catholic Charities Gala, the ultimate authority and pervasiveness of the Catholic Church rules (00:54:05). When Marty Baron—a Jew—arrives, the girl sitting at the check-in desk is unable to find his name on the list. It is only when a gentleman associated with the Catholic Church vouches for Baron that he is allowed to enter the ballroom (00:54:28). He stands, inches taller than most other people in the room and awkwardly isolated from the Society members mingling with each other, until Robby walks up and joins him (00:55:02). They begin talking to each other about the way the church has handled the breaking of such scandals on a smaller scale in the past. During this conversation, the two men are framed together within the

frame of the screen by a lamp on either side (00:55:25). Other people mill around, but the light literally and symbolically unites these two men and sets them apart as the only two who are working to expose the truth. At this point, the focus is literally and figuratively on the two men united in the cause of justice. The Catholics walking about the room are out of focus in the background. They appear to blend together into an obscure mass behind the two protagonists, cinematographically emphasizing the theme of the group mentality as a contributor to the hiding of illegal and immoral acts by the priests that the Globe reporters combat in this narrative.

Obviously these events are adapted from reality; this is clear from the text slide at the beginning of the film that reads, "Based on Actual Events" (00:00:44). It is fitting, then, that the film naturally maintains its verisimilitude by depicting realistic looking people, particularly by the use of naturalistic costumes. Maya Deren, in her work, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," refers to the medium of film ". . . as a form in which the meaning of the image originates in our recognition of a known reality and derives its authority from the direct relationship between reality and image in the photographic process" (158). However, the filmmakers do maintain a consistency of dark and neutral colors within the realistic context of the narrative. The sky is cloudy, the buildings are dark, and the interior of the Spotlight office, where the main characters spend much of their screen time, is a monochromatic picture of the tedium of workplace life. In other words, the environment of *Spotlight* is not unrealistic, but it is somewhat expressionistic, indicating the gloomy nature of the events depicted.

Within this system of creating a dark tone for the film, the filmmakers do make some creative use of color that calls to mind Roland Barthes' visual theory of *studium* and *punctum*. In his work *Camera Lucida,* Barthes outlines these two concepts in terms of visual images. According to his definitions, *studium* refers to "application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind

of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity" (26). In contrast, Barthes defines *punctum* as "this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me . . . the notion of punctuation" (26). In other words, the *studium* is the basic, established background of an image while the *punctum* is the one element—be it an object or a face or a color—that is most noticeable within the image and that creates meaning by standing out from the *studium*.

As stated earlier in context of costuming, the cinematographer and production designer of *Spotlight* created an overall drab *studium* for the film. The images on the screen are characterized largely by neutral colors and carrying shades of blue. This mirrors the dark nature of the events of the film. However, a consistent element of many of the shots in the film is the color red. Numerous shots throughout the film contain some red object—a shirt worn by an extra in the background, a book on a shelf behind a character, a button on a phone—that punctuates the image on the screen. The use of the color red by itself is notable for the symbolic connotations the color has accrued. Most relevant to this story is its association with sin and blood—the blood of Christ as he was sacrificed to remedy that sin. Evil and holiness are both represented in the one color, just as evil and holiness are both found in the clergy of the Boston archdiocese. The color red keeps resurfacing to emphasize the film's preoccupation with this dichotomy coexisting. Such recurring spots of brightness that seem to jump out of the screen to grasp the audiences' attention serve to maintain a sense of urgency from one shot to the next, particularly when the film depicts the tedium and monotony of the actual investigation. This visual link maintains visual continuity and thus emphasizes narrative unity—the film never wavers in its purpose, just as the investigators never waver in their goal.

One such spot of brightness is in a small button on one of the Globe's office phones, seen during a key conversation with an ex-priest who supplies valuable information to the Spotlight team. Here the filmmakers combine the recurrent use of color as a thematic symbol with clever camera movement, another important facet of cinematography. According to *Looking at Movies,* "The moving camera leads the viewer's eye or focuses the viewer's attention and, by moving into the scene, helps create the illusion of depth in the flat screen image. Furthermore, it helps convey relationships: spatial, causal, and psychological" (248). There is no better example of camera movement being used to facilitate the narrative of *Spotlight* than in the scene where the Spotlight crew has ex-priest and expert in child molestation by priests, Richard Sipe, on the phone.

The shot of this scene begins with a close up on the phone (00:59:54). Sipe's voice begins emanating from the phone's base—he is on speaker with the whole team. As he begins sharing his research with the journalists, the camera begins to slowly dolly out from the characters to grant a wider view that encompasses everyone (01:00:45). Sipe explains to the team that, according to his research, only about fifty percent of the Catholic clergy are actually celibate, and that while most priests are having sex with adults, this lack of true celibacy creates an atmosphere of secrecy in which those who have sex with minors are protected. The camera slowly backs away from the scene while Sipe explains his research. Then Sipe delivers the hardest blow yet—when Robby asks Sipe if the current estimate of thirteen pedophile priests in Boston sounds accurate according to the research, Sipe delivers a shocking reply: no. According to his findings, the number of priests acting out sexually with minors should be close to six percent of all priests. Reporter Matt Carrol does the math and discovers that, in Boston, this would indicate close to ninety delinquent clergymen. "Is that possible?" Sacha asks Sipe. "From

a metric standpoint, yes," he replies, "that would certainly be in line with my findings," and there the camera stops its slow movement; by now the camera has moved so far away from the four reporters that they seem almost diminutive (01:01:36). It is clear that they are more overwhelmed than before; this problem is bigger than they ever imagined, and the investigation will need to be much more expansive and time consuming than previously conceived of. The movement of the camera relates the characters to their surroundings in a new way, causing them to appear small and vulnerable in the middle of their cluttered office, just as the stakes rise higher than ever before. However, the faces of the team members remain resolved; it is evident that they will forge ahead with the investigation.

This scene parallels another key scene in the movie. Mike finds out from the lawyer who defends many of the abused children, Mitch Garabedian, that a number of documents prove not only that one particular priest, Father Geoghan, was abusing children, but that Cardinal Law knew about it and did nothing to bring about punishment (01:20:28). According to Garabedian, these documents should be on public record and thus accessible to the reporters. Mike runs to the courthouse and obtains the records as quickly as he can, and he finds them to be just as damning as Garabedian said they were. He takes them back to the Spotlight office and reads them out loud to the rest of the team. During this reading, the camera again starts in close on Mike and the documents and dollies out to allow the rest of the characters into the frame (01:36:05). This time, however, the characters are not pushed to the middle of the frame. Rather, they are allowed to fill the space out to the edges of the screen. The implication here is that, at this point, the journalists finally have the upper hand. No longer are they small and vulnerable in the midst of a dangerous investigation. Now, because they continued to dig into the issue, they have things under control.

This moment of slow camera movement does not work, however, without the clever editing choice made for these shots, which are two of only a few in the entire film that last over just a few seconds. The pacing of *Spotlight* is very intentional; rarely are the scenes longer than about two minutes. The conversation with Sipe, which takes place in just one take, lasts closer to one and a half minutes by itself, and the later dolly as Mike reads the documents takes about twenty-four seconds (00:59:54, 01:36:05). These relatively long take lengths emphasize the importance of the narrative events depicted. However, as stated, these takes are noticeably long; most of the film is comprised of relatively short scene and take lengths. This quickness of pace allows the story to maintain a sense of forward motion. As the real-life investigation was extremely time consuming, taking place over the course of a year, and often tedious, it would be hard to tell the story in anything resembling real time. Therefore, the filmmakers chose to edit the film to have scenes of relatively short, even length. The shortness maintains the urgency and energy of journalism; the evenness maintains the true-to-life tension between the desire to progress in the investigation and the stasis during points when the investigation seemed to reach a dead end.

The use of montage, in the contemporary sense of the word, also contributes to this progression of the story, while maintaining the fidelity to the real life events. As David Harrah writes in his essay, "The Pudovkin-Arnheim-Eisenstein Theory," "[m]ontage can produce rhythm, and rhythm has cinematic meaning. . . . Rhythm is a means of influencing the spectator emotionally, and of controlling his emotional reaction" (168). Spotlight's editors are very intentional about creating montages that condense weeks or months worth of work done by the Spotlight team so that the film stays within a reasonable runtime, while simultaneously emphasizing the immense effort put in by the journalists. The most meaningful example of this is

the sequence is when the Spotlight team is using the old church directories to track down the names of priests who were likely involved in the abuse (01:02:44). During this sequence, one of the reporters discovers that the church has used designations such as "sick leave" when they take a delinquent priest out of rotation for a brief time. The Spotlight journalists must therefore sift through decades' worth of church records to track the shuffling of priests from parish to parish in Boston each time they were discovered to be molesting children. In reality this work took weeks. To condense the portrayal of this monotonous work down to a short sequence of film, the filmmakers created a montage sequence that depicts the characters in various locations around Boston slowly going through the tomes of church records. This technique emphasizes the repetitive nature of the task and allows the filmmakers to show that the real journalists dedicated nearly all of their time to it—these are people who worked day and night to defend children who had been abused.

A second montage is later used when the team has assembled a list of names of priests whose listings in the records fit the previously described pattern (01:12:50). Sacha and Matt go out into the streets of Boston, visiting the homes of victims and abusers to track down proof that the priests who had suspicious listings in the records were actually involved in abuse. The editors piece together a montage of short scenes depicting the reporters' interactions with these people. Some of these interactions are positive and some are negative, but all are important to the investigation. The use of the montage style of editing, as in the previous montage, emphasizes the monotony of the work and makes the reporters' dedication to the task much more astounding.

Montage is not the only powerful editing technique; the film makes powerful use of crosscutting as well, particularly in its recounting of the first two interviews with victims, which are conducted by Mike and Sacha (00:35:39). During this sequence, Mike interviews one of

Mitch Garabedian's clients, a particularly gruff man, and Sacha interviews Joe Crowley, a homosexual man. As the two very different subjects tell their personal stories, the film is edited to cross back and forth between the two interviews. The sequence jumps between Garabedian's office and the café and park where Sacha and Joe go to discuss Joe's experiences, setting up a parallel. These are two very different men who have had two very different experiences, but the crosscutting between the two interviews establishes the parallel. These men are not so unalike, nor are they unlike the thousands of other individuals who have been abused in the past. This moment of editing, like the camera dolly during the conversation with Richard Sipe, establishes the sheer enormity of the problem and thus allows the four members of the Spotlight team to appear even more courageous and perseverant in the face of such an overwhelming issue.

The acting and use of sound put the finishing touches on *Spotlight*'s brilliant use of film form to emphasize the message that diligence and nerve are enough to bring truth to light, even against intimidating odds. *Looking at Movies* defines acting as "an art in which an actor uses imagination, psychology, memory, vocal technique, facial expressions, body language, and an overall knowledge of the filmmaking process to realize, under the director's guidance, the character created by the screenwriter" (272). Within this definition, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, and Stanley Tucci stand out as arguably the best performances in the film, the only difference being that their characters were not wholly created by screenwriters but are real people who are still alive today. Each of them endeavors to perform at the height of a naturalistic acting style to help the film maintain verisimilitude. Mark Ruffalo portrays the dedication-to-the-point-of-abrasiveness necessary to accurately depict the real Mike Rezendes. Rachel McAdams as Sacha Pfeiffer is the master of the stern facial expression as she pokes and prods her various interviewees in her search for information about the hidden abuse. As the real Sacha Pfeiffer said

in an interview, “Often times the public only sees the movie star, red carpet, glamour side of actors. We saw how hard they worked behind the scenes to become us. They spent a lot of time with us, and what we thought were just walks and dinners and conversations, we now realize, was research for them. They were studying our mannerisms” (*Spotlight On the Reporters*). These actors became avid students of not only their subjects’ mannerisms, but also their modes of speaking and character traits in conjunction with their own interpretations of the script in order to create the most accurate depictions of Rezendes and Pfeiffer possible.

Unfortunately, Stanley Tucci did not have the opportunity to spend any time with the real Mitchell Garabedian before playing him in the film. However, he was able to watch videos of Garabedian working, and he took his inspiration from that (*Spotlight—UK Premier Interviews*). Tucci plays Garabedian as an almost spastically angry and overworked lawman—at least until Mike becomes more closely acquainted with him. As Garabedian becomes a more influential character, the viewers’ perception of him changes along with the audience. He ceases to be a jerk of questionable sanity and becomes a sincere, albeit jaded, warrior for truth and justice. Indeed, one of the most poignant lines Tucci delivers is in his very last scene in the film, where he walks into a consultation room to speak with a mother and her two children who have been abused. Garabedian greets the family with a warm “Hello! And how are we today?” (01:56:53). In the wake of the successful publication of the investigation, Garabedian appears to be a truly kind man, seeking to advocate for the victims of sexual assault. Tucci acts out this character development with believability and without ever making Garabedian appear as a caricature.

Nowhere is the use of sound more poignant than toward the very end of the film, when a voice over accompanies yet another montage. As the images shift between various members of the team working to finish up their story, the only audio element is a voice-over recording of a

children's choir singing "Silent Night" (01:47:12). Eventually the scene shifts to show the children singing, and then the film is edited to a reverse shot of Mike standing in the archway of the church sanctuary, watching the children with an expression of determined sadness (01:47:29). This is the film's emotional climax—the juxtaposition of the innocence of the children and the grim knowingness of the reporter who has fought his hardest to defend them is the final moment highlighting the heroism of Mike Rezendes (and, by extension, the rest of the Spotlight team and the editors who guided the project).

Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight* is a beautifully constructed work that utilizes every element of film form to show the investigation into sexual abuse by priests in the Boston Archdiocese. The cinematography and editing in particular facilitate the urgency of the narrative and maintain the audiences' attention despite being employed in the depiction of monotonous work. This is the film's true genius. In the end, the story is brought to light and the silence is broken by the hard work put in by individuals so carefully crafted and portrayed by McCarthy, in tandem with the writers and actors, leaving audiences with a note of optimism: there are individuals who will fight for justice, and when they do, the truth will be made known. As Garabedian states in the film, "If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to abuse one" (00:57:47). Hopefully, this film will inspire that same village to defend one.

Works Cited

Barsam and Monahan. *Looking at Movies*. 5th ed. S.l.: W.W. Norton, 2015.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections of Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. Hill and Wang, 1980.

Deren, Maya. "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality." *Daedalus*, vol. 89, no. 1, 1960, pp. 150-167. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026556.

Harrah, David. "Aesthetics of the Film: The Pudovkin-Arnheim-Eisenstein Theory." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1954, pp. 163–174. http://www.jstor.org/stable/425910.

Spotlight. Directed by Tom McCarthy, performances by Mark Ruffalo and Rachel McAdams, Open Road Films, 2015.

Spotlight On The Reporters Behind The Film. WGBH News. *YouTube* 29 Oct. 2015. 8 Nov. 2016.

Spotlight—UK Premiere Interviews, Mark Ruffalo, Stanley Tucci, Mike Rezendes, 'Robby' Robinson, Premier Scene. *YouTube*, 20 Jan. 2016. 18 Nov. 2016.

Review

Special Topic: Gender

Jared Skinner

Bullhead **and the Cognitive Weight of Gender**

Belgian filmmaker Michael Roskam's full-length debut, *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*), is a murky investigation of an uncommon protagonist set against an even more atypical criminal underworld. The plot of the film is often uneven and confusing. Its characters are violent and upsetting. Conventionality is completely tossed into the wind with this film's abnormal structure, pacing, and subject matter. Protagonist Jacky Vanmarsenille (played by a brilliant Matthias Schoenaerts) is a cattle farmer who is approached by a crooked veterinarian and roped into an unlawful deal with the Flemish beef-trading mafia. The absurdity of this movie is practically summed up in this simple attempt at plot synopsis. However, underneath this often-confusing veneer, *Bullhead* is a disturbing and tormenting exploration into the life of a tortured man trying to traverse the chasm between himself and his displaced identity.

Petulant and morose, Jacky lumbers through his days in a joyless fog. His hulking and intimidating frame seems simultaneously to strengthen and weigh him down as he tends his cattle, intimidates customers, and stalks his former love. Head bowed, he stares at the world with eyes that are both wet and hateful, taut with emotion, and ready for attack. Besides his emotive talent, Schoenaerts's physical performance is breathtaking here. Gaining sixty pounds for the role, he inhabits this character's tortured and manufactured bulk, in touch with the pervasive animalism that lurks only a slim level beneath his humanity (Kirk, n. pag.).

Midway through the film, the origin of Jacky's misery is revealed in a flashback sequence. The son of a cattle farmer who is wrapped up with the mafia as well, Jacky is brought by his father to a deal one day. He is taken with the mobster's daughter, and her older brother, Bruno, notices young Jacky's infatuation and tries to prostitute her to Jacky. Nothing becomes of this initial encounter other than the feeling that Bruno is deeply troubled and unstable. Both psychopathic and mentally challenged, he and his gang of bullies run into Jacky and his friend in a later scene, which culminates in Bruno's chasing down and barbarically castrating Jacky with two stones. At this point, the audience knows that Jacky's future is doomed from this horrible confrontation. His biological identity has been ripped from his boyish grip before he could even understand it. At this moment, he is estranged from society, forever marked as different by those who know him and especially himself. In a number of heart-wrenching shots, young Jacky's lifeless stare communicates a future of artificiality and rejection and an angry, lonely life of confusion and absence.

In a rather histrionic way, the film continues to develop a message of the horrors of misunderstanding and alienation, as well as the toxicity of excessive masculinity. Jacky's character ultimately provides viewers with a lens with which to view the tragedy of a dissociated self. Stripped of his physiological core, Jacky must artificially make his body become that of a man's. In a Freudian way, Jacky's life represents a chronic overcompensation from the trauma of castration. To famous Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud, the phallus is extremely powerful in the development of the male character. In his work "The Infantile Genital Organization," he clarifies that the identity of a child is formulated around the possession or lack of the phallus ("Phallus," n. pag). Commentary by scholar Catherine Bates suggests that it "represents an organ so highly prized and so voluptuously rich in sensations [it] suddenly lends a dreadful reality to

the possibility of its loss" (110-11). From this logic, Freud derives the concept of "castration anxiety." Jacky, however, was stripped of even the possibility of feeling this anxiety. His psychological recovery is akin to that of trying to fill a bucket with a large hole in the bottom. He is slowly buried under his muscle and suffers symptoms commonly associated with "toxic masculinity": suffocation of emotion, extreme self-reliance, and substance abuse. For him, these serve as coping mechanisms. They become the handles with which he grasps the part of himself he believes to be essentially lacking.

Biologists Patrick Geddes and Arthur Thompson provide a logical explanation for Jacky's subsequent behavior with their concept of anabolism versus catabolism (Mikkola, n. pag.). In their 1889 work *The Evolution of Sex*, they argue that gender norms are determined by metabolic performance (Mikkola, n. pag.). This means that men, who are fundamentally catabolic, "expend their surplus energy and this makes them eager, energetic, passionate, variable" (Mikkola, n. pag.). Jacky's behavior clearly becomes a toxic exaggeration of these features. He suffers this catabolic torture inevitably because of his warped conception of what he is and what he should be. His actions become increasingly unhinged and self-destructive as the film progresses. In the beginning, Jacky stands alone in his room injecting his hormone cocktail and shadowboxing, but this soon deteriorates into his paralyzing a man with a savage beating in the parking lot of a nightclub.

This deterministic approach is appropriate for analyzing Jacky precisely because it is dated, misinformed, and damaging. The fact that Jacky's gender trauma can be spoken of in terms of "inevitability," as he dons masculine characteristics, speaks to a restricted understanding of gender. In the film, these tragic consequences come to fruition in the finale. Failing to reconnect with the girl he has always loved and overtaken by the police, Jacky's humanity finally

succumbs to the animal that has been incubating inside of him. In a mesmerizing and dizzying final sequence, he releases a torrent of animalistic rage on the officers. Grunting and thrashing, he is shot in the stomach and bleeds out in a feral state of anger and resentment, sickened at the creature he has become.

This embellishment of Jacky's character has a wider implication than just a reading of *Bullhead*. The film's message is not exclusive to the realm of gender, and here lies an important distinction. In everyone's life, there is fallibility, vulnerability, and a tender insecurity. These can be physical, intellectual, sexual, etc. The tragic failure is the notion that gender is not one of these aspects. Operating from the sociological belief proposed by Candace West and Don Zimmerman that gender (not sex) is socially constructed, there is a societal disconnection between this and other aspects of human character. *Bullhead* works as a warning against this repression. Jacky is a tragic figure in that every pound he forces onto his body is one closer to his total collapse. *Bullhead* is a cautionary tale against this tragic form of dissociative disorder. Without a capacity for acceptance, the path towards annihilation is one of inevitability. Even more chilling, no one in the community around him ever mentions his castration. This resistance against reconciliation marks a failure of our culture's treatment of the taboo of gender and its psychological implications that must be remedied.

Works Cited

Bates, Catherine. “Castrating the Castration Complex.” *Textual Practice*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1998, pp. 101–119.

“Castration.” *Concept and Form: The Cahiers Pour l’Analyse and Contemporary French Thought*, Kingston University, cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/concepts/castration.html.

Kirk, Jeremy, “Interview: ‘Bullhead’ Director Michael Roskam and Matthias Schoenaerts,” First Showing, 10 Feb. 2012, firstshowing.net/2012/interview-bullhead-director-michael-roskam-matthias-schoenaerts/.

Mikkola, Mari. "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/feminism-gender/.

“Phallus.” *Concept and Form: The Cahiers Pour l'Analyse and Contemporary French Thought*, Kingston University, cahiers.kingston.ac.uk/concepts/phallus.html.

Rundskop (*Bullhead*). Directed by Michale Roskam, performance by Matthias Schoenaerts, Ad Vitam, 2012.

West, Candace, and Don Zimmerman. “Doing Gender.” *Gender and Society*, vol.1, no. 2, pp. 125-151.

Short Story

Special Topic: Gender

Isabel Azar

The Marriage of Ned Kynaston

"I vow, I have wed the fairest woman in England, besides myself, that is." Ned grinned; his twenty-four-hour's wife, Mary, giggled at the jest.

"'Tis true—how can a homely lass like me compare with so lovely a creature as you?'"

"If you wish me to be less favored by the audiences, sew my gowns so they suit me poorly; they are of your making, after all."

"If I did, they should fall off, and scandal would surely follow—the gallants would laugh at it for weeks."

"And the ladies?"

"Would scream and swoon."

"From delight or horror?"

"It depends upon the lady, I suppose."

He leaned his head close to hers—they were on the public street—and whispered, "Well, *you* certainly shrieked with pleasure last night when my breeches dropped!"

"Fie—don't speak of it, thou rogue!" she exclaimed, slapping his shoulder playfully.

"I answer to that name," he replied, with a smirk.

They arrived at the side entrance to Mr. Killigrew's theatre, where she bid him farewell until that evening.

"Mayhap I will make us a pie from a leg of mutton," she remarked.

"'Twill sate my hunger, certainly—though not as much as thou wilt."

She flung her arms around his neck and kissed him; they were only interrupted by a resounding:

"Joy to you, Ned, and to your pretty wife!"

The couple turned to find Charles Hart lounging in the inside doorway to the scene-room, his azure eyes glinting with gladness.

Ned offered his friend a smile. "I thank you."

"I don't wish to spoil your embraces, but we have a play to act in a mere hour's time."

"Indeed," Ned answered. He glanced back at Mary. "Till tonight, sweetheart."

"Aye." Kissing his cheek, she departed.

He gazed at her as she wended her way down the street, the hue of her light blue hooded satin cloak growing fainter till she disappeared amid the crowd.

Hart cleared his throat. "Ned, come."

Ned turned, and they began to make their way to the men's tiring-room.

"Charming, is she not?"

"Indeed—thou art fortunate," Hart replied. "But how will you tell the ladies of it?"

"I'll inform them plainly."

Following the play that afternoon (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Ned sat in the tiring-room, about to remove his Helena costume. Pausing to run his hands down the green satin skirt, which Mary had so lovingly sewn, he caught sight of a small tear in the hem. It must have happened during the lovers' quarrel—Hart *would* forget himself and tread upon it whilst barring him from Michael. Mary could mend it. Just then, Hart entered.

"Ned?"

Wearing an expression of mock indignation, Ned wheeled on him. "You senseless idiot," he squealed in his feminine tones, displaying the tear, "this is *thy* doing!"

"My humblest apologies, most charming creature," Hart replied, making an elaborate bow. He continued placatingly: "'Twas my ardor which compelled me to preserve thy lovely person from that virago."

Ned gave him his hand to kiss, saying, "I see I must forgive you, sir. A man with so great a . . . *mind*—" he winked slyly "—as yours cannot remain long in my disfavor."

Hart roared with laughter till tears came. He gasped for breath, dabbing his eyes with his handkerchief. "Gad . . . Ned . . . you act the jill-flirt well—too well, i' faith! Mary had better have a care, lest you desert her for some nobleman. And talking of such fellows, I must tell you that Buckingham and some ladies desire to meet you in the scene-room."

"Many thanks," Ned replied, grabbing his fan and sweeping out.

Upon his entrance, he noted the three women his Lordship had in tow; the tall, dark-complexioned one on Buckingham's arm, the Lord's acquaintance, Lady Charlotte Kingsmill, had visited him many times before. The two golden-haired girls seated on the sofa at a little distance behind them were strangers to him. He noted their excited whispering behind their own gaily-colored fans.

Buckingham and Lady Charlotte advanced to greet him, as the former cried, "Ned, how is't with thee?"

"Well, sir." Ned then kissed the lady's hand; she smiled affably.

Buckingham continued, "Pray, give me leave to present to you Lady Charlotte's cousins, the Miss Golds." He cleared his throat, nodding to the two still-murmuring girls. "Ladies."

One took his cue, then nudged her sister; they quieted, rose, and approached the others. Ned made them a bow, despite his attire, and the girls fell to giggling as they curtsied. A gesture from Buckingham silenced them once more. Lady Charlotte took up the conversation.

"At present, they are making me a visit from my aunt in Hampshire, and they were so delighted by your performance that they desired to make your acquaintance."

"I am honored, madam."

Buckingham explained, "As I dwell close by her ladyship's lodging, she has given me the task of guarding the young ladies' reputations whilst they are in London, so if you have any wicked schemes, I'd advise you to dispose of them now."

Ned bridled in pretended offense. "Sir, *can* you doubt my principles? If you persist, I shall be forced to require satisfaction."

"Nay, I would not draw upon so beauteous a damsel," Buckingham returned, with equally simulated gallantry. The Miss Golds could not refrain their laughter at his sally.

His Lordship then stepped back. "Well, I shall leave you ladies to your ride—Lord Rochester has prevailed upon me to join him and some other of our friends for gaming."

"No doubt he needed little effort," remarked Lady Charlotte amusedly.

His Lordship made them a parting bow. Once he'd gone, her Ladyship took Ned's arm. "Mr. Kynaston, shall we go?"

"By all means, madam."

The four then climbed into the Lady's carriage and set off for Hyde Park. Ned absently stroked the crimson-cushioned seat as he wondered when he ought to deliver the news of his marriage. His musings were broken by Lady Charlotte to his right: "I must say, sir, that gown is fine indeed."

He nodded. “I thank you, my lady—that purple becomes you.”

Across from him, her cousin queried, “What d’ye think of *our* dresses, sir?”

“She only asks you because she wishes you to say that hers is the loveliest,” Jane piped up in a nasal tone. She turned to her twin, who returned her glare. “Admit it, Jemima—you are froppish because Charlotte gave *me* first choice at the mercer’s because *I* am the elder.”

“You are so by only *two moments*—we are *both* sixteen! And yellow makes thee look ill!”

“Well, *you* look like a great pink sow!”

Jemima struck her sibling on the arm with her fan, Jane tugged Jemima’s curls in return, and Charlotte was obliged to interpose before they descended into outright war.

“Come now, my dears—behave like the ladies you are.” The girls settled themselves sullenly. Charlotte turned to Ned with a pleasing smile. “Pray, forgive them, sir—’tis only their second trip to town. They have admired you from afar for the past week, yet ’twas only today that they got up the courage to accompany me to the scene-room.”

He smiled. “Do not concern yourself, madam.”

“You are to blame for beginning the quarrel. Now we shall get nothing of him,” Jane loudly hissed to Jemima.

“What is it you ladies wish?” Ned inquired.

“Well, you understand, sir,” Charlotte replied, “’tis such an honor to be seen in your company that we desire some favor to remember you by.”

“Such as . . .”

“A lock of your hair.” She fingered his golden curls.

“’Tis so lovely,” Jemima sighed.

He smiled. “I would it were my own, but it is one of Mr. Killigrew’s wigs, a property of the playhouse. And even if I could humor your desire, ladies, I must be bold to say I would not.”

“And why?” exclaimed Jemima.

“’Twould seem a betrayal of my wife.”

The ladies sat a moment in silent comprehension; by way of explanation, he added, “We were wed yesterday.”

Charlotte replied stiffly, “You have our most sincere congratulations.”

“I thank you.”

Apart from the women’s comments upon the garb of their fellow females whom they spied in other coaches, they rode in silence until the carriage returned to the theatre.

Jane noticed Hart loitering in the side doorway. Pointing with her fan, she cried, “Oh, cousin, there is that fine actor who played the fellow in love with Mr. Kynaston’s lady—do let us speak with him!”

Charlotte glanced at Ned. “Will it trouble Mr. Hart, sir?”

“Nay,” he replied as they alighted, “he is vastly fond of admirers.”

The theatre door was not wide enough to admit two at a time, so Ned stood back and allowed each of the ladies to enter singly. Jemima was the last; passing Ned, she caressed his chin with one fingertip, giving him a longing look—or did he imagine it?

He called Hart over to meet the ladies. Jane and Charlotte soon had him comfortably seated between themselves on the scene-room sofa, all three conversing animatedly as he answered their queries about the world of the playhouse; Jemima held back, eying Ned. Finally, evidently realizing that the other three were oblivious to them, she caught his hand and, before he had time to think, tugged him back into the vestibule, where she pinioned him in a corner.

His heart pounded as he stared down at her; he felt his palms growing moist.

Gazing up at him, she whispered boldly, “Thou art the properest man I e’er met.”

He blushed slightly. “You flatter me, miss—and now let us rejoin your party—”

He attempted to break away; firmly, she grasped his hips with both hands. Her voice turned amorous: “Charlotte spoke falsely when she said we all desired locks of your hair—she does not know that I’ve longed for a kiss from thee since I first saw thee on the stage. Wilt thou not give me one?”

“Nay, I—”

She wrapped her arms round his waist, pressing herself close. “You shan’t go till you do!”

He tried to pry off her hold, but she only tightened her grip. Finally, he decided there was no other way to silence her and leaned down to her cheek. Before he reached it, she swiftly turned her head, her lips meeting his. He was startled by her forcefulness, and his shock increased when she grabbed his rump, her fingers digging into his skirt as if she were squeezing an orange. Grabbing her shoulders, he shoved her away; she gave him a vengeful look. Just then, Charlotte called, “Jemima!”

“I come, cousin!” she replied. Mustering as much dignity as possible, Ned escorted her to back to the others, and the trio departed. Once they had gone, he and Hart headed towards the tiring-room; they were stopped by Mary’s sober voice. “Ned.”

He and Hart turned to face her. Arms folded, she stood in the vestibule—her hood was round her shoulders, revealing a face flushed with fury.

“God-a-mercy, Mary—what’s the matter?” Ned asked.

“I saw that kiss,” she stated simply.

"How—"

"Through the window."

"'Twas not—"

"Betrayal, Ned? So soon? How long—"

He felt his own face draining of color. "D'ye think me such a villain—"

"You love those minxes better than me!"

"Liar—"

"You were acquainted with them and their sort for months e're we met, and I thought little of your going about with them, till now." Her eyes began filling with tears. "Heed me well—you are banished from my bed until you give them o'er!"

Biting her nether lip to keep from weeping in his presence, she pulled up the hood to conceal her sorrow as she darted out and into the street. Hurrying to the door, Ned watched her flee into the throng once more. He looked back to Hart, who noted his ashen visage.

"Good God, you are pale as snow."

"Quarreling already, Ned?" said a female voice behind them.

They turned; Margaret Hughes stood in the scene-room doorway, with a furrowed brow between her chocolate-colored eyes.

"Nay, Peg," he answered. "'Twill be mended e're long."

"If you wish me to speak with her—"

"Not at present, but perhaps I shall. She may require the solace of friendship."

Mary remained unpersuaded for two nights, but when she had heard the full tale and given it due consideration, she tacitly welcomed Ned into her arms once more. He bid the ladies a final farewell the following Monday; they accepted it with resignation, though Jemima, lagging

behind the other two, stuck out her plump pink tongue at him before Jane jerked her from the room.

Three weeks later, he and Peg were making their way back to the tiring rooms after a performance of *Othello*. Ned wore his snowy Desdemona smock and golden satin nightgown; a wig of flowing flaxen tresses tumbled over his shoulders.

"Your *Willow Song* almost made me weep, Ned," Peg remarked. "And the scene with Emilia was most excellent."

"I thank you; someday I should like to hear you enact it, for they say—"

They were interrupted by an enraged Buckingham, who approached, grasped Ned by the throat, and flung him against the wall. Peg drew back, watching in silent bewilderment.

"Damned wretch!" Buckingham snarled in Ned's face, his grasp increasing.

Ned clutched his assailant's hand, gasping for breath. "What . . . have . . . I . . . done?"

"You know right well."

"Nay."

"Jemima Gold has got a bastard in her belly, and she swears 'tis yours!"

"Impossible—when—"

"She says you plucked her after you all rode in Hyde Park."

"She forced me to kiss her—naught else happened."

"My Lord," Peg broke in, "pray consider before you do some rash deed!"

Buckingham paused, glanced at her, then turned back to Ned. "Do you speak the truth?"

Ned recalled how Jane hauled off Jemima at their last meeting. Envy, perhaps? "Ask Miss Jane—mayhap she knows more of the matter."

His Lordship sighed, releasing Ned. "Very well—but if she tells the same tale—"

"Then I will satisfy you, sir," was the answer.

As Buckingham departed, Tom Archer, a young apprentice with Mr. Davenant's company, entered. He was a freckled, redheaded lad of seventeen, with a turned-up nose which gave him a haughty look—his impertinent attitude did him no favors. The only reason Davenant employed him was in hopes of training him up to play saucy damsels.

"Mr. Davenant wants some gowns for a play," he stated flatly, not bothering to greet either of the other two.

"I'll see to this—change your attire, Ned. Come, Tom," Peg said. She led him from the room, as Ned drew several breaths. If Jane lied as well, he would be a dead man.

The following noon, he went home, thinking to pleasantly surprise Mary with a brisk mid-day tumble. Hastening along the streets, he smiled, envisioning how he would greet her. No doubt she would be busy laying out bread, mutton, and cheese for their meal; he would creep up behind her, put his hands over her eyes, and make her guess who it was, then give her a heated kiss before catching her up in his arms and rushing above stairs to their chamber. She would laugh all the while.

Opening the front door, he stepped back, startled. Mary stood in the doorway, wearing her hooded cloak, her arms filled with bundles. Above the pile, her face was pallid, and her brown eyes wide with horror. He gave a small gasp.

"Are you ill, my love?"

After a long pause, she answered hollowly. "A catamite, Ned?"

"W-w-what . . ."

"I heard from the butcher this morning, who had it from a witness, who said that Lord Buckingham pressed you against a wall in the theatre yesterday, and . . . took his pleasure of you."

"Why . . . how . . ."

"You were in your smock, 'tis said."

"Aye."

She sighed. "Ned, I know not what to think, but I will not remain with a man who has wed me falsely. I believed you loved only me, but it appears his Lordship has your heart, so . . . farewell. I am returning to my father."

She kissed his cheek and was gone.

His thoughts spun in desperation; finally, he determined to ask Peg's aid in resolving the matter.

After the play that day, Peg and Ned visited the butcher, Mr. Milles, who said he had the rumor from Tom Archer.

"I was certain 'twas that little pimpled knave," Peg remarked as they hurried the Opera, Davenant's theatre. "He was the only person excepting myself who could have seen you at that moment."

They arrived at the Opera, and upon entering the scene-room, found Tom cowering at Buckingham's sword-point. At the Lord's side stood a wrathful Charlotte, a frightened Jane, and a puzzled Jemima.

Buckingham greeted them with satisfaction. "Ah, Ned, Mrs. Hughes, you have arrived in good time. This cursed—"

"Remember the ladies, sir," said Ned.

"This *dog*," Buckingham continued, "has just confessed to wronging Jemima's honor—the child is his."

Jane blurted, "Jemima said any player was better than none, and she vowed she would have one for a husband, so when she found Mr. Kynaston was married she began to love Tom, and she told his Lordship that Mr. Kynaston was the child's father out of spite because Mr. Kynaston would not return her love."

Jemima became spleenful, slapping her sister's ample cheek. "Fie, Jane!"

Bawling, Jane fell into Charlotte's arms; Charlotte stroked the girl's hair, attempting ineffectually to soothe her wails.

Tom shouted, to be heard over the noise: "I *knew* you liked him best, Jemima!" He turned bitterly on Ned. "That's why I put it about that you were Lord Buckingham's catamite."

"You also envied him his beauty, methinks," Peg added, raising her own tone. "When I helped you gather the gowns yesterday, you said you fancied you'd make a much prettier Desdemona."

"Nay, Tom, you *must* wed me," Jemima shrieked, stamping her foot. "I forbid you to act any longer!"

Charlotte sighed exhaustedly. "Jane, pray be quiet—I cannot think!"

Presently, Jane's sobs subsided, and Charlotte continued. "My cousin says true—I will write to my aunt and we will make the necessary arrangements."

"'Tis settled, then, my Lord?" Ned inquired.

"Aye. Wilt thou forgive my fury?"

"If you will partake of a bottle with me at the earliest opportunity."

"Most willingly, sir."

As night began to fall, Peg and Ned made their final call, at the tailor's shop owned by Mary's father. They entered; Ned lingered near the door while Peg went to the back of the shop. After a good half-hour, she emerged with Mary. Peg gave Ned a smile, then slipped out the door.

He stood, gazing at her. Her face was drawn, her eyes weary, with dark circles beneath them. Yet she was calm as she approached and took his hand. Her touch was gentle; she gave him a little press to put him at ease. He felt his mouth fast becoming dry, and hoped she would speak first, which she did.

"Peg has told me of the whole affair . . . I . . . I am sorry for ever having supposed such a notion of you, but I became so distressed, especially after the matter with the ladies, that I feared your love was never truly mine, and that you wed me in a mere moment of fondness."

"'Twas a worry any wife might have. Can you forgive *me* for not breaking away from Jemima *before* she kissed me?"

She gave a soft laugh. "I suppose you did not expect such strength from a young girl."

"Nay—there never was a more impudent lass."

Slowly, an impish smile curled her lips. "Was I not quite impertinent when abed with thee?"

He laughed as he freed his hand and enfolded her in his arms, pulling her close. "Aye, I had forgot—you are *far* more saucy than she!"

She lay her forehead to his, nuzzling his nose. After a moment, she replied, with quiet yearning, "I have missed you."

He placed his fingers under her chin and tilted her face till their eyes met. "Then . . . will you come home?"

Just before she kissed him, she breathed: "Aye, Ned."

Poetry

David Beutel

Dinnertime in Buenos Aires

It's patriotic
How their tango flows
Melancholy, fanciful, poised.

I hear an accordion's groan
Encircling the dancers who,
With practiced embraces,
Captivate surrounding tourists.

No camera captures me,
The nearby *kiosko* owner,
Sighing their enchanting melody,
Detained in the family business.

Turning, I close my register.
My provisions, perishable, gather
Argentinian luck on my shelves.

Typical!
Empanadas freshly baked
To satisfy midday hunger
Now spoil in afternoon heat.

"*Pepe, ¡veníte pa' comer, ya*!"
Called, dutifully I obey
My wife's voice above.
A fresh embrace of home
And a steaming meal await.

Reaching up, I expertly finesse
Squawking shutters that signal
My daily self-applause.

Interrupted, dancers tense.
The crowd, stirring, hears agitated
The daily *Hasta mañana*
I give my incongruous shop.

My one anxious apology,
"*Bienvenidos,* friends. Welcome!"
I will give them as farewell

Before young *yanquis*,
Eyes pulled from spectacle,
Ignorant of my practiced routine,
Object with characteristic irritation:

"The store's closed already. Not fair!"

Zoe Cruz

First Abortion

In August
you bought a Big Gulp
because you were pregnant and
wanted to take another test
just to be sure that division sign
really was a plus sign.

This time you got a color-coded stick
that turned "Pink for Pregnant"
and laughed at the alliterative genius
the pregnancy police seemed to possess.

You squatted and squirmed
wincing at the driblets of urine on your hand
regretfully aware you weren't ready
to peel away layers of diaper dump.

But there it was in all of its neon glory:
that little pink plus sign – the double whammy.

You wriggled your jeans back up your thighs
threatening to expand like an unwilling balloon
and stepped out of the Jet-Pep bathroom confident
you had "PREGNANT WITH BASTARD CHILD"
flashing along on your pelvis.

In October, you suffered through the Personal Call
you had to make during your 8AM then felt finality.
You decided the sex of the baby
her name and home-coming outfit.

But you dismissed these as frivolous fantasy
and as you went under released
the constructed memories because
it was the last time you would allow yourself
to think of her.

Short Story

Claire Davis

A Light in the Penumbra

"I'm still not sure that I believe you," she says to the night sky. "The moon turns red?"

"Crimson," I answer. "Red like blood on abrasions, or those flowers, you know the ones. The ones people used to leave on graves."

"Red like this?" She fingers the hem of my ragged flannel shirt, my brother's before me and two sizes too big still.

"When it's clean, maybe," I snort, and she smiles. The flying ash from the thin bank of fires encircling us makes us look calmer than perhaps is true.

"You really ought to wash it sometime," she says, turning her gaze back up to the smoky sky as if she might miss it. "Maybe we'll find some soap somewhere."

"And maybe we'll find a fresh-baked chocolate cake," I say in return, "but that doesn't mean anything."

"You believe the moon will turn red tonight, but you don't believe we'll find soap?"

"Lunar eclipses are science. Soap isn't."

"Statistics is science, though," she says, and I have to admit she has a point.

"Fine. If or when we find soap, we'll wash the shirt. The point is, the moon turns red."

"We don't even necessarily need soap," she muses, ignoring my terse tone for at least a little bit longer. "You can wash it in the moat outside the house."

"I'd sooner drink the moat than wash something in that stagnant duck pond," I swear, a mocking hand over my breast. She rolls her eyes but laughs anyway, and it feels like an ember from the fires has lodged in my sternum.

The dented car hood groans as she leans back, fingers pressing into the rusted whorls forming a strange pattern. "Can you imagine the chaos the first time it happened? How many people ran scared into caves and under trees to avoid the stare of what surely must be the eye of a vengeful god?"

"Too many," I say. "It's not good to see signs in anything and everything."

"How do we know the signs when they appear, then?"

I sigh. "I don't think we can. We sure didn't recognize the signs in the helicopters and the radios, back Then."

She thinks on that for a minute, lips pursed to the side. "I think the problem was that we read those signs wrong. Everyone knew something was coming."

"We say that *now*," I say, but when she glances at me, her face a mask in the flickering firelight, I let the argument drift into silence.

"Look," she says a moment later, and she points at the moon. The first wash of shadow eats at the pockmarked face. "Is that it?"

"It gets better, I promise," I say. "It's just starting now."

She must hear the defensive edge in my voice because she slips her right arm out of her jacket and drapes it around my shoulders as I scoot closer. "We'll find you a coat, too," she promises.

I struggle not to shiver as the wind whistles past my ears and sends a chill down my spine. “The only way we’ll find a free coat is if we take it off someone, and I’m not about to deal with that.”

“What?” she teases, elbowing me in the side. “Are you scared of ghosts, Miss Scientist?”

“No,” I protest.

“You are,” she continues gleefully. “I can feel your heart racing at the thought of it.”

“You’re going to miss the show,” I point out, and the distraction works. She drags her attention back to the moon, which hangs low in the sky, but not low enough that the magnolias around us swallow it in their thick, hungry branches.

“Did you know it would turn red, the first time you saw one?” she asks. Her foot bobs quietly on the bumper.

“Yes,” I admit. “My mom never could keep secrets. She’d pile us all in the van on these ‘secret’ field trips late at night, but she’d get so excited about whatever meteor shower or comet tail that she’d just tell us all about it by the time we’d arrived.” I can still see her, hands barely touching the wheel as she gesticulated wildly, tracing the paths of the stars above us as we munched on fast food fries in our pajamas.

“She sounds nice.”

“She was.”

The cracks and groans of the fire fill the air for the next few minutes. I watch the embers fly up and away into the sky, forming new constellations with the dying stars for a brief moment before going cold. Our own little supernovas, here on Earth.

“Will the fires hold the weeds out?” she asks suddenly.

"They should," I assure her. "And I have a flame thrower, just in case. They only have to last us for a few hours."

"The moon's still only disappearing," she points out, her lip sticking out in childish petulance.

"Give it time," I say. "It takes a little bit, and just when you think it's gone, it nosedives into the deepest red you've ever seen."

"If you say so," she says, shifting her weight back onto her hands.

Deep in the forest, something shifts and slithers. I snatch the flame thrower before I see the deer's flank flash in the dark, nimbly avoiding the sluggish vines that try to catch it in one last hungry embrace. Beside me, she relaxes again.

"Where were you?" she asks once both our nerves have settled to their normal strain.

"What, Then?" I pretend to not understand.

"When else?"

I do not know why I answer the question. Perhaps it's because she hadn't insisted we miss the rest of the eclipse to return to the safe, blinding lights of the house. Perhaps it's because of the burning ember that still hasn't left my sternum. Regardless, I answer.

"I was playing hooky from gym," I admit. "We were stomping through the woods behind the school, finding newts and salamanders in the drainage creek. I still had a few squirming in my pockets when I began running." My fingers still remember the slick, gritty residue they left on my hands, and I fight the urge to wipe my hands on my jeans before I hazard the obvious question. "You?"

"At work," she says, looking out into the forest rather than up at the sky. "The only reason I knew anything was wrong was because Jose liked to listen to the radio when he was at

the grill, and that day every station switched to NPR. That's what tipped me off. Otherwise, it would have been a few hours later, when I would have tried to drive past the city gardens." Her laugh sticks in her throat. "I never liked concrete jungles until then. I guess they have some advantages, after all."

"Not anymore," I say, and we gaze up in silence. My hand doesn't leave the trigger to the flame thrower. She remains tense beside me, as well.

She breaks the silence first, pointing at the moon. "Oh my God, you were right," she says. "It's actually red."

I smile at it, the crimson eye in the night. "Yeah." I shift my weight on the car hood, leaning a little closer to her. "I know it's no movie, but I thought you'd like it."

"It's the best movie I've seen in a long time," she says. Her eyes are shining in the firelight, and the stinging smoke makes them cry. She laughs, self-conscious, and wipes at them with her sleeve. "Which is, admittedly, very sad. I'd kill for some popcorn, though."

"Too bad there's no rabid corn field nearby," I joke as I hoist the flame-thrower up and waggle it.

She laughs again, but it tapers off as she thinks about what I've said. "God, can you imagine what it's like out there? At least all we have here is kudzu."

"And bamboo," I remind her. "neither of which were particularly friendly Before either."

"Still," she maintains, "we didn't eat them. Besides, we fertilized the corn, which is how this whole mess started anyway."

"That's only one theory, and it doesn't account for how *everything* grew," I argue even though I'd rather we drop the subject entirely, forget the script we hear every night between the others in the safe house, and just watch the moon burn.

She waves an apathetic hand in the smoke, cutting the curling ashy tendrils and the conversation off.

"So," I ask a moment later, "is it everything I promised?"

She squints and cocks her head. "I expected more birds to sing, honestly."

"Why?" I stifle my laugh in my shoulder unsuccessfully.

"Because it's an eclipse," she answered shortly. "Doesn't everything go quiet during solar eclipses?"

"Well, yeah," I answer, immediately apologetic. I chose my words carefully. "That's because it gets dark enough to seem like nightfall."

"Well," she argues tenaciously, "why couldn't I expect a lunar eclipse to do the opposite? It glows red, right? Now, *obviously*, I know better, but I thought, maybe, it'd turn to dusk for a few minutes and some birds would wake up." Even in the flickering firelight, I could see her fiercely burning cheeks. She pulls her knees up to her chest and pulls away from me, leaving a cold vacuum between us.

"You thought it would get as light as dusk out here?" I ask slowly.

"That's what I said, didn't I?"

"No, no, I just—" I bite my tongue and try again. "You agreed to come out here, beyond the safe house and the moat and the group, with only me and a flamethrower, to see an eclipse when you thought it'd get light enough for everything to start growing?"

She looks at me, startled. "Well, yeah? I thought that was obvious." She shrugged. "Don't get me wrong—I wasn't looking forward to that five minutes of war—but I am a little disappointed I didn't get to hear the birds in the middle of the night."

I can only stare at her, the jacket slipping off my shoulder. “Why did you even come if you thought I’d do something as dumb as that?” I ask finally.

She rolls her eyes and scoots across the car hood so she can drape the jacket back over my shoulders. “You promised it’d be worth it,” she said, “and if you weren’t scared, then there wasn’t anything to worry about.”

“How did you know I wasn’t lying or crazy?” I insist.

Her grin shines in the dim light like a second moon. “First of all, I’ve played you in poker. Second of all, you’ve always been crazy.”

“Shut up,” I mumble good-naturedly, and she laughs, leaning her head on my shoulder and watching the last of the red fade from the moon’s face.

“A good kind of crazy,” she amends. “Crazy enough to take a girl out to see an eclipse in the middle of nowhere.”

“You’re just as crazy,” I answer. “You let a girl take you out to see an eclipse in the middle of nowhere.”

“Looks like we’re a match set, then,” she says. When the moon disappears entirely, she makes no move to leave.

I reluctantly shrug her off after a few minutes more when the moon has just begun to reappear in the sky, ashy grey like the spent embers at the edges of our sputtering fires. “C’mon. We should go. We’ve got to wash my shirt, remember?”

“I thought you didn’t believe in soap,” she teases, her hair mussed in a clump that she ignores.

“I don’t.” I counter, slithering out from under her jacket. “I believe in your ability to find some.” Slinging the strap of the flamethrower over my head, I jump down from the rusted hood

and pick my way through the burned soil and the charred stalks of ivy left from when we'd cleared it a few hours before. By tomorrow night, there'd be no sign we were there at all, and the car would be just another leafy lump in this verdant wasteland.

"Well, Miss Scientist," she says, hand on her hip as she holds a new torch from the edge of our fire circle, "you proved me wrong tonight. I'll try to return the favor."

"Please do," I say in the same refined and mocking tone. "I heard eclipses are lucky omens, somewhere."

"Sounds trustworthy," she smiles. She crosses the thinnest point of the smoldering fires and holds her hand out to help me leap across.

I take it and jump into the darkness after her, towards the torch and the way home.

Poetry

Jillian Fantin

Eulogy for Every Misplaced Handkerchief, or Desdemona's Last Will and Testament

---

My rolling Moor, you once wished for a courtly crèche.
Blossoming rosaries and not bringing me roses, you'd scold
my kindness, twist it, claim I asked for more of the Flesh.
Convinced adulterers bear no holy children, told
lies that I discarded your dearest gift, you had thrill
in ignoring my muffled pleas. "Please," I gasped.
"Friendship," I cried. My words stopped not your kill.
Still, still: with body broken, blood poured, the Flesh's grasp
tempted me not. Your cygnet died in static, not song,
final fleeting falsetto basely snatched. My love,
in death, I maintained your feigned virtue. But wrong
was I to lie, tell all you live pure, gentle as a dove.
Feral Othello, you betrayed and plucked your *Desdemona,*
you murderer cloaked in righteous persona.

Short Story

Lynette Sandley

Leader of the Izoro Sheep

Daddy left us for the second time when I was twelve years old. He left our mother, my three brothers, and me to fend for ourselves in Izoro, Texas. Population seventy-five: home to saints, sinners, and scorpions as Preacher Pate says. I guess Daddy was just tired of the responsibility of a family and the constant battle for survival as a farmer in windy Central Texas. He was probably tired of the sheep, the snakes, and my mother's constant reminders of her brother Hugh's success in Topsey about fifteen miles down the road from us. Maybe ranching sheep wasn't Daddy's idea of success. Aunt Jenny said he refused to wear the overalls in the family. Uncle Hugh said he'd always been no 'count. Mama said nothing about him, at least not to us boys. Sometimes, I didn't blame Daddy for leaving but resented him for not taking us all with him.

My two younger brothers, Gary and Larry, not twins, were under three years of age. They came along after Daddy left the first time when I was six, then came back when I was eight. Gary, a toddler, looked a lot like Daddy, and Baby Larry just looked like himself. Mama had her hands full running after them and keeping up the house and vegetable garden. Keith was the oldest, two years older than me, and Mama said I had to do what he said since he was acting as the man of the house. That was tough.

“Terrell, you’re falling down on the job! The sheep need water.”

“How many times do I have to tell you, Terrell, to close the safety latch on the gate to the pen?”

"Mama said she saw a copperhead by the woodpile. Take your gun and go see if you can find it."

And on and on. Like we hadn't been working shoulder to shoulder for the past year after Daddy left.

Our last chore of the day was to gather the sheep into a fenced-in pen with a shed to protect them from the weather and, more importantly, coyotes and other predators. Our sheep are Rambouillet, and we sell their wool and occasionally the mutton of the older ewes. Rambouillets do well in these parts, eating grass and other plants when we get enough rain and mesquite when we don't. The rams are big, three hundred pounds or so when full-mature, and mean during rutting season. We only keep the ewes and their lambs but borrow Uncle Hugh's ram when we need him.

Sheep are extremely stubborn animals. It can be awfully hard to outsmart such a dumb animal. Keith and I could usually get them in by rattling an aluminum feed bucket so Betsy, their leader, would follow one of us. We only give the ewes grain in late winter when grass is harder to find and they're pregnant. Betsy had been through several lambing seasons and knew the sound of the bucket. Even though she was used to us, we had to be careful to give her enough room and make her think moving towards the pen was her idea. If she started moving, the other sheep would generally follow. On one particular night, Keith and I were really tired after splitting wood all day, ready for supper, even if it was just brown beans and cornbread again. The wind was kicking up, smacking us with occasional leaves or twigs. The sun was going down, one horizontal stripe at a time.

"Let's get this done," said Keith.

"Yep," I said back.

"Be ready to grab her head."

"I know that!" I answered as my stomach growled.

"Just make sure you're ready!"

Keith rattled the bucket and started walking slowly towards the pen. Betsy turned to face him and started moving in his direction. The other ewes started to follow her, and the lambs followed their mothers. I was careful not to get too close to the sheep. They don't get as big as the rams, but ewes get big too, about two hundred pounds when full-grown. They may be heavy, but they can move fast when they want to. Rambouillet ewes don't have horns, but they can trample anything in their path, and we knew to give them room.

All was going well when Betsy flicked her ears, lowered her head, and veered to the side of the pen. The other thirty sheep and their lambs veered with her.

"Grab her head! Grab her head, you idiot!" Keith screamed as he dropped the feed bucket and started running after the sheep. I ran around in front of Betsy, shouting to scare her into going back the other way. I grabbed at her neck, trying to get her head up to control her. Sheep have a lot more power with their heads down, horns or not.

"Whoa, girl!" I cupped Betsy's jaw with my right hand forcing her head up. She stopped, and with my left hand, I pushed with all my might on her chest to steady her. She bared her teeth and rolled her eyes until I could see the whites, but she stood still. The other sheep did not. They broke away from us and ran back into the open field. It was getting really dark, and I didn't want to spend hours searching for those sheep.

"What an idiot! You fool!" Keith abandoned running after the sheep to confront me. Betsy was letting me lead her to the pen. Might as well get one sheep in before tracking down the others.

"Me? How is this my fault? I stopped her, didn't I?" Betsy was in. I snapped the safety latch on the pen and turned to face Keith. Sheep don't like loud noises or being separated from the flock, and Betsy began to bawl and turn in circles.

"I'd be better off doing everythin' myself. No count, good for nothin'!" he screamed.

I swallowed and punched my brother's face as hard as I could. He retaliated before I could land another blow. We rolled in the sawdust and dirt, punching and clubbing each other. I hit Keith until he stopped screaming I was no count, good for nothing, a fool, and an idiot. I left him lying in the sheep dung. My knuckles were bleeding as was my nose, and my chin was slick with spit and blood. A front tooth was loose. I found the feed bucket and rattled it. Though Betsy was still bawling in the pen, maybe some of the other ewes would respond to its sound. With tears streaming, I leaned into the wind and dark to find the scattered sheep. Keith later met me in the field. Working separately, we found every sheep and put them in for the night. We didn't speak. When we finally got to go into the house, Mama had questions.

"Thought you boys would never come in! We ate ages ago, and Gary and Larry are asleep. Got plates for you on the stove . . ." Mama trailed off as she got a look at us. "Did something happen? Surely, you boys haven't been fightin'?"

Keith said nothing.

"Sheep are all in, Mama," I offered.

"What happened?" Mama asked. We made no answer. "I . . . I know it's been hard. Both of you doing the work of a man . . . but, it's real important that you work together."

"The sheep are all in, Mama," I repeated. "They gave us some trouble, but they're all in the pen now." I glanced at Keith who continued to say nothing.

Mama stared first at me, then Keith, trying in the light of the kerosene lamp to read what had happened. After several seconds of silence, she cleared her throat a little, then got our loaded plates from the stove and set them on the table.

"Terrell, I want you to offer grace for you and your brother."

"Yes, ma'am." I launched in, "Father, thank you for this food, this house, this family . . . thank you for helping us find all the sheep. In Jesus' name, amen."

"Amen," Mama echoed. Keith said nothing.

Mama, Keith, and I never talked about it, but things were different after that night, and Daddy never came back. When I said we should put in an indoor bathroom to replace the outhouse, Keith had no argument, and Uncle Hugh helped us. When I said we should keep goats along with the sheep, Mama and Uncle Hugh agreed. As Brother Pate says, we've managed to keep body and soul together in these past few years. Mr. Henderson, the principal at Lampasas High, has urged me to apply to Baylor. Says he sees leadership potential in me. Says a young man who writes and speaks well with some education could go places. But there's no money for college and no need for schooling here on the home place. I'm flattered at Mr. Henderson's kind words, but I don't see me leaving. I'm going nowhere.

Poetry

Jared Skinner

Glastonbury Grove: A Tribute to David Lynch

The horse is the white of the eye
It sits on a mantelpiece
Wind rustles the branches whose trunks
Make horses who sit on mantelpieces
Lumber and labor you axmen whose arms
Cut through exhaled breath.
Night twitches, they retreat to wives
The forest lengthens.

Flittering and flapping and wings and
Everything is innocence but underneath
Wriggling is the worm. And
Just as the ladies are applying red to lips
It feeds on detritus
and the forest lengthens.
Now a song. The thump of a
String and the blare of the horn provoke the
Leaves. They listen and sway, branches and
Arms, aphonic, they acknowledge,
These woods are strange.

Poetry

Julie Steward, PhD

Chicago

Elsewhere
provides the pleasure
of mere
being.

Here on State Street
bodies spill and swell on the sidewalk
into undulation
utter strangeness
the quality of light
inches up stone facades
and we huddle
in the
compulsion
of this
vertical
city.

Your right hand finds the small of my back.

"*O for a Muse of fire*!"
you cry and a shopper turns,
red Macy's bag carefully
balanced on her shoulder
like the last
ornament
on a
Christmas
tree.
Behind Ray Bans she sizes you up,
less crazy than
simply strange you seem
her shrug ignores your

"*Once more into the breach*!"

Each
of the downtown
suits stares
straight ahead
your Henry the Fifth
nothing new
in this City of Big Shoulders.

Elsewhere
provides the pleasure
of dislocation
so far from home for one more day.

Chicago swallows your Shakespeare
into nothing more
than urban susurrus.
You murmur,
"*By my troth he would not wish himself*
anywhere but where he is."

And so lines like a lover swirl in your memory,
ground you as you stamp on the city
words you love even though I'm the only one
who hears your royal outburst,
your Henry 5 who pops up
in the strangest places,
making you
you.

And so we wear our tourist costumes
without shame for tomorrow
home will beckon
Like our barking dogs
and we will fall
drowsy into routine
and breakfast.

But for now
morning, stores, and scores of strangers
shuffle past and we two
we happy two
we band of lovers
regal and wild
soak up
the city,
all the more

vivid because
all the less
time.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Ben Crabtree

THIS is Cinema

For my digital humanities project, I created a website called thisiscinema.org for educators, students, and film lovers. THIS is Cinema is an online resource that aims to uncover the academic and aesthetic elements that make up the audiovisual medium of cinema. In order to examine closely every aspect of film studies from the perspective of both a film student and a cinephile, THIS is Cinema defines film in a four-part acronym:

- **Theory**—Theory presents the framework for analyzing and understanding film using various academic, aesthetic, and sociocultural perspectives.
- **History**—History details the progression of cinema as an art form from its origins to the present day through an interactive timeline of essential film movements and history's effect on cinema itself.
- **Intertextuality**—Intertextuality examines the interconnected nature of cinema through adaptation and inter-film relationships.
- **Storytelling**—Storytelling celebrates the diverse voices and narratives presented on screen by highlighting specific films, auteurs, genres, and themes through informative articles and video essays.

For this project in particular, I focused on the History page by creating a detailed timeline of film history and providing complete web pages for three key film movements:

- **Film Noir** (https://www.thisiscinema.org/film-noir)—Combining the dramatic chiaroscuro lighting and bold black-and-white cinematography from German Expressionism with the seedy pulp novels of The Great Depression and early "policier" films from France's Poetic Realism movement, Film Noir provided an aesthetic response to post-war pessimism and the anxieties of a post-war world.
- **Italian Neorealism** (https://www.thisiscinema.org/italian-neorealism)—Characterized by on-location shooting and non-professional actors, the Italian Neorealism movement allowed Italy's most vibrant auteurs to reinvent their national cinema to focus on the plight of the common man and woman in the midst of daily life.
- **The French New Wave** (https://www.thisiscinema.org/the-french-new-wave)—The French New Wave changed cinematic language by emphasizing the audiovisual nature of the medium through discontinuity editing, long takes, extended tracking shots, jump cuts, improvised dialogue, rapid film editing, and a focus on film form over content.

In addition to my digital humanities project, I have also spent the semester creating a study resource for students with disabilities for thisiscinema.org called The Window Project (https://www.thisiscinema.org/the-window-project). The Window Project provides lesson plans and video essays for educators and parents of students with learning differences in order to empower them to engage with film studies. From Film History and Adaptation Studies to World Cinema and a Themed Film Series, The Window Project bridges the gap between the academic study of the cinematic arts and the practical knowledge gained from film for students with

disabilities and various learning styles. Through the wide variety of resources provided by the main website and The Window Project, THIS is Cinema aims to be a catalyst for educators, students, and cinephiles to engage with every aspect of film studies.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Casey Cunningham

Reading *Wide Angle* from a Distance

Introduction: Close and Distant Reading

As an English major and as an editor, the practice of close reading has long been a staple of my literary activity. In both critical analysis and editorial deliberation, I have studied texts at a sentence level, giving proper scrutiny and debate to every word choice and comma placement. I learned the value of this type of reading from my professors and fellow students, many of whom view close reading as a hallmark of the humanities disciplines. In several of the humanities position statements published in last semester's issue of *Wide Angle*, senior English majors argue that close reading is the central activity of the humanities, the skill that distinguishes English, history, classics, philosophy, and religion from other fields of study. Within the Samford English department, the idea that close reading is a valuable skill seems indisputable. Yet digital humanist Franco Moretti would disagree.

Moretti argues that the practice of close reading a small number of texts can never produce an accurate or representative awareness of any type of literature. For example, a scholar of Victorian literature could never hope to read even a small fraction of all of the books written in the Victorian era, so any claims about the genre are based on a tiny portion of the total texts and cannot be an accurate representation (Schulz, n. pag.). Even if a scholar read hundreds of novels from this era, he or she could not come close to the thousands that were published. In his

essay "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," Moretti states, "Of course, there is a problem here. Knowing two hundred novels is already difficult. Twenty thousand? How can we do it, what does 'knowledge' mean, in this new scenario? One thing for sure: it cannot mean the very close reading of very few texts. . . . A larger literary history requires other skills: sampling; statistics" (208-209). Instead of close reading a limited number of texts, Moretti would prefer that literary scholars did not read at all. With the technology available to modern-day humanists, he argues that they can perform research more effectively by allowing computers to "read" the books for them—thousands more in minutes than a human could read in a lifetime—and harvest the data, a process known as "distant reading." A *New York Times* article about Moretti defines "distant reading" as "understanding literature not by studying particular texts, but by aggregating and analyzing massive amounts of data" (Schulz, n. pag.). Literary criticism, with this method, becomes not an art, but an objective, quantifiable science. Just as a traditional humanist reads closely, a digital humanist, Moretti argues, reads from afar.

Moretti's concept of distant reading illustrates the difficulty scholars face when attempting to define the scope of the emerging field of the "digital humanities." Some say that the phrase "digital humanities" simply denotes the practice of using digital tools within already-existing humanities disciplines to enhance research abilities. However, others argue that the digital humanities constitute an entirely new discipline, with their own terminology and goals (Gardiner and Musto 4). The online publication of *Wide Angle*, a digital journal of traditional humanities texts, seems to fall under the first definition. Moretti's distant reading, a scientific, data-driven method of analyzing literature, belongs to the second. Distant reading is not merely a tool to facilitate the traditional activities of the humanities but an entirely new activity with a much broader and more objective goal. In their book, *The Digital Humanities: A Primer for*

Students and Scholars, Eileen Gardiner and Ronald Musto ask their readers, "Has the arrival of the digital forever changed the way humanists work, in the way they gather data and evidence or even in the very questions that humanists and the humanistic disciplines are now capable of posing?" (2). Although Gardiner and Musto attempt to engage the debate surrounding this question, they ultimately conclude that "we have still not yet settled on a working definition of the digital humanities" (13). It seems that only time can tell how the new realities of the digital world will impact humanistic study.

Project Description and Method

With this debate in mind, I decided to put Moretti's version of the digital humanities to the test by performing my own distant reading. The archives of *Wide Angle* were my corpus of choice. I was hopeful that a distant reading of the entire journal would provide insight into the evolution of both the journal itself and the interests and writing styles of Samford students over the past six years. However, following Moretti's goal to remove the bias of a human interpretation, I approached my project without a specific hypothesis. I planned to simply gather my "data" (the text of all past issues of the journal) and allow a computer program to do the work of "reading" it for patterns, trends, and statistics. After some trial and error with a variety of digital tools, I successfully uploaded PDF documents of each of the eleven previously published issues of the journal into a public domain program called *Voyant Tools*. Within minutes, *Voyant Tools* produced a variety of text visualizations and statistics.

I chose to use several of *Voyant*'s digital tools to study the most frequent words across all issues of the journal as well as in each specific issue and also examined the vocabulary density, sentence length, and distinctive words in each issue. I used the Cirrus tool to produce visualizations of the most common words, the Trends tool to produce graphs tracking the use of

a word through each issue, the Collocates tool to identify words which are frequently paired together, and the Contexts tool to view specific words in their original contexts in the journal. In order to produce the most meaningful results, I manipulated the "stopwords," or the words that the computer will automatically filter out of its calculations, to include not only standard stopwords (this, the, but, so, and, etc.) but also words such as "Wide," "Angle," "Journal," "copyright," "English," and "department."

After using each tool to analyze my corpus, I realized that the creative writing sections of each issue, due to their shorter length, were almost completely overshadowed by the data from critical essays about literature and film. Therefore, the creative works were not represented in *Voyant*'s data visualizations of the entire corpus. In order to also study the trends in this section of the journal, I used a PDF splitter to isolate only the Creative Writing section of each issue and uploaded the new corpus into *Voyant Tools*. With this second corpus, I used the same digital tools as with the complete body of texts. Although I was able to better view some patterns across the creative writing sections, my results were not as significant as in the larger corpus due to the smaller number of total words.

Data

The following images are visual representations of the most frequent words in the corpus as a whole and in specific issues, produced by the Cirrus tool.

Image 1: Cirrus of the Entire Corpus

Image 1 displays the thirty-five most frequently used words, excluding stopwords, across all eleven issues of *Wide Angle.* The five most common words are "new" (515 times), "people" (488), "like" (466), "world" (439), and "time" (430). Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

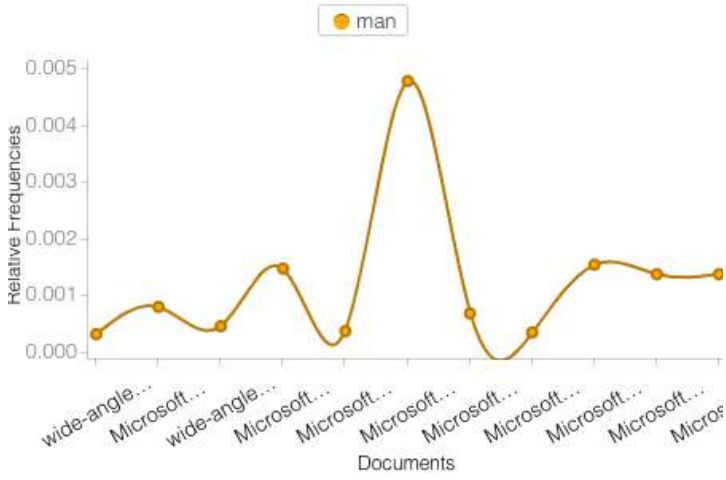
Image 2: Cirrus of Creative Writing Corpus

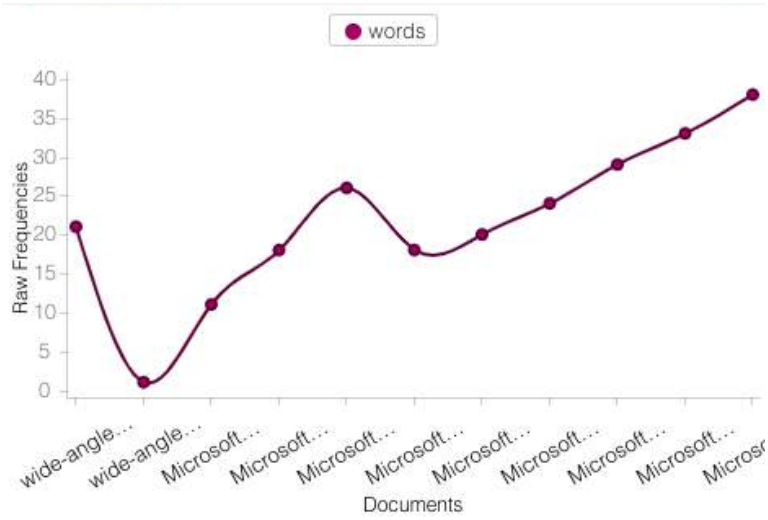
Image 2 displays the thirty-five most frequently used words, excluding stopwords, across the creative writing sections of all eleven issues of *Wide Angle.* The word "man" was also excluded as a stopword due to the extreme outlier from a screenplay published in Issue 4.1. Not including "man," the five most used words across all creative works were "like" (128), "just" (65), "time" (62), "know" (61), and "Anna" (59). Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

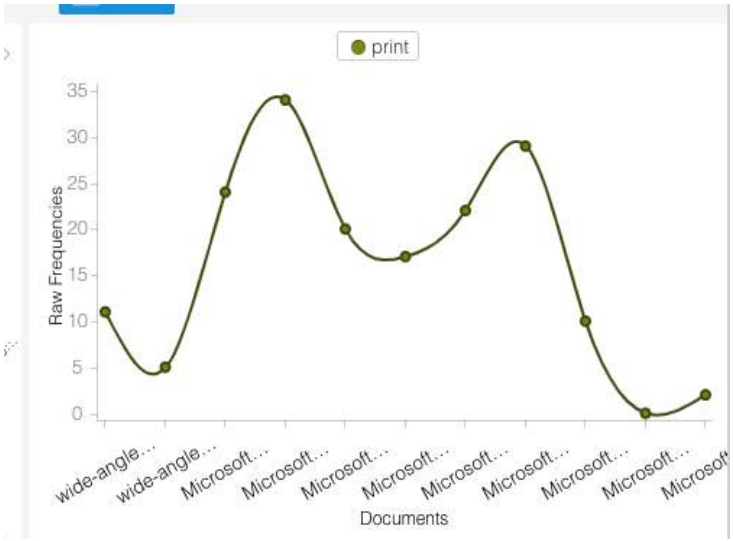
Image 3: Cirrus of Issues 6.1, 6.2, and 7.1

This image illustrates the most frequent words in the most recent three issues of *Wide Angle,* the issues for which Lauren Morris has served as Managing Editor and I have served as Literature Editor/Assistant Managing Editor. The most frequent five words are "people" (253), "life" (201), "humanities" (197), "reading" (184), and "new" (182). Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

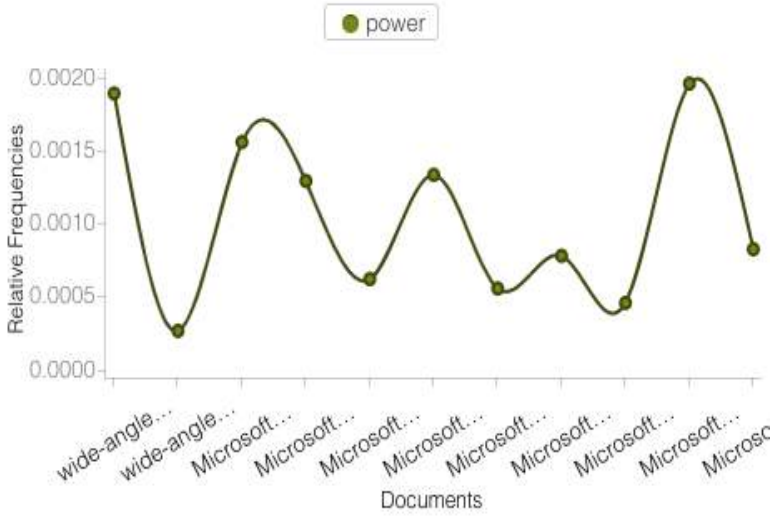
The following charts, generated with the Trends tool, display the frequency of certain words over the past eleven issues of *Wide Angle.*

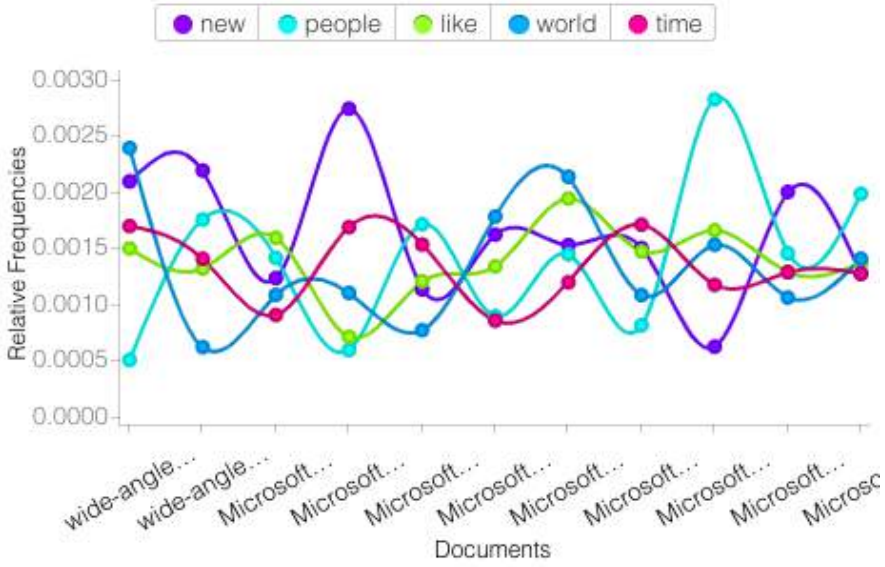






Wide Angle 7.2





Images 4-10 display word trends generated with the Trends tool

Image 4 displays a word that declines over the course of the journal's history, "mystery." Images 5-8 display words that increase in popularity. Image 9 displays a word which has remained popular over time. Image 10 displays the trends of the five most frequent words. Source**:** Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

	Term	Collocate	Count (context)
☐	new	york	135
☐	new	print	65
☐	world	war	59
☐	man	man	51
☐	life	peter	41
☐	war	war	39
☐	life	humanities	37
☐	war	ii	35
☐	world	ii	32

Image 11: Most frequently paired words
The Collocates tool displays the words most frequently paired together across all eleven issues. The words "new" and "york" are paired the most times, a total of 135. Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

In addition to the data displayed in the provided images, the following statistics were of interest:

Most Common Word(s) in Each Issue:
1.1 - "double" (41 times)
2.1 - "Dupin" (63 times)
2.2 - "war" (98 times)
3.1 - "space" (103 times)
3.2 - "Evelina" (93 times)
4.1 - "man" (118 times)
4.2 - "meaning" (90 times)
5.1 - "narrator" (94 times)
6.1 - "people" (87 times)
6.2 - "Jane" (137 times) and "women" (125 times)
7.1 - "humanities" (196 times)

Vocabulary density steadily decreased over the course of the eleven issues, from a high of a ratio of 0.305 unique words to the total number of words in Issue 2 to a low of 0.157 in the most recent issue. Average number of words per sentence also generally decreased over time, from 22.9 in Issue 1 to 19.5 in the most recent issue. However, length of issues has generally increased. The corpus contains 330,896 total words and 23,413 unique word forms. The most

distinctive words of each individual issue were almost always the names of specific characters, books, and films referenced in the critical essays of that issue.

Analysis

The real work of distant reading comes after the computer delivers its colorful maps and charts. Despite their visual appeal, the data graphics lack significance on their own. Why does it matter that the word "new" was used more times than any other word? What is the significance of the recent decline in use of the word "print"? These are the questions I asked myself as I began to sort through the hundreds of statistics about each issue of the journal. Despite my initial desire to approach the data without expectations, I quickly realized my own decisions, influenced by my areas of interest and previous experience working on the journal, determined which portions of the data I selected as significant. In the images and facts presented in the data section, I manipulated the words displayed by filtering stopwords that I deemed to be insignificant and then chose certain words on which to focus. In spite of this inevitable bias, I discovered a number of trends and was able to use both my prior knowledge of the journal's contents and context clues to interpret their significance.

According to the word frequencies generated by the Cirrus tool, the most common word in *Wide Angle* is "new," used a total of 515 times (Image 1). My initial interpretation was relatively simple: the word "new" can be used to describe a wide variety of topics, and writers often attempt to cover a "new" topic in their essays, so it makes sense for "new" to be the most common word. However, I looked further with the Contexts tool to examine uses of "new" within the first issue of the journal. My initial supposition seemed partially correct; "new words," "new life," "new family," "new forms," "new twist," and "new interpretation," are just a few of the ways the word was used in context. However, as the Collocates tool also indicates in Image

11, the word "new" is most frequently paired with the word "york," as in "New York City." The collocate "New York" appears a collective 135 times and for a simple reason. Because I uploaded PDF documents of the entire journal, Works Cited pages were included in my corpus of texts. Until the release of MLA 8 last year, city of publication was a required part of each citation, and the majority of publishing houses are located in New York. The change in MLA style to no longer require city of publication is not really reflected in the Trends chart for "new" (Image 10), because "new" is also used in so many other contexts. However, the other change from MLA 7 to MLA 8, removing the media type from the citation, is clearly represented by Image 8. Use of the word "print" sharply declines as a result of this change in MLA style. Therefore, my distant reading provides a clear representation of the change in *Wide Angle* citation style over time.

I was also intrigued by the frequency of the word "man," which was used 416 times across the corpus. This statistic, clearly represented by the size of the word "man" in Image 1, surprised me because *Wide Angle*'s House Style, in order to have gender-inclusive language, does not allow the use the word "man" to represent humans in a general sense. At first, I could not understand why "man" would be used so many more times than "woman" (197 times), "men" (180 times), or even "women" (309 times). However, when I examined the contexts surrounding the term "man," I discovered that the majority of its use (118 of the 416 times) occurred in Issue 4.1 (Image 5). In this issue, a student published a screenplay in which one of the main characters was referred to only as "MAN." As a result of this discovery, I later chose to filter the word "man" as a stopword in the Creative Writing corpus to avoid skewing my results. Overall, my examination of gender-specific words, especially "women," did indicate that *Wide*

Angle authors have consistently discussed topics of feminism, gender, and masculinity in their critical essays.

Although I was not surprised that gender was a consistent theme, another consistent set of words did surprise me: "war" and "power" (Image 9). These were two of the most common words across the corpus, used 384 and 385 times, respectively. To examine these trends, I looked into the Collocates (Image 11) and found that both "war" and "power" were frequently used in conjunction with the word "world," a term in the top five most frequently used words of the corpus (Image 10). In addition, both were used to discuss a variety of different texts. From this information, I conclude that wars and struggles for power are another common topic across issues of *Wide Angle.*

In order to see if any words or topics have declined or increased in use since the journal began, I compared the frequencies of words in each individual issue. Although the majority of words, including the word "power" (Image 9), did not show any consistent upward or downward trend, a handful of words showed consistent increase, and one word displayed a downward trajectory: the word "mystery" has been used less and less since the first two issues of *Wide Angle* (Image 4). In contrast, the words "words" and "understand" have both increased (Images 6-7). Based on these trends, it seems that essays in more recent issues of *Wide Angle* focus not on the mysterious and inexplicable side of literature, but on interpretation of specific "words" to better "understand" their meaning. ("Meaning" is one of the five most common words across the corpus). The most frequent words in each individual issue, listed at the end of the Data section, support this explanation; over the course of the journal's history, as issues have grown in size, the most frequent word of the issue has changed from specific character names to analytical words such as "narrator" and "meaning." Similarly, the variety of vocabulary has actually

steadily decreased as the journal has grown in size, suggesting that despite longer issues, authors tend to publish on related topics and use similar key words.

Because the majority of the words in each issue compose the critical essay sections on literature and film, I conducted additional research to represent the trends within creative writing pieces. Image 2 displays a Cirrus of the most common words in the Creative Writing sections when critical works are excluded from the corpus. Because the total corpus was so much smaller when examining the creative pieces, the majority of which are poetry, data was not as representative and often concentrated on names of specific characters or places. However, one statistic jumps out from the Cirrus: the word "like" is by far the most common word across all creative writing, used a total of 128 times. The significance of this frequency is obvious when one examines the contexts; *Wide Angle* creative writers use many similes. Image 2 reveals other key differences between the creative writing sections and the critical works; the frequency of words such as "eyes," "hands," and "skin" indicate that creative writers tend to describe human features, and the presence of contraction words ("don't, "I'm," etc.) indicates the departure from the formal writing style of the critical essay. Overall, creative works account for 32,792 words out of 330,896 total words in the corpus, only 9.91 percent, so their lack of representation in the overall corpus is unsurprising.

Conclusions

My distant reading of *Wide Angle* successfully identified trends over the course of the journal's history and quickly generated numerical data that would have been almost impossible to acquire without the help of digital tools. Although none of my discoveries was too surprising, I gained an appreciation for the broad scope of *Wide Angle*'s first six years. However, I cannot say that I am fully satisfied with Moretti's method. When I compare my distant reading of the

most recent three issues of the journal (Image 3), the issues on which I worked as an editor, to my close reading when I originally edited them, I do not think I learned nearly as much about the purpose or content of *Wide Angle* by distant reading. The results are so general that even with interpretation, they provide little depth of meaning.

The act of distant reading produces exactly what its name would suggest—a distant, broadly sweeping perspective of a body of texts. As literary critic Joshua Rothman points out, this result is far from normal for the humanities disciplines: "In ordinary literary criticism—the kind that splits the difference between art and science—there is a give-and-take between the general and the particular. You circle back from theory to text; you compromise, or ennoble, science with art. But Moretti's criticism doesn't work that way. Generality is the whole point" (Rothman, n. pag.). Although generalizations can be helpful in drawing conclusions, they can also be harmful and/or inaccurate. I am sure that not all of the claims I made in my analysis of *Wide Angle* hold true for every work the journal has published, and they cannot come close to describing the artistic quality of the individual creative and critical pieces we publish. In conclusion, Moretti's new discipline has its uses, but it also has its dangers. While I may continue to use computer-generated data as support for my close readings, I will not use them as replacements.

Works Cited

Gardiner, Eileen, and Ronald G. Musto. *The Digital Humanities: A Primer for Students and Scholars*. Cambridge UP, 2015.

Moretti, Franco. "The Slaughterhouse of Literature." *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2000, p. 207. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Accessed 4 Mar. 2018.

Rothman, Joshua. “An Attempt to Discover the Laws of Literature.” *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 18 June 2017, www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/an-attempt-to-discover-the-laws-of-literature.

Schulz, Kathryn. “What Is Distant Reading?” *The New York Times*, 25 June 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/books/review/the-mechanic-muse-what-is-distant-reading.html.

Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. *Voyant Tools*, 2016, http://voyant-tools.org/.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Regan Green

Mutter, She Wrote:

Subverted Gender Ideals in Flannery O'Connor's Short Stories

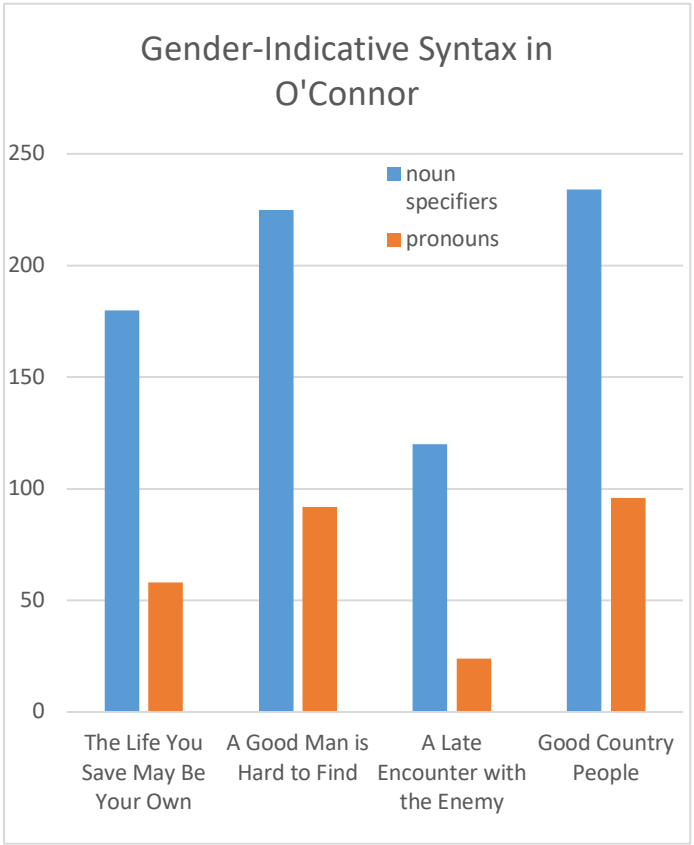
Last year, I read Ben Blatt's *Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve,* a book that combines data with literature and looks at the craft of writing as a measurable science. One of the chapters explores the differences between how writers write about male and female characters. For example, writers more often use the words *shout* and *mutter* when referring to a male character and use the words *scream* and *murmur* when referring to a female character. The chapter also explains the differences between male and female writing styles. Besides the stereotypical differences such as that men write more war stories and women write more romances, Blatt introduces subtler, more subliminal distinctions. For example, according to one algorithm he cites, the word *is,* statistically speaking, indicates a male writer, and the word *am* indicates a female writer (37). I decided to conduct a study of my own to test the replicability of Blatt's results in a given genre and timeframe. Rather than finding my own results to be reflective of his, the data took an interesting twist, and I was (pleasantly) surprised to discover that my results were quite different than I expected. In my investigation, I decided to look at one male writer and one female writer of the same genre during the same time period to limit the influence of factors other than gender. I chose Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner, well-known writers of the Southern Gothic genre in the mid-twentieth century. Before

we delve into the data, I'd like to give a brief introduction to O'Connor's work to provide some relevant context by which we can interpret the otherwise empty numbers.

O'Connor was a devoted Catholic, and her morals often emerge in her stories. She writes a sort of manifesto for herself in *Mystery and Manners*: "The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural" (33). O'Connor's religious convictions heavily informed her attitude on gender roles and manifested in her literature as female characters who distort their cultural role as the lovely and graceful Southern Belle. Her characters often react against the Southern Belle archetype and assume masculine authority. However, these characters are not the protagonists; she does not reward them for being champions of the feminist movement. Instead, they are punished. Her work shows that she considers rebellion against the patriarchy to be equivalent with rebellion against the authority of God (Bagno-Simon 1), stemming from the traditional Christian belief that God gave man authority over woman in the home, Church, and community. By this logic, for a woman to rebel against a man is for her to rebel against God's sanctioned system. But O'Connor seems less concerned with confining her characters to gender stereotypes and more interested in experimenting with different male-female dynamics to show what happens when they do not submit themselves to their preordained roles.

I began this project expecting to find data that supports what I read in Blatt's *Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve*—data that shows that O'Connor's writing is fundamentally feminine and that Faulkner's is masculine. But the project took a remarkable twist when I discovered my predictions to be wrong. As I mentioned earlier, most writers use the word *murmur* for female characters and *mutter* for male characters. But in O'Connor's story, "The Life You Save May Be

Your Own," the old woman "mutters" (*The Complete Short Stories* 147-48) and in "A Good Man is Hard to Find," a male character called the Misfit "murmurs" (129). Writers use the word *scream* when referring to a female character and the word *shout* when referring to a male character, but in "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," the male character General Sash "screamed" (138) instead of shouting. Most writers only use the word *marry* when referring to a female character, but in "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," the word *marry* is applied to the character Mr. Shiftlet five times (152). Though these words first appear to be gender-neutral, they do seem to have a nuance toward female or male stereotypes. For example, *scream* indicates a cry of pain or fear, something that females would more often express according to the stereotype of the weak and vulnerable female. On the other hand, *shout* indicates a loud call expressing strong emotion, which aligns with the stereotype of the aggressive, dominant male. And because most if not all of us are susceptible to using these stereotypes, it is extraordinary that O'Connor does not fall prey to these preconceived ideas. In the margins of her stories, we are introduced to a world in which males are equally as likely to scream as females are. It is a subtle distinction, but it is an important one.



Wide Angle 7.2

Not only does the content of O'Connor's writing reflect her interest in gender subversion, but the way she writes does as well. Blatt tells us that males use more noun signifiers such as *a*, *this*, and

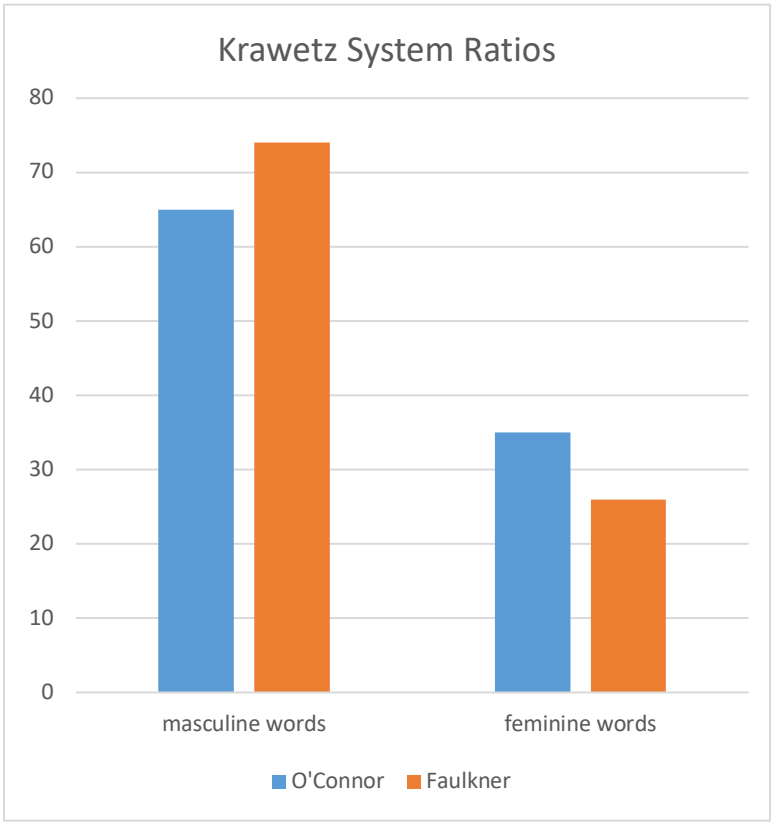
these, whereas females use more pronouns such as *I*, *yourself*, and *their*. I took a handful of noun specifiers and a handful of pronouns and used the word-search function of Microsoft Word to count the number of times they occur in four of O'Connor's short stories, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," "A Good Man is Hard to Find," "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," and "Good Country People." On average, there were three noun specifiers for every one pronoun, showing that O'Connor leans heavily towards masculine syntax.

Blatt also briefly introduces the Krawetz System, developed by a computer programmer named Neal Krawetz. The system finds the frequency of fifty-one words in a text and uses this data to predict the gender of a writer. While other studies on word choice have shown what we all already knew, that male and female writers tend to write about different topics (women use domestic words like *pillows, china,* and *curls*; men use military or governmental words like *chief, civil,* and *enemy*) (Blatt 36), the Krawetz System looks at subtler patterns. Twenty-four of the fifty-one words are indicative of a male writer. These include *a, above, are, around, as, at, below, ever, good, in, is, it, many, now, said, some, something, the, these, this, to, well, what,* and *who.* The other twenty-seven are indicative of a female writer and include *actually, am, and, be, because, but, everything, has, her, hers, him, if, like, more, not, out, she, should, since, so, too, was, we, when, where, with,* and *your* (37). Krawetz assigned each word a point value based on its relative predictive value. For example, every time the system detects the word *these* in a text, eight points are added to the masculine tally, and every time it detects *since*, twenty-five points are added to the feminine tally (37).

Blatt even gives us a practical example: a male is more likely to write the sentence, "The method is simple and crude," which accrues twenty-four male points for the word *the*, eighteen male points for *is*, and four female points for *and*, giving it a male-female ratio of ninety-one

percent. A female is more likely to write the sentence, “The method is not too complicated,” which accrues twenty-four male points for the word *the*, eighteen male points for *is,* twenty-seven female points for *not*, and thirty-eight female points for *too,* adding up to a male-female ratio of thirty-nine percent (Blatt 37). According to his paper, Krawetz’s system could predict a writer’s gender accurately eighty percent of the time. One could counter that this system still panders to gender-indicative topics. Male words are often informational and about objects, and female words are often involved and about interactions between things or people. Therefore, as Blatt points out, it is possible that masculine topics like war and government require informational language, while feminine topics like domestic affairs and romance require involved language (39). But it still stands that most usage of these fifty-one words must be largely subliminal.

I was only able to find the point values for a few of the fifty-one words used in the Krawetz System's algorithm, so my experiment was not quite as thorough as his, but I was able to render a sort of miniature version. Despite my expectation that O'Connor's work would amass a higher feminine tally and Faulkner's a higher masculine tally, they were surprisingly similar. My data on Faulkner's work shows that on average his stories (I examined "Barn Burning" and "A Rose for Emily") have a male-female ratio of seventy-four percent. This means that for every one feminine word, Faulkner uses approximately four masculine words. The four aforementioned short stories of O'Connor's I examined have a male-female ratio of sixty-five percent, meaning that for every one feminine word, O'Connor uses roughly two masculine words. It would be understandable to dismiss these results if the Krawetz words catered to gender roles because it would be easy for a woman to decide to write about a masculine topic and use a masculine vocabulary filled with chiefs and enemies or for a man to write about china and lace, but the Krawetz words are so linguistically fundamental that they give no indication of their gender implications, and it would be virtually impossible to cheat one's way through this system.



This is why O'Connor's writing is so extraordinary. Her exaggerated plots and grotesque characters famously disrupt gender roles, but so does her prose. The vocabulary and syntax that she uses to subvert gender ideals are a subversion of gender ideals in and of themselves. Whereas other female writers may subvert gender stereotypes through their narrative, they most likely do so with feminine vocabulary and syntax—and males as well with masculine vocabulary and syntax. But O'Connor's work creates a new world where preconceived gender roles are uprooted, both consciously and subliminally—a world in which men can murmur and women can mutter (*The Complete Short Stories* 147-48).

Works Cited

Bagno-Simon, Libby. "The Liberty Belle: Reversed Gender Roles, Skewed Faith, and the Breakdown of Southern Myths in Flannery O'Connor's Patriarchal World." *Literary Refractions,* vol. 5, no. 1, 2014: 1-16.

Blatt, Ben. *Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve: What the Numbers Reveal about the Classics, Bestsellers, and Our Own Writing*. Simon & Schuster, 2017.

O'Connor, Flannery. *Mystery & Manners*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald and Robert Fitzgerald, Faber and Faber, 2014.

O'Connor, Flannery. *The Complete Stories.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1971.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Lauren Morris

Audiobooks as Adaptations: How the Audiobook and Text of Martha Hall Kelly's *Lilac Girls* Fall Short

---

Audiobooks are a form of adaptation characterized by the transformation of print texts into aural-performative texts. They are distinct from films, as there is no visual element involved, which provides listeners with the opportunity to visualize texts on their own using their imagination. Audiobooks are also different from plays, as they are pre-recorded and depend solely on vocal elements to convey content and meaning. And they are not books either, for books have a printed element: the words on the page (and, for some, illustrations). Audiobooks sharpen listening skills because they rely on listening skills to convey meaning. Like readers of film, listeners of audio can, of course, go back and re-listen to clips, but the audio is diachronic; it goes at a set pace, whereas with novels, readers decide their own pacing.[1] Timing is, therefore, a significant distinction between audiobooks and books, though this element is not unique to audiobooks, for films and plays are diachronic as well. Also like films and plays, *Audible* audiobooks sometimes have full casts in which each character is narrated by a different voice, and one listener named Emily Heller claims to prefer these to *Netflix* original series. She explains, "The result [of a full-cast audiobook] is a fully dramatized performance that feels less like a bedtime story and more like a movie playing out in your head"

[1] Note that applications like *Audible* allow listeners to speed up or slow down the narration. However, I find changing the speed of narration to be mostly distracting, as a computer speeds up or slows down the recording. Because the narrator does not actually change his or her speed, the result sounds unnatural.

(n. pag.). The audiobook adaptation of *Lilac Girls* by Martha Hall Kelley is promising because it not only includes a cast of three performers reading for three corresponding narrators in *Lilac Girls*, but the narrative itself takes place over two decades, so the timing and pacing of the audiobook are key to conveying its meaning orally.

A summary of *Lilac Girls* provides a context for its discussion. *Lilac Girls* is based on the true story of Caroline Ferriday, a New York socialite and liaison to the French consulate who championed the stories of "rabbits," survivors of Nazi experimentation at Germany's only all-women camp, Ravensbrück. Across the Atlantic, another narrator, Kasia Kuzmerick, provides the perspective of a "rabbit" in Ravensbrück. Formerly a Polish teenager providing aid to the underground resistance movement, Kasia undergoes nonconsensual experimentation by Nazi doctors—one of whom is our third narrator, Herta Oberheuser. The lives of these three women intertwine as the text progresses through the end of World War II.

The *Audible* production of *Lilac Girls* introduces a unique task for performers because the novel spans twenty years, from 1939 to 1959. Sometimes chapters, which are each dedicated to one of three characters, span a month (as in chapter seven, which covers December of 1939), and sometimes they cover two years (as in chapter nineteen, which covers 1942-1943). Ten years pass between part two and part three, for part two ends in 1947, and part three picks up in 1957. The large number of chapters and the sectioning of the narrative into three parts contribute to the feeling that the text takes place over a long period of time. The novel denotes time passing by utilizing frequent paragraph and section breaks, which provides readers an opportunity to pause and reflect, mimicking passing time by literally letting time pass before reading the next section. Listeners, however, are not given this opportunity because the pauses between sections, paragraphs, chapters, and parts are minimal; the audio is never silent; and there are no visual

reminders—such as blank space between paragraphs, page breaks, or changes in font—to denote a scene or time change in the audio.

The performers in *Lilac Girls* are tasked with convincing the audience, within chapters as well as between chapters and between parts, that significant events have transpired that they do not have the chance to explore. In my opinion, this responsibility is too much to ask of performers because the performers do not have sufficient tools to indicate the passing of two decades to the *Audible* audience. Perhaps if the audiobook had incorporated a musical element in addition to the voice narration, listeners would be given the opportunity to (at least minimally) experience the events between chapters and parts and thereby reflect on the passing time.[2] Playing music in between sections of audio could set the mood for reflection on past and future events in the text, especially if the length of music played corresponded to the amount of time between narration. Any musical addition to the original text of *Lilac Girls* would afford another layer of interpretive opportunity for narrators, producers, and listeners alike.

It is important to note that every performance is an interpretation. Good performers do not just read text; they read in between the lines of text to delve into the experiences of their character. Every reading of the text is its own interpretation, for performers must personalize (and sometimes accent) their voices to fit what they perceive as the tone, emphasis, or mood of a passage. Listeners, therefore, have little opportunity to form interpretations that have not already been, at least in part, decided for them by the performer.[3] This marks a crucial difference between books and audiobooks: readers can decide for themselves what to emphasize within a

[2] Audiobooks are not limited to words alone. The *Audible* version of *Call Me by Your Name*, for example, contains musical clips at the beginning of each chapter.
[3] It is worth pointing out that this makes audiobooks similar to film adaptations and plays.

passage of text and how to interpret that emphasis, whereas with Audiobooks, listeners' interpretations are significantly impacted by the oral performance.

Though I recognize the challenge *Lilac Girls* poses to performers to narrate two decades of characters' lives, I was disappointed by the interpretive choices of the three women who read for the novel's three narrators. For example, at the end of chapter three, which takes place in 1939, Herta's friend Pippi is sexually assaulted by German boys at a camp. The text paints a disturbing picture of the situation: "One of the boys was lying on top of her . . . pumping as she cried. The second boy, the dark-haired one, stood at the head of the bed pinning Pippi's shoulders" (Kelley 50). Despite the atrocity of the boys' assault and the intensity of the situation, Herta (played by Kathrin Kana) does not sound at all disturbed when she intervenes to say, "Stop it" (Kelley 01:49:06). In fact, there is no anger, frustration, or fear in her voice; taken out of context, one might guess that Herta is rebuking someone for calling her a name, not stopping camp boys from raping her friend. Throughout the passage, Herta's tone stays relatively the same: her voice is monotone and her disposition bored. It is as if she is summarizing a book she did not enjoy. She does raise her voice when exclaiming "Stop it" (Kelley 01:49:06), but she does not "sound serious," as the text suggests (Kelley 50). In situations such as this one, I felt that the performers misinterpreted the text and oversimplified complex scenes.[4]

Unfortunately, the performance of *Lilac Girls* was not as strong as I had hoped, and the book by Martha Hall Kelley did not meet my expectations either. The sudden change in character and ethical guidelines by Herta, for instance, seemed insufficiently supported by the text. Chapter nine paints Herta as an intelligent woman, uncertain about her country's policies and

[4] It was not just Herta who bothered me. The performer who read for Kasia, Kathleen Gati, had a sticky mouth and often sounded Pollyannaish, which seemed distracting and inappropriate given Kasia's situation as an experimental subject in Germany's only all-female concentration camp during WWII.

struggling in an unfair and misogynistic medical culture. When asked to perform a lethal injection on prisoners deemed unfit for work, Herta exclaims, "'I'm just not comfortable with all this. It's so, well, personal.' The thought of administering a lethal injection was too abhorrent to dwell on. . . . Lethal injections were barbaric" (Kelley 119). Again, after her superior, Fritz, forces her to complete such a task, telling her that "'it can't be helped,'" Herta explains, "'Of course it can be helped. We can refuse to do it'" (123). The chapter ends with Herta confronting Fritz: "'I'm not staying. I didn't go to medical school to do this—' . . . There was no question. I would be gone by sunrise" (123). Despite these seemingly decisive claims, Herta's next chapter begins, "I stayed at Ravensbrück . . . how hard I was working to get the *Revier* [workplace] cleaned up and running efficiently" (169). Herta's transition from a person ethically opposed to the medical practices at Ravensbrück to a Nazi unconcerned with the ramifications of her work seemed jarring and implausible.

Moreover, when Herta is summoned at the Doctor's Trial at Nuremburg later in the text, she expresses no regret for her actions. When a prosecutor asks, "'How could you participate in the sulfonamide experiments in good conscience?'" Herta responds, "Those prisoners were Polish women who were sentenced to death. . . . They were scheduled to die anyway. That research helped German soldiers. *My blood*'" (357, original italics). Herta assumes no responsibility for her actions and even assigns them moral value for the medical knowledge they provided to the German army; her conclusions are selfish at best. Despite her ethical qualms in chapter nine, later in the text, Herta shows no remorse for significantly altering and often ending the lives of others. Kelley's failure to provide a motive for Herta's change in ethical guidelines marks a lack of character development and weakens the plausibility of Herta's perspective as a Nazi doctor in an all-women's work camp.

Regrettably, the audiobook form of *Lilac Girls* did not meet my high expectations for oral adaptations of texts. An examination covering twenty years of three individuals' lives is not easily accomplished through vocal intonation alone; there are not enough opportunities for listeners to take in all that happens between chapters and parts and sections of the book. Moreover, the lack of character development in *Lilac Girls* makes the characters' choices and stories seem unrealistic. Though I believe audiobooks can add valuable interpretive insight into a text by the person or people who adapt it, this one—and the novel it adapts—was sub-par at best.

After listening to and reading *Lilac Girls*, I find myself pondering whether the experience of listening to texts is equal to that of reading texts on my own. Listening to texts aloud involves engaging in performers' interpretations, whereas individual readers have more freedom to craft their own ideas and interpretations. But even this statement must be qualified. Readers typically come to a book with a preconceived notion of what it is going to be about—the cover and title alone reveal at least something about the text. I wonder, therefore, if it is possible for readers to create an interpretation solely on their own, as it seems to me that all interpretations are informed by something—whether that be an individual experience or an audio-performance. Given my nuanced perspective, I assert that audiobooks are not essentially better or worse than novels (or films or plays), although they are changing the way we read. Perhaps audiobooks will make us as humanists more active listeners and broaden our ideas about what we consider to be texts.

Works Cited

Heller, Emily. "Full Cast Audiobooks Are Like a Movie in Your Head." *Mashable*, 5 Oct., 2017. https://mashable.com/2017/10/05/audible-full-cast-audiobooks/#VAXK1.0XCSqg. Accessed 16 April 2018.

Kelley, Martha Hall. *Lilac Girls.* Ballantine Books, 2016.

Kelley, Martha Hall. *Lilac Girls*. Narrated by Cassandra Campbell et. al., Random House Audio, 5 Apr. 2016. Audiobook.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Hannah Warrick

God, Hell, and Other Damnations: Tracing Holden's Neurosis Through His Language

---

J.D. Salinger's 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye* tells a story of alienation, teenage angst, and the "phoniness" of society through the narrator, Holden Caulfield. After being expelled from boarding school, Holden wanders through New York City, reflecting on his current identity as a troubled teenager and fantasies about the protector of innocence he wishes he could become. A decade after its publication in 1950, *The Catcher in the Rye* was the most censored book in schools until 1982 due to its profanity, atheist sentiments, dishonest narrator, alcohol use, and sexual references (Frangedis 73-74). Holden's unruly character, especially his neurotic behavior, was initially a subject of concern for the classroom but eventually evolved into a subject of psychological analysis. At the end of the novel, Holden reveals that he is being monitored by a "psychoanalyst guy" (114) and is potentially receiving care in a mental hospital before returning to school. One of Holden's friends, Carl Luce, even encourages him to see a psychoanalyst, saying, "He wouldn't do a goddam thing to you. He'd simply talk to you, and you'd talk to him, for God's sake. For one thing, he'd help you to recognize the patterns of your mind" (79). These "patterns of your mind" are embedded in Holden's colloquial, teenage vernacular and are traceable by subconscious patterns and associations in his speech. By finding trends in Holden's language and identifying word clusters, I will trace Holden's neurosis and examine how it manifests itself primarily in the morbid

fantasies Holden creates, which are rooted in his fear of the biological requirements of adulthood: sex and death.

The Catcher in the Rye is a prime candidate for language analysis because Holden's sentence structure, "lousy" vocabulary, and grammar indicate that he is speaking in a colloquial, oral voice rather than a refined, literary voice (Costello 180). This is not to say that Salinger did not carefully craft Holden's speech. In fact, he wrote the novel over a ten-year period; however, Holden's casual, spoken diction lends itself more appropriately to linguistic analysis because of its low style, vulnerability, and multiple idiosyncrasies. Rather than a detached narrative voice, the prose intimates a personal voice that at times struggles to articulate feelings precisely, but ironically this failure to articulate accurately reveals Holden's complex interiority. In order to expedite the grueling process of manually cruising the text to find patterns, I chose to use the program *Voyant*, an online platform designed for textual analysis. After I simply uploaded a PDF file of *The Catcher in the Rye* onto the website, the program created word lists, cluster data, and corresponding graphs within seconds. In particular, I analyzed the frequency of Holden's swear words, which measures the number of times each word has been repeated, and word clusters of key terms, which show me the words that tend to cluster around a specific term in proximity. *Voyant* maps this data by charting its progression throughout the course of the novel and divides the novel into ten segments, allowing me to easily access the text and gain context within the program.

I started my process by generating a word list that contained the top frequently used words in Holden's vocabulary to gain a quick overview of Holden's regular diction. After eliminating unnecessary stop words, I used *Voyant* to visualize the data into a word cloud, which indicates the frequency of each word by its relative size (refer to Figure 1).

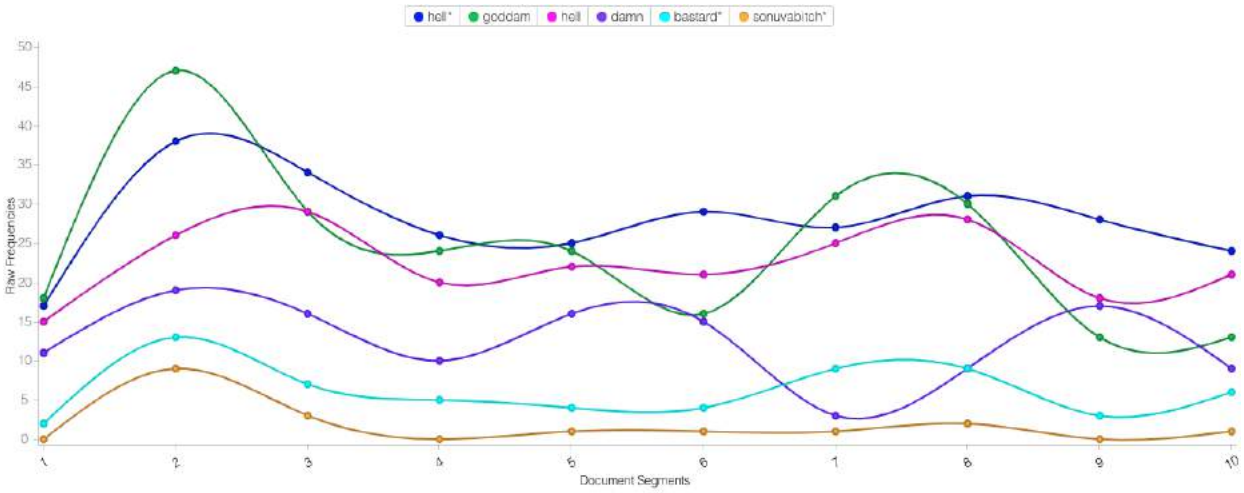
Figure 1: Word Cloud

Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. "Cirrus." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

After eliminating unnecessary stop words, it became clear that Holden's vocabulary is relatively simple, vaguely descriptive, and contains a high frequency of slang and swear words. Holden's language matches the informal speech of an American teenager in the 1950s, and the frequency of his favorite swear words such as *goddam, damn,* and *hell* should not come as a surprise to the reader (Costello 173). Holden's favorite swear word *goddam* occurs over 245 times in the novel, and he uses it to express general emotion toward a person or object, either negative, as in "goddam dirty moron" (56), or positive, as in "goddam gorgeous hair" (18) (Costello 175). While the usage of *goddam* may seem irrelevant because of the word's versatility for Holden, it functions as an emotional marker, intensifying during moments of Holden's neurotic behavior. I

found that the frequency of Holden's vulgarity especially increases in violent situations between two male figures and a third-party female. Graph 1 maps the trends of Holden's swear usage throughout the span of the novel:

Graph 1: Trends of Holden's Swear Language

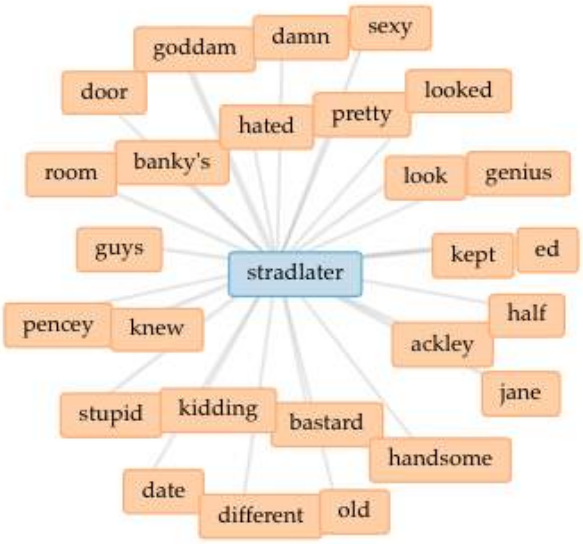


Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey. "Trends." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

Holden's swear usage increases dramatically in Segment 2 when Holden inquires after his roommate Stradlater's date, who is Jane Gallagher, an old friend of Holden's and former romantic interest. Holden quickly becomes obsessive over the situation, saying, "I sat there for about a half hour after he left . . . I kept thinking about Jane, and about Stradlater having a date with her and all. It made me so nervous I nearly went crazy. I already told you what a sexy bastard Stradlater was" (19). In order to gain more insight of Holden's obsession over Stradlater, I generated a cluster cloud around the term *stradlater* to see what words occurred in proximity (refer to Figure 2). Some of these words were Stradlater's own, but I focused on Holden's specifically in order to see what terms he associated with Stradlater's character. Many of these terms, such as *sexy, handsome,* and *date,* characterize him as a "dominant male," and Holden's

dislike of Stradlater is apparent in terms such as *goddam, hated,* and *bastard.* His excessive use of swear words in this section also demonstrates his fear of Stradlater's dominance, and Holden's influx in *goddam* and *bastard* is an attempt to match Stradlater's power and masculinity by giving himself a sense of verbal power.

Figure 2: *Stradlater* Cluster



Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. "Trends." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

From these correlations, I traced Holden's nervousness to a reaction against Stradlater's physical power and sexuality, which undermines Holden's own sexuality and threatens Jane's childish innocence. Conversely, Holden's other roommate, Ackley, is the antithesis of Stradlater's sexuality. Holden describes him, saying, "a virgin if I ever saw one. I doubt if he ever even gave anybody a feel" (21). The two roommates present two alternate sexual identities to Holden, and he quickly rejects both, wanting to be free of the "biological imperatives" of adulthood yet not completely severed from them (Bryan 1067). Holden's swear usage begins to decline after Stradlater beats him in a fist fight, instigated by Holden because of Stradlater's refusal to give him the details of his date with Jane, and Stradlater remains the dominant male. Holden has a brief moment of reflection in the mirror: "You never saw such gore in your life. I had blood all over my mouth and chin and even on my pajamas and bath robe. It

partly scared me and it partly fascinated me" (25). His victimization ironically gives Holden a sense of power as a fallen hero, and he fantasizes himself as a martyr dying to protect Jane against Stradlater's sexual advances.

After a decline in Segments 3-4, Holden's vulgarity surfaces again in his encounter with the pimp Maurice (refer to Graph 1). Although Holden has already paid for the prostitute's services, which he did not use, Maurice demands extra money. When Holden refuses and calls him "a goddam dirty moron" (56), Maurice punches him in the stomach and takes his wallet. Holden stumbles to the bathroom and once again has a moment of morbid imagination:

> I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts . . . I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom . . . with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit . . . I'd hold onto the banister and all, with this blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time . . . and then I'd ring the elevator bell. As soon as old Maurice opened the doors, he'd see me with the automatic in my hand and he'd start screaming at me. . . . But I'd plug him anyway. Six shots right through his fat hairy belly. (56)

The spikes in Holden's vulgarity correspond to situations of male violence involving a third-party female object (in this case, the prostitute), and he excessively uses words such as *goddam*, *damn*, and *hell* to imbue himself with sense of power in front of his male contenders. I also generated a cluster cloud surrounding Maurice (refer to Figure 3), and while Holden does not characterize Maurice as someone "suave" and "sexy" like Stradlater, he describes him as someone who has the ability to inflict physical violence, using words such as *plugged, big, stealing, chief, chisel,* and *break.* Maurice acts as a substitute parental figure and reprimands Holden, saying, "Want your parents to know you spent the night with a whore? High-class kid

Figure 3: Maurice Cluster

Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. "Trends." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

like you?" (55). Through his fantasy, Holden attempts to reimagine himself as a worthy opponent, inflicting revenge on Maurice, but in reality he is terrified, telling the reader, "I was still sort of crying. I was so damn mad and nervous and all" (56). After returning to his hotel room, Holden is unable to fall asleep and even contemplates suicide, but he decides against it, saying he doesn't want people "looking at me when I was all gory" (57).

The last spike in Holden's vulgarity occurs between document Segments 7 and 8 (refer to Graph 1), when he experiences his "dark night of the soul" (Bryan 1070) and stumbles around New York drunk. Once again, Holden imagines that there is a "bullet in his guts" and considers calling Jane:

> I sat at that goddam bar till around one o'clock or so, getting drunk as a bastard…I was careful as hell not to get boisterous or anything…I started that stupid business with the bullet in my guts again….I kept putting my hand under my jacket, on my stomach and all, to keep the blood from dripping all over the place…I was concealing the fact that I was a wounded sonuvabitch. Finally what I felt like, I felt like giving old Jane a buzz and see if she was home yet. (80)

In this section, the male contender is Holden himself, and his wounds are self-inflicted by his neurotic imagination. Jane Gallagher still acts as the absent female, whom he looks to as a possible source of healing and attention, but by doing so, he also associates her with violence and pain. The specific placement of the imaginary bullet in Holden's abdomen is significant as well: violence and pain are paired with Holden' s sexual vulnerability and fear.

Nearing the end of the novel, Holden's usage of *goddam* reaches its lowest frequency in document Segments 9 and 10 (refer to Graph 1) when he visits his little sister Phoebe, a figure of innocence and stability for Holden. Initially, I supposed this decrease was due to Holden's consideration of Phoebe's young age; however, it is Phoebe herself who actually calls out Holden for his vulgarity, demanding that he "stop swearing" (92, 93). It is especially significant that in this dialogue, Phoebe and Holden are discussing their deceased brother, Allie. Holden says, "I like Allie . . . And I like doing what I'm doing right now. Sitting here with you, and talking, and thinking about stuff." Phoebe cuts him off abruptly: "Allie's dead" (92). Phoebe, while ironically a symbol of youth and innocence for Holden, forces Holden to face the reality of his brother's death, snapping him out of his fantasy in which Allie is alive and well. While Holden confides in his younger sister, telling the reader that "you'd like her" (37), she also unnerves him as she is the female version of his dead brother. Physically, Allie and Phoebe resemble each other: "She has this sort of red hair, a bit like Allie's was, that's very short in the summer time" (36). She reminds Holden of Allie, yet she also reminds him of Allie's death, forcing Holden out of fantasy and back into reality.

After pinpointing Holden's neurotic breakdowns, I decided to conclude my investigative process by generating a cluster graph around the general terms *nervous* and *anxious* in order to identify the possible neurotic triggers of Holden's behavior (refer to Figure 4). I found that many

of the words which cluster in proximity around *anxious* and *nervous* were words associated with sexuality and sensuality, such as *mature, suave, touch, voice, felt, dark, lips, sexy, date,* and *shaking.* From this preliminary research, I was able to gather that Holden is easily disturbed by sexual encounters, especially ones involving a dominating male figure such as Stradlater or Maurice.

Figure 4: Nervous/Anxious Cluster Map

Source: Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. "Trends." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

Secondly, the term *Allie*, associated with the term *nervous*, stood out to me as an obvious connection to Holden's neurosis because his traumatic memories of Allie's death. Holden

describes his breakdown, saying, ". . . I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it. . . . My hand still hurts me once in a while when it rains and all, and I can't make a real fist any more—not a tight one, I mean—but outside of that I don't care much. I mean I'm not going to be a goddam surgeon or a violinist or anything anyway" (21). Holden's broken fist acts as a metaphor for Holden's mental handicap, and more specifically, his impotence. His inability to be a "goddam surgeon" mirrors his inability to prevent death from affecting his loved ones, and his inability to be a violinist represents his inability to perform sexually, since Holden associates a woman's body with "a violin, and that it takes a terrific musician to play it right" (50).

I also found that these two fears, sex and death, are married in Holden's mind. After relating the *nervous/anxious* word clusters back to Holden's neurotic fantasies, I saw that each fantasy associated the failure of Holden's sexuality, either with Jane or the prostitute, with a dominating male figure who then "punishes" him for his failure. He seeks the innocent female figure for idolization and devotion, but he never has the courage to actually "give old Jane a buzz," and so he continually replays these fantasies in his isolated mind. Holden constantly sees this association in the world around him (Bryan 1067). One particular example is when Holden stares out his hotel window and looks at the couples in the other building. There is one couple in particular that Holden finds unsettling:

> . . . he was giving her a feel under the table, and at the same time telling her all about some guy in his dorm that had eaten a whole bottle of aspirin and nearly committed suicide. His date kept saying to him, "How horrible . . . Don't, darling. Please, don't. Not here." Imagine giving somebody a feel and telling them about a guy committing suicide at the same time! They killed me. (46)

This marriage of sex and death is obscene and terrifying for Holden, and he constantly views himself as being caught in the crossfire. Upon further reflection, I would add that while Holden is terrified by the outside world and adulthood's "biological imperatives" (Bryan 1062), Holden is ultimately afraid of himself. While he wishes to be a "catcher in the rye" (93), a heroic figure that keeps children from falling off the cliff into impeding adulthood, Holden is terrified of becoming the villain and jumping off the cliff on his own volition.

Despite Holden's anxieties and neurotic behaviors, the novel ends with a faint note of joy, as Holden watches Phoebe ride the carousel: "I felt so damn happy all of sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling. . . . It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there" (114). The repetitive cycle of the carousel stops time for Holden, and he briefly sees Phoebe persevered in childhood and himself as her curator. It is this experience with which Holden chooses to end his narrative, and while he admits that he "got sick and all" (115) and is under supervision at a medical institution, Holden begins to gain control over his identity through the telling of his story. His language may be simple, low-style, and at many times vulgar, but through his expressive and messy diction, he is able to give the reader a vivid glimpse into his mind and neurotic behaviors, pleading for empathy, understanding, and help.

Works Cited

Bryan, James. "The Psychological Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*." *PMLA*, vol. 89, no. 5, 1974, pp. 1065-1074. *JSTOR,* doi:10.2307/461377.

Costello, Donald P. "The Language of 'The Catcher in the Rye.'" *American Speech*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1 Oct. 1959, pp. 172–181. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/454038?refreqid=search-gateway:304afd365b7923e0351c6602fa7cff16.

Frangedis, Helen. "Dealing with the Controversial Elements in 'The Catcher in the Rye.'" *The English Journal*, vol. 77, no. 7, 1988, pp. 72–75. *JSTOR,* doi:10.2307/818945.

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye.* 1951. http://www.pu.if.ua/depart/Inmov/resource/file/samostijna_robota/Catcher_In_The_Rye_-_J_D_Salinger.pdf.

Sinclair, Stéfan, and Geoffrey Rockwell. "Trends." *Voyant Tools*, 2018, <http://voyant-tools.org>.

Commentary

Special Topic: Digital Humanities

Emily Youree

"You're in *My* Game Now": Player Agency in *The Stanley Parable*

"*The Stanley Parable* is an exploration of story, games, and choice. Except the story doesn't matter, it might not even be a game, and if you ever actually do have a choice, well let me know how you did it."
--thestanleyparable.com

As the world of the humanities begins to embrace the digital, storytelling in a digital medium is a widespread topic of discussion in popular culture: creators are experimenting with new digital tools in webcomics, podcasts, self-publishing, and, most controversially, video games. In academia, the debate over whether video games are the future of texts or the destruction of them is ongoing. Discussing video games as a form of text on an equal level with literature and film can be uncomfortable—the very words "video game" and "player" imply entertainment and sport rather than academic scholarship, and a quick *Google* search of "video game analysis" results primarily in *Reddit* forums and *YouTube* channels rather than peer-reviewed journal articles. It is little wonder that academia is torn over how to address this new medium. However, regardless of the resolution of this debate, which will no doubt take years to reach, video games are currently the most prominent form of digital storytelling and the best example of the effects a digital medium can have on a text. The most striking of the unique digital tools at video games' disposal is the interactivity and agency of the "reader" within the text. One video game that clearly demonstrates these tools is *The Stanley Parable*, released in 2013 by David Wreden and Galactic Cafe. *The Stanley Parable* demonstrates how player agency

can function as a narrative tool in video games by offering agency to the player only sparingly and often taking it away.

The premise of *The Stanley Parable* is deceptively simple: the reader is placed in the role of a man named Stanley, who works in an office where his job is to push buttons on a keyboard when instructed. One day, no instructions come; Stanley finds that all his coworkers have disappeared and ventures outside his cramped office to find the answer to the mystery, marking the beginning of gameplay. As Stanley wanders through the hallways, his actions are related by the Narrator, a professional, male voice with a British accent—voiced by Kevan Brighting ("The Stanley Parable")—who serves as the other main character. However, to complicate matters, the Narrator begins to relate actions that Stanley has not yet taken: most notably, as Stanley enters a room with two open doors (the first choice the game gives to the player), the Narrator coolly declares that "Stanley entered the door on his left" (see Fig. 1) (*The Stanley Parable*). The player can instead choose to enter the right door, to the Narrator's annoyance, and when the Narrator claims that "Eager to get back to business, Stanley took the first open door on his left" (*The Stanley Parable*), the reader can choose to ignore him. Each choice leads to a different outcome, adding up to nineteen possible endings. This is the arena in which *The Stanley Parable* explores reader agency.

Fig. 1. Stanley's first choice. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

Before analyzing the game, a brief overview of video games' characteristics when viewed as texts is helpful. A unique facet of video games in comparison to other forms of text is interactivity: the reader (or "player") is cast as a character in the narrative and acts within the text. Games can be third-person (in which the player sees the full character on the screen, watching the character jump as he or she presses "A") or first-person (in which the player sees through the eyes of the character, watching the world on screen shift down momentarily as he or she presses "A"). *The Stanley Parable* is a first-person game, one remarkably aware of that choice. Stanley is a tongue-in-cheek nod to an "everyman" character, trapped in a monotonous job and a post-industrial, sterile, office landscape—an arch representation of postmodernity. A layer of metatextuality appears in this characterization as well: he spends all his time sitting in front of a computer pressing buttons on a keyboard when instructed (*The Stanley Parable*), just as the player sits in front of his or her computer, pressing buttons on a keyboard to operate within the game. Even the Main Menu screen declares the relation of the player to Stanley: it depicts a computer sitting on a desk, with a Droste effect of the same computer and desk within the screen (*The Stanley Parable*). The player's computer screen adds another layer to the pattern (see Fig. 2). Through these metatextual elements, *The Stanley Parable* makes it clear that it is drawing the player within the text, and, for the purposes of *The Stanley Parable* and this essay, the player and Stanley are one and the same while gameplay continues.

Fig. 2. The main menu of *The Stanley Parable*, featuring a meta-textual Droste effect. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

The insertion of the player into the text results in interesting effects on the agency and actions of the player in *The Stanley Parable*. As a video game, it emphasizes interactivity in a way that no other form of text does: films can replicate movement through a hall or an actor can stare into the camera, and actors in plays can address the audience or pull an extra from the front rows, but neither of these mediums allows for lasting audience agency in the text. Books do have an option for interactivity: the Choose Your Own Adventure series, a staple of libraries' children's sections from the 80s and 90s, offers as many as forty endings for each book ("History of CYOA"). However, although these books have been formative in the creation of video games as popular as Mass Effect II ("History of CYOA"), they are a niche genre, their impact further narrowed by their classification as children's literature. Books, as a whole, do not require interactivity. For video games, however, interactivity is lifeblood: even *Pong*, in which the player's agency is reduced to scrolling a line up and down to hit a moving pixel, is dependent upon player interactivity. This particular prominence of reader agency gives video games a unique set of tools to construct an atmosphere and narrative.

When the Narrator describes Stanley's actions or gives him directions, he is speaking directly to the player. Being given instructions by an unseen authority makes simple actions much more complex; rather than simply walking through the right or the left door, the player must make a deliberate decision to obey or disobey authority—when the game makes it explicitly clear that each choice has a consequence. The Narrator's addresses to the player also create a sense of interaction. Although the player cannot reply vocally within the game, when the Narrator's comments become increasingly impertinent, the player's natural response is to reply through action, lingering in rooms as he becomes impatient or following paths against his

instructions. The insertion of the player into the text shapes the narrative through the player's actions.

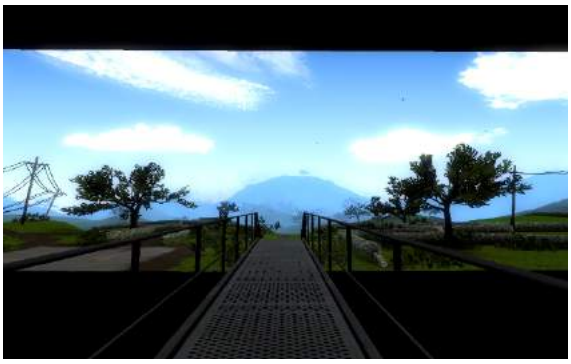
Of the nineteen endings achievable in *The Stanley Parable*, most end in Stanley's (and, by extension, the player's) loss of agency—whether Stanley is trapped walking in circles until the Narrator declares that he has gone insane, or he scurries helplessly around a control room futilely trying to diffuse a bomb set by the Narrator. Almost any attempt to assert agency over the story results in retaliation by the Narrator. However, rather than restricting the player's options, *The Stanley Parable* uses these endings to create a sense of exploration (at least initially). The player acts differently knowing that the worst that can happen is that the game will restart, and "finding" the various endings could be viewed as a goal of the game. Meandering exploration becomes a replacement for narrative, even though it never leads to definitive answers. The loading screen makes this explicitly clear, displaying a band of words stretching across the bottom of the screen: "THE END IS NEVER THE END IS NEVER" (see Fig. 3). Being designed for repetition also gives *The Stanley Parable* the opportunity to explore many different answers to the question of agency and control within the text, which is another unique aspect of video games as a text. Only through interactivity can the same story have multiple endings, gesturing toward free will and creating metatextuality in which the game blurs into the player's life. The official description elaborates on these repetitions and their variations: "The game is not here to fight you; it is inviting you to dance" ("The Stanley Parable"). Through player agency, *The Stanley Parable* is able to create a multifoliate narrative with, if not infinite possibilities, then at least eighteen more than other forms of media.

Fig. 3. *The Stanley Parable*'s loading screen. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

Each ending utilizes interactivity to convey its meaning, which is almost always that there is no satisfactory end. *The Stanley Parable* gives the player no closure and presents no "right answer," and any free will that the game's interactivity gives the player is soon revealed to be an illusion. If the player chooses to do the opposite of everything the Narrator says—fully exerting agency—Stanley ends up in a starkly plain apartment, where the Narrator reveals that Stanley's wife is a mannequin and begins to narrate that the entire adventure has been in Stanley's imagination. The player is trapped in the tight confines of a room, unable to open the only door, and the narration only progresses when the player responds to an on-screen command to press various keys, just as the Narrator describes Stanley doing. Each time the player presses the required key, the room becomes more like Stanley's office (see Figs. 4 and 5). The player is reduced to Stanley's state of helplessness by the game's careful removal of the player's agency and metatextual re-creation of Stanley's situation for the player.

Figs. 4 and 5. The player is forced to turn Stanley's apartment into his office. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

If the player does exactly as the Narrator says, the Narrator begins to describe more and more of Stanley's feelings and thoughts, encroaching increasingly on the player's agency and control. Stanley arrives at a room blatantly labelled "Mind Control Facility" (see Fig. 6), discovers that he and his coworkers have been brainwashed and, if the player follows the Narrator's instructions, permanently disables the mind control apparatus. The wall miraculously opens to reveal blue sky and green grass beyond the confines of the office (see Fig. 7), and while Stanley walks out into this new world, the player completely loses agency as Stanley looks around and moves forward without any input from the keyboard—marking a shift of control from the player to the Narrator. As the Narrator waxes poetic, claiming that Stanley is free and has "unshackled himself from someone else's command" (*The Stanley Parable*), the player and Stanley are ironically more trapped than ever. The player followed the Narrator's instructions without exercising agency and so loses that agency in that path's ending.



Figs. 6 and 7. The "Mind Control Facility" and the world behind it, in which Stanley is controlled. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

Between these two extreme paths lie many variations of the same themes, most of which result in the removal of the player's agency. One of the most interesting of the endings is the Confusion Ending. After detouring twice from the Narrator's path, Stanley enters a room with four closed doors from which the usually self-assured Narrator seems unsure how to proceed. After the Narrator forcibly restarts the game four times in order to "find the story" (which the Narrator claims to have written) with similar results, including a failed attempt to make Stanley follow a literal story line (see Fig. 8), the Narrator decides that they will "make up our own story" (*The Stanley Parable*). Finally, the Narrator and Stanley arrive at a room with a wide screen labelled "The Confusion Ending," listing the events that lead up to the first restart, followed by a summary of each subsequent restart—listing "Find the Confusion Ending Schedule" under the fourth restart before continuing on to list four more restarts after it (see Fig. 9) (*The Stanley Parable*). The Narrator is distraught, demanding to know why he doesn't get to decide, and that he doesn't "want to be trapped like this"—effectively trapped and robbed of agency just as Stanley has been (*The Stanley Parable*). When he refuses to restart the game, the

game restarts on its own, overriding the control of the otherwise all-powerful Narrator (*The Stanley Parable*). He has been overpowered by the text that he claims to have created. While most endings result in the player's lack of agency, the Confusion Ending removes agency from the Narrator as well, suggesting that, at least in some cases, the text itself is more powerful even than its creator.

Fig 8. The Stanley Parable Adventure Line devolves into chaos. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

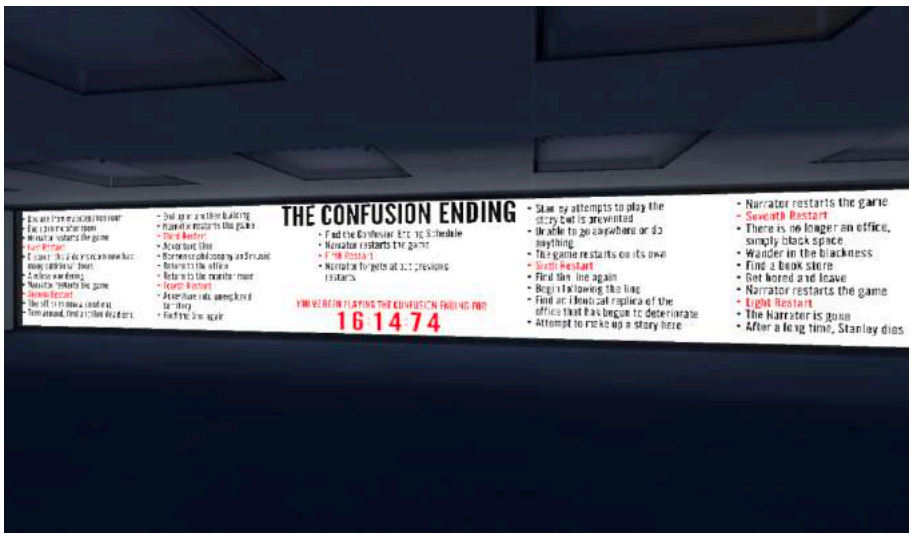


Fig. 9. The Confusion Ending Schedule. *The Stanley Parable*, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam.

Once again, in a complex metacommentary, the Confusion Ending demonstrates the techniques uniquely available to a digital medium. By moving in this empty beige hallway for an absurdly long time and turning too many corners in too quick succession to be operating in a physically possible space, the player fully experiences the preposterousness of the situation when the Narrator asks Stanley what he wants "our story" to be, urging him to "go wild—use your imagination" (*The Stanley Parable*). The game uses these tools to comment upon the agency of the reader in comparison to the agency of the author. When the path down which the Narrator first leads Stanley ends at a location that the Narrator deems to be "all a spoiler," he cries, "Quick Stanley! Close your eyes!" (*The Stanley Parable*). However, the player is allowed full motion and a full view of the scene before Stanley. The Narrator cannot make Stanley or the player close their eyes, and they choose not to. Similarly, after the first restart, when the Narrator and Stanley find four closed doors in a room that usually only contains two, the Narrator demands to know if Stanley changed anything—when Stanley is repeatedly shown to be helpless in the Narrator's game, without options to change any aspect of it (*The Stanley Parable*). This context gives the Narrator's question a tone of irony, but also raises more questions about the player's agency: might the player have more power than the Narrator has been suggesting? After all, in a way the player did change something: by choosing the specific path that led to the Confusion Ending, the reader set those events in motion, ultimately creating the very scenario that the Narrator accuses Stanley of creating. Furthermore, at the end of each play-through (within the Confusion Ending and within the game as a whole), the restarting of the game clips off the end of the Narrator's last words to Stanley, stepping on the Narrator's toes even as he demands to get the last word (*The Stanley Parable*). One of the future events on the schedule is

"Narrator forgets about previous restarts" (*The Stanley Parable*), reminding the player that, unlike the Narrator, the player remembers his or her past actions and the results of each ending, giving the player even more agency compared to the Narrator. The very tools used to remove player agency are, paradoxically, the same that return it.

In 2016, STX Entertainment released *Hardcore Henry*, an action film shot almost entirely from a first-person perspective, which was an obvious homage to video games and first-person shooter games in particular. The film was crowdfunded through Indiegogo, reaching $254,954 out of its $250,000 goal ("Hardcore—The First Ever Action POV Feature Film"), but the film holds a meager 50% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes ("Hardcore Henry") and two and a half stars on Roger Ebert.com (Abrams), with many citing its contrived plot and nauseating camera movement as its detracting factors. The reason critics suggest bringing Dramamine is the same reason that the film fails to capture the entire effect of a videogame: its first-person perspective gives the impression of audience agency without actually giving the audience agency. Their merit as art aside, video games, through the interactivity of a digital medium, are able to offer perspectives that books and films generally cannot. Although *The Stanley Parable's* emphasis on player agency ultimately makes the player feel more acutely the limits on his or her free will, the tools it uses to achieve that end demonstrate the wide array of opportunities that digital tools create for storytelling. The game gives its players agency only sparingly and usually removes it soon after, and through this exact allotment the game illustrates the possibilities that interactivity offers as a narrative tool: creating multifoliate narratives; metatextuality; and commentary on the relationships among an author, text, and reader. Through the unique tools of a digital medium, *The Stanley Parable* offers insight into both video games and stories themselves.

Acknowledgement

Neither this paper nor the thoughts behind it would have been possible without the input of my brother and go-to expert on video games, Charles Youree. Thank you for introducing me to *The Stanley Parable* and being patient when I forget which key makes the character move.

Works Cited

Abrams, Simon. "Hardcore Henry." rogerebert.com, https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/hardcore-henry-2016.

"Hardcore – The First Ever Action POV Feature Film." Indiegogo, https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/hardcore-the-first-ever-action-pov-feature-film#/. Accessed 4 March 2018.

"Hardcore Henry." Rotten Tomatoes, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hardcore_henry/. Accessed 4 March 2018.

"History of CYOA." Choose Your Own Adventure, https://www.cyoa.com/pages/history-of-cyoa. Accessed April 16, 2018.

The Stanley Parable, Galactic Cafe, 2013. Steam. Accessed March 4, 2018. "The Stanley Parable." https://www.stanleyparable.com/.

Contributors

Isabel Azar will graduate from Samford with a double major in English and Theatre. For more of her work, visit her blog, "Frivolities and Fancies from My Lead-Smudged Left Hand" (frivolitiesandfancies.blogspot.com<http://frivolitiesandfancies.blogspot.com>).

Sydney Berry is a senior English major from Memphis, TN. In her spare time, she imagines worlds and people and attempts to make them into literature.

David Beutel is a senior University Fellow majoring in History, Spanish, and Global Studies. He is from Calhoun, Georgia, and likes to travel.

Bailey Bridgeman is a senior from Dallas, Texas. She is a University Fellow and is studying English and Classics. After graduation, she plans to teach Latin in Dallas.

Zoe Cruz is a junior English major in the Creative Writing concentration with a minor in Psychology. She is the secretary of the University Fellows Leadership Council and is a member of the Howard Scholars program. After graduation, Zoe will pursue a career in education teaching middle school English. Her favorite writers are John Steinbeck and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Claire Davis is a junior University Fellow from Birmingham, AL, studying English and Classics. Besides writing essays and short stories, she also produces a podcast through the Samford Traditions and Oral History Recording Initiative.

Jillian A. Fantin is a sophomore University Fellow majoring in English and Political Science, who, when not writing, enjoys activism, David Bowie, thrifting Hawaiian shirts, and playing the ukulele and (soon!) the autoharp.

Katie-Bryn Hubbard is a senior University Fellow majoring in English with a concentration in Film Studies and is the president of the Film Club. She will graduate this spring with an English degree and high hopes of following in the footsteps of her film hero, Roderick Jaynes, to become a film editor.

Bridget Rose is the Director of the Academic Success Center at Samford University and an Assistant Professor in the Core Curriculum. Her essay on St. Perpetua is part of a larger scholarly interest in early Christian saints and martyrs.

Lynette Moore Sandley is an Assistant Professor of English/Core and has been a faculty member at Samford since 1997. Her poems have been published in *Voices International* and *Vidal's Quarterly*. She and Don Sandley adapted Georges Feydeau's classic farce *A Flea in Her Ear* re-set in New Orleans and produced by Samford in 1999.

Jared Skinner is a junior History major and committed cinephile. He and his brother create odd, thought-provoking material for a short film account entitled “Skinner Brothers Films” on YouTube.

Dr. Julie Steward is Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Samford University. Her poetry has appeared in *The Kennesaw Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Most recently, she was invited to read her poetry in Las Vegas, NV, at the annual conference of the Far West Popular Culture Association.
