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CRITERION

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"If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts."

❖ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

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CRITERION

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY CRITICISM

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Editors' Note

Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism represents the volunteer efforts of student authors and editors working to refine the essays on literary criticism found in this journal. The journal is run by students, publishing student work, overseen by a faculty advisor, and supported by the English Department at Brigham Young University.

The articles in the fall issues of *Criterion* come from the annual BYU English Symposium. The essays in this issue represent some of the best work from the 2016 rendition of that symposium. Each of the essays chosen were then further developed through an additional editing process. We chose the articles published in this journal based on their valuable content and innovative ideas.

We are thankful for a team of student editors who worked with the authors of these papers to once again go through the editing process and refine their work. The final journal is the product of each of our editors who brought their expertise, dedication, and a willingness to learn each week as they edited. We are also thankful for all the authors who took the time to revise their papers. Each contributor should be proud of the work published here.

We would like to thank Chelsea Lee for her continued efforts while she studied abroad. Her work on the journal before and during her time abroad were often behind-the-scenes, but essential.

As new Editors-in-Chief we are particularly grateful for the guidance of our Faculty Advisor Emron Esplin. We frequently found ourselves lost in our new experience, and his leadership helped us move the journal forward through each step of its creation and publication. We would also like to thank the BYU Department of English for their patronage and support.

As the Editors-in-Chief of this journal, we are excited to present the efforts of many in this latest edition of *Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism*.

Esther Raty and Makayla Okamura

Eve's Feminist Wave

Heather Randall

Paradise Lost has been studied critically since the seventeenth century, and yet there is still something that scholars and readers cannot agree on: what is up with Eve? Students of Milton argue about the role she plays in this epic that describes the greatest heroism in history. Could Eve possibly be part of that great heroism? I propose that viewing Eve's role in *Paradise Lost* through the lens of third-wave feminism can help us better understand her heroic role in the story. By comparing Eve to third-wave feminists, the breadth and depth of her heroic character becomes evident; however, her true heroism is unveiled by examining how she differs from third-wave feminists in selflessness and restraint. This repression of her own desires for the good of those around her leads her to become, if not the epic's hero,¹ then at least Adam's hero, and certainly the hero of humanity.

Seeing Eve in this modern feminist view helps the reader understand the decisions Eve makes throughout the work. One aspect of her character can be framed in an important part of third-wave feminism: the “reclamation of femininity” that occurs as today's women embrace feminine traits that previous feminist movements fought against (Reger 111). For example, the second wave of feminism in the United States rejected stereotypically female ideas, fighting to change the stereotype that a woman's place was the home. Sewing, knitting, cooking, cleaning—any activity that women were typically thought to participate in was de-emphasized as much as possible in order to undercut the “symbols of patriarchal control” (111) in society. Third-wave feminists, however,

have subverted this idea, emphasizing those same typically feminine activities as “tools for women’s empowerment” instead of symbols for patriarchy (110). For third-wavers, empowerment does not come from the activity itself; instead “the ability to choose one’s appearance or activities is what matters” (109). In third-wave feminism, the choice itself gives power to the woman.

Eve finds her tool of feminine empowerment in the Garden of Eden as she nurtures the nature around her. Carrying out the command of God to “prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers” (Milton 4.438), Eve chooses to give the garden her vitality and quickly excels as gardener of the heavenly surroundings. Eve is found “oft stooping to support / Each flower of slender stalk, whose head . . . Hung drooping unsustained; them she upstays / Gently” (9.426–32). Eve is literally able to give power to the flowers around her as she works with them. With this powerful choice of activity, the Garden of Eden becomes subject to Eve’s rule, flourishing now under her hand instead of under God’s, even though God originally gave it life. Of most importance for the third-wave feminist is the direct effect of this tool of Eve’s empowerment on Eve as a woman. Julie Kim suggests that the work Eve accomplishes in the garden gives her a sense of self-worth and identity (22), and I agree. In this work that Eve performs independently, she does exactly what feminists today venerate, empowering not only herself but also the things around her.

Another key to understanding third-wave feminism and Eve’s character is understanding the extent to which this wave of feminism “is all about contradictions” (Orr 35). When discussing what groups one feminist identifies with, she explains, “I suffer from an acute case of multiplicity” (Gilmore 218). Some feminists report that contradictions surface specifically because of the definitions of feminism that the second wave provided for the current generation. Angela Davis explains that feminists today “lay claim to feminist consciousness even as they engage in rituals, careers, sexual practices, and cultural politics that they take to be decidedly ‘unfeminist’ according to standards of second-wave feminism” (Walker 281). Third-wave feminism deals with a contradiction that is never fully reconciled: on one side, there are expectations to live up to, while on the other side exists a new, unique “feminist consciousness.” Eve suffers this same predicament in *Paradise Lost*.

Eve’s situation is very familiar to the third-wave feminist. What she desires to do contradicts what God’s expectations of womanhood demand of her. From the time she first gains consciousness, her first desire is to continue looking at her reflection. When she meets Adam, however, she finds him “less fair . . . than that

smooth wat'ry image" and back she turns to continue admiring her own reflection (Milton 4.478–80). God gave Adam to Eve in order to make Eve happy, but Eve has a much different idea of what will bring her that happiness. Although both God and Eve desire the same goal—happiness and success in the Garden of Eden—each side wants to accomplish that goal in different ways. Later, Eve tells Adam she would rather work by herself in the garden, despite Adam's protests that they will be more likely to resist evil together. Again, Eve's wishes disagree—not from the desire to resist evil, but in how to accomplish it. Eve argues they can only be truly strong if their virtues are tested, and so she ventures off into the garden without Adam, willing to stand for the things she claims to believe in and hoping to become stronger by so doing (9.378–83). Eve desires success and happiness within the Garden, but she is entangled in this contradiction as she struggles between her ways and God's ways. As Eve must grapple with the same complexities that third-wave feminists must, her independence will give us insight into her depth of character.

Another aspect of third-wave feminism that relates to Eve's role in *Paradise Lost* is the idea of "embodied politics." This is the method of "resisting cultural norms through dress and appearance" (Reger 117), the idea of using the body in a stereotypical way to make a statement against that stereotype. For example, third-wave feminists may wear sexually suggestive clothing in order to protest cultural standards about rape. Embodied politics works against stereotypes to empower women.

Eve may not consciously utilize embodied politics, but her physicality still has a powerful effect over Adam. In Eve's case, the angels of heaven provide the negative stereotype of Eve's physicality that she subverts. The angel Raphael shares with Adam that Eve "in outward also [resembles] less / His image who made both, and less [expresses] / The character of that dominion giv'n" (Milton 8.543–5). However, Eve's physical presence has been working on Adam to overthrow this stereotype, however angelic, of Raphael's. Adam tells him, "Yet when I approach / Her loveliness, so absolute she seems / And in herself complete" (8.546–8). While never denying Raphael's statement, Adam testifies that whenever he sees Eve she seems already complete, lacking nothing of what Raphael previously suggests. Eve's embodied politics fight against even celestial stereotypes, a complexity that makes Eve more than just a female presence within the epic.

Thus Eve's role in *Paradise Lost* gains a deeper essence in connection with third-wave feminism; as a reader, using this contemporary lens helps Eve

become femininely complex and independent with a purpose. However, only as the differences between Eve and third-wave feminists are examined can Eve be understood as a hero of the story. She may not be quite the third-wave feminist that this comparison has so far made her seem. Her heroism is only possible because she makes decisions of selflessness that third-wave feminists would not consider. Eve does not take part in a fight against the patriarchy, which is a prevalent current in today's feminism, because of her love for Adam. And lastly, third-wave feminism focuses on enjoying the female body and all its sexual desires, things which Eve abstains from in favor of her future posterity.

The concept of fighting against a patriarchal society that oppresses women is a foundational building block of third-wave feminism. One woman explains how this battle against patriarchy guides her actions; she gets involved in third-wave feminist activities like lesbianism because they help her be a participant in the "rejection of patriarchal power" (Reger 116). Milton describes Adam and Eve's relationship by giving a taste of this patriarchy; the sexes are not equal, and Eve perpetually seems a degree away from God and a degree below Adam. Textual evidence suggests that Eve is aware of this disparity and, after eating the fruit of the tree, even contemplates becoming superior to her husband with her new knowledge.

. . . Shall I to him make known
 As yet my change, and give him to partake
 Full happiness with me, or rather not,
 But keep the odds of knowledge in power
 Without copartner? so to add what wants
 In female sex, the more to draw his love,
 And render me more equal . . . sometime
 Superior; for inferior who is free? (9.820-5)

Though Eve could have made the decision to have the upper hand in their relationship, she chooses unity with her husband instead. Her love for him overpowers her desire to fight against any type of inferiority she senses. In fact, the love she has for him and her desire to see him happy motivate her to choose the almost unthinkable—instead of fighting against Adam, she offers to spiritually give up her life for him. In repentant humility, Eve tells her husband, “[I] to the

place of judgment will return . . . blame from thy head removed may light / On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe, / Me me only just object of [God's] ire" (10.932–6). With those words, Eve becomes a Christ figure, willing to sacrifice her own happiness for Adam's. This love-inspired act towards the man in her life, something third-wave feminists may not even consider, makes Eve a hero in *Paradise Lost*.

The final aspect of third-wave feminism from which Eve differs is in the pursuit of sexual pleasures. Feminists today believe that a woman, empowered and independent, has the right to follow her desires, especially her sexual desires. Stephanie Gilmore describes how third-wavers today ask if they "should . . . ignore the fact that they might enjoy pornography . . . or like to be a man," or want to engage in one-night stands? (217). The third-wavers answer, "Don't ignore it!" Women, they believe, have the right and privilege to pursue those desires. Interestingly, *Paradise Lost* is not devoid of sexual issues, and those issues revolve around Adam and Eve's relationship.

When it comes to wanting sexual pleasures, Eve comfortably fits this mold—she has sexual desires too. Milton often focuses on Adam and Eve's sexual relationship, calling it a "perpetual fountain of domestic sweets" (4.742). In one scene, the desire for those "domestic sweets" is strong: "Carnal desire inflaming, [Adam] on Eve / Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him / As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn" (9.1013–5). Especially after the fruit is eaten and the fall has begun, Eve desires sexual pleasures just like third-wavers today and does not stop herself from going after them. After her attitude becomes repentant, however, Eve makes the deliberate choice not to seek after her sexual desires, no matter how much she may want to, in order to save her posterity from the sorrows of living in a fallen world. She tells Adam that she is willing to avoid their domestic sweets "so Death . . . with us two / Be forced to satisfy his rav'nous maw" (10.990–1), thus sparing her children from a life that promises death. Eve is fully aware of the sexual desire she will have to deny herself, admitting it will be "hard and difficult, / Conversing, looking, loving, to abstain / From love's due rites . . ." (10.992–8). However, no matter how difficult, she chooses to restrain herself from her pleasures in favor of her posterity. Though Adam and Eve ultimately become reconciled to God and a plan is put in place for their salvation and the salvation of their posterity, Eve's willingness to sacrifice for her future generations makes her a hero to their cause.

This contemporary look at Milton's seventeenth-century Eve may seem strange at the onset, but a third-wave feminist view of Eve is a refreshing fit for

this female character who has many decisions to make throughout the work and who often receives too much criticism for making one wrong one. However, Milton's Eve is made up of a surprising strength in complexity and feminine power that makes her an independent woman in her own way, with sincere intent to do good for God in her state of creation. After a good look at Eve through a third-wave lens, she can be viewed not as the almost-hero of *Paradise Lost* who commits a tragic mistake, but instead as the one woman in *Paradise Lost* who becomes a hero to her husband and her posterity because of the selfless decisions she makes.

Endnotes

- ¹ As we consider a female character's heroic place in her story, it might be surprising to find her labeled hero instead of heroine. Although the decision to call Eve a hero in this essay is perhaps surprising, I made the decision deliberately, bearing in mind the connotations of both hero and heroine. Whether heroes are found in comic books, military uniforms, or even behind the scenes in ordinary life, when we read the word hero we think of bravery, selflessness, and overall goodness. In our society today, women are becoming more and more included in this term. This is what makes the use of heroine unnecessary. The word calls attention to the gender of the one acting bravely or selflessly; before we know it, we have switched our focus away from the exceptional actions that allow us to label the woman heroic in the first place. Whether assigned to man or woman, heroic acts are subverted in their greatness if they must first be qualified by gender. Society's politics aside, the word heroine is too limiting for the heroic caliber of a woman. Thus, as we discuss the heroic actions Milton assigns to Eve, let us not limit those actions by gender. Let us forthrightly label her as the hero she is.

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Violence and Identity in Richard Wright's *Native Son*

Anna Gee

In 1863, the United States legally abolished slavery, an institution that had existed in America for over two hundred years. Yet seventy-five years later, Richard Wright wrote that in the America of 1940, blacks were still perceived as white “property, heart and soul, body and blood” (*Native Son* 332). In today’s America, racial tensions are never far from the forefront of social, economic, and political issues. As modern-day Americans observe and interact with this tension, particularly with acts of racially charged violence, we must question its origins, critically examining who is responsible for the disproportionate distribution of violence among races.

In *Native Son*, Richard Wright examines how the correlation of race and violence produces devastation through the novel’s main character Bigger Thomas, whose “rhythms of . . . life” have become “indifference and violence” (27). Bigger ultimately recognizes that violence has become so integral to his identity as a human being that he “didn’t know [he] was really alive in this world until [he] felt things hard enough to kill for ‘em” (429). Black violence in the novel functions as a positive force, allowing Bigger to triumph over indifference and, for the first time, explore his identity as a human being. This notion contradicts the white perception of violence as it appears in the novel and forces the

modern reader to confront difficult questions: if violence creates identity and meaning in the lives of black individuals, what do we make of the traditional paradigm of violence as immoral? If violence is universally condemnable, how do we explain the disproportionately harsh retributive consequences of black violence? *Native Son* illustrates that rather than a depraved and “peculiar mentality” inherent to black humankind, it is white objectification that ultimately necessitates the formation of black identity through violence (281).

The preponderance of literary scholarship on violence and identity in *Native Son* speaks to the significance of these two themes. Some critics argue that Wright’s discussion of violence in the novel is excessive while others, like Robert Butler and Obioma Nnaemeka, cite violence as a necessary demonstration of Bigger’s complicated persona. Among critics that discuss the significance of violence in the novel, few connect violence with the formation of identity. Professor Kadeshia Matthews, a specialist in twentieth century African American literature and culture, describes violence as a necessary component of Bigger’s identity but does not explore the meaning of that violence and the significant role that whites play in its perpetuation. Further discussion on the culpability of whites in the loss of black identity, and the resulting black violence, is necessary. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of both white dominance on black self-perception and the kind of violence that ensues throughout *Native Son*.

Native Son demonstrates that violence is perpetuated by white objectification of blacks. In treating blacks as objects, whites create an environment that precludes black identification as human. Whereas a lack of violence continues to obscure black identity, violence allows blacks to recognize themselves as sentient, autonomous beings. In this paper, I assert that violence is the only means provided for blacks to establish independence and separate themselves from objectification to form a new, albeit underdeveloped, identity. I argue that Bigger uses violence to overcome indifference and shame. I further show that the consequences of violence ultimately limit Bigger’s newfound identity, exposing the weaknesses in the kind of identity that violence creates.

In *Native Son*, white-on-black discrimination establishes a social construct in which Bigger and other black characters are viewed by both themselves and whites as less than human and non-autonomous. Objectification is manifest from the opening scenes of the novel. Bigger’s comments to Gus, his primary confidant and a fellow black teenager, demonstrate that dehumanization is not only a phenomenon imposed by white society but also one experienced and

acknowledged by blacks: “They don’t let us do nothing. . . . I reckon we the only things in this city that can’t go where we want to go and do what we want to do” (19, 21). Whether intentional or subconscious, Bigger’s self-classification as a “thing” in these lines is indicative of the way he is made to feel by white society: as a thing, his every move is dictated by white rules. This is problematic as the ability to make autonomous decisions is essential to the development of human identity. Philosopher Robert Nozick argues that when one person determines another’s actions and worth, “[the] process whereby they take this decision from you makes them a part-owner of you; it gives them a property right in you, just as . . . an animal or inanimate object” (172). As white society legislates the actions of blacks, blacks effectively become white property, resulting in white-black relationships that mirror those of owner and object. These relationships and interactions preclude the formation of autonomous black identity. In his article “On Social Interaction and the Communicative Construction of Personal Identity, Knowledge and Reality,” sociologist Thomas Luckmann explains that interactions with others are integral to the creation of identity: “Personal identities are actively ‘constructed’ in social interaction, in processes of direct intersubjective communication” (286). Because whites do not treat interactions with Bigger as “intersubjective,” or existing between two conscious human minds, his personal identity cannot be actively constructed; his experiences with whites lead him to feel that he “ain’t a man no more” (353). As whites remove black autonomy and create communication that is less than intersubjective, the creation of black identity as human is rendered impossible.

Suppression of Bigger’s human identity renders him indifferent to the suffering of other human beings. Psychologists Brock Bastian and Nick Haslam describe the development of “cognitive responses to interpersonal maltreatment,” asserting that “people enter into ‘cognitive deconstructive’ states when excluded. These involve emotional numbing, reduced empathy, cognitive inflexibility, and an absence of meaningful thought” (297). As Bigger copes with maltreatment by whites, he experiences the symptoms of cognitive deconstruction; this is manifest in even his most intimate relationships: “I wasn’t in love with Bessie. . . . I don’t reckon I was ever in love with nobody. . . . You had to have a girl, so I had Bessie” (352). Bigger can neither truly hate nor love: maltreatment by whites has ensured indifference. His attitude toward his lover, Bessie, is not one of understanding or humane connection but as one object observing and interacting with another. Disturbing as this dysfunction is in itself, its ramifications are far more sinister, culminating in Bigger’s murder of Bessie. As

Bigger interacts with Bessie, he never considers the impact of his decisions; he is completely indifferent to her suffering or happiness. Whether initiating sex with Bessie or merely determining whether to show her attention, Bigger's choices are solely motivated by the inclinations of his own body. Because he does not view himself as an autonomous being, Bigger assumes that he is controlled by exterior forces, not recognizing his ability to make conscious decisions. As a result, he is ignorant to the devastating consequences of his actions.

Just as maltreatment results in indifference, limitations on black autonomy foster blindness for Bigger and his friends. In the society of *Native Son*, blacks are bred to react, observe, and obey. While whites "do things" and "got things," blacks are relegated to "the outside of the world peeping in through a knothole in the fence" (20). What little power blacks can attain comes not from following personal goals or defying social constructs but from keeping "firmly in their place" (281). The right to life for blacks depends on strict adherence to white law; if they step beyond that boundary, white leaders proudly declare, "they cannot live" (281). Repressing both desire and action is a painful and dehumanizing choice; blindness, therefore, becomes a coping mechanism that shields blacks from the horror of full comprehension. As Bigger begins to recognize blindness in both himself and others in the black community, he is deeply troubled by the injustice from which it stems. His friend Gus demonstrates self-imposed blindness as he responds to Bigger's indignation: "Aw, ain't no use feeling that way about it. It don't help none . . . You'll go nuts. . . . You think too much" (20–21). The distinction in this instance is not a juxtaposition of conformity in Gus and dissatisfaction in Bigger; rather, the difference between the two young men is that Gus has turned a blind eye to his frustrations—he does not allow himself to consider them. This distinction elucidates Gus's comment that Bigger "think[s] too much": while Bigger is also a frequent victim of blindness, he fights to maintain an awareness of the injustice imposed upon him. By resisting blindness, Bigger is able to form ideas that, although initially criticized by his peers, ultimately lead him to meaningful and autonomous action.

As Bigger recognizes blindness in his family members and friends, he becomes ashamed to accept an identity that is less than human; it is this shame that ultimately compels him to action. Shame develops as he reflects on his mother's religion that "he needed but could never have unless he laid his head upon a pillow of humility and gave up his hope of living in the world. And he would never do that" (254). Bigger sees religion as a blindness that prevents his mother from fully accepting the world's cruel realities. Critic Obioma

Nnaemeka asserts that Bigger finds this blindness shameful because he “does not want to ‘make up’ for anything; he intensely desires to live fully like a free man” (18). Bigger’s determined rejection of blindness compels him to face the pain of objectification in its full force; it is his pride that keeps him from using religion as a crutch. Mrs. Thomas’s religion comforts her in giving her hope that the future will be brighter. As a Christian, she believes in the power of mercy for Bigger, both from Christ and from the Daltons, the parents of Bigger’s victim, Mary. As Bigger observes his mother pleading with the Daltons in his prison cell, he views her faith as unrealistic and embarrassing; he becomes “paralyzed with shame” and feels “violated” (301). Shame is more powerful than blindness or indifference because it stimulates Bigger to act and forces him to consider himself in relation to others. Bigger becomes ashamed because he is fully aware of his objectification and inferiority to whites. The blindness of those around him compounds this shame because blindness steals the sliver of control that Bigger’s awareness maintains. When Mrs. Thomas interacts with the Daltons, “Bigger’s shame for his mother amounted to hate . . . He felt in another moment he would have leaped at her” (302). On this occasion and throughout the novel, shame produces violence.

In seeking to eliminate shame, Bigger turns to violence. Violent acts create a semblance of control and meaning that endows him with power. The paramount expression of Bigger’s violence is an attempt to rid himself of shame—his murder of Mary Dalton is created by the shame of being a black man caught in a white woman’s bedroom. Later, as he reflects on his culpability in the crime, he isolates shame as a driving force behind his actions: “He felt that his murder of her was more than amply justified by the . . . shame she had made him feel” (114). Just as Bigger’s shame ultimately stems from a lack of autonomy or control, his violence arises as a means to gain control. Through violence, Bigger inflicts emotional and physical pain on whites, alleviating his sense of inferiority by controlling white lives. As Professor Krista Thomason notes, “shame makes us feel that we are not in control of who we are. . . . One of the ways of alleviating shame is to do something that regains a sense of control” (18). It is when Bigger feels objectified or defined by “aspects . . . that fall outside of . . . [his] self-conception” that he becomes ashamed; creating violence allows him to redefine himself according to his own choices (Thomason 11). As he becomes increasingly violent, Bigger recognizes that violence liberates him from shame because it creates an autonomy and control that he cannot obtain otherwise: “Of late he had liked to hear tell of men who could rule others, for in actions such as these

he felt that there was a way to escape from . . . shame” (115). Because Bigger is unable to control the outcomes of his own life through constructive means, he finds solace in controlling others through violence. Ultimately, this violence not only serves to alleviate shame but is also the driving force behind Bigger’s ascent to human identity.

As Bigger comes to terms with the effects of his violence, he begins to feel remorse for his actions and, as a result, pity on the victims of his crimes. This remorse fosters an emotional connection with other human beings, providing Bigger with a sense of human identity. Before Bigger is able to develop interpersonal connections, he must recognize emotional similarities between himself and others. As Bigger recognizes that his violent acts have been the cause of suffering, he is able to relate to other human beings through his violence. Mary’s boyfriend Jan, a white man that Bigger had previously resented, “became a human being to him; . . . he had killed what this man loved and had hurt him” (289). Jan becomes more real to Bigger because Bigger can now relate to him emotionally. Different as their experiences may be, Jan is suffering at the hands of another person whose actions he cannot control, an experience with which Bigger is intimately familiar. Similarly, as the court puts Bessie’s body on display, Bigger feels “a deeper sympathy for Bessie than at any time when she was alive” because he is finally able to connect with her emotionally (331). White society as represented by the court treats her corpse not as the remains of a human being but as a valuable object to further their own purposes, an objectification with which Bigger can relate. Because Bigger’s life has been so heavily marked with suffering, the range of his emotional capacity is limited, inhibiting his ability to empathize with those around him. As his violence produces remorse, he recognizes that there are others around him suffering as he is. Psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela asserts that “remorse stems from a potential for empathy,” suggesting that “remorse is . . . concerned with the other [rather than] . . . the self” (21). Remorse creates the first instance of positive emotional connection for Bigger because it forces him to recognize the pain of others and connect this pain to his own. As a result of this remorse, “a reciprocal emotional process . . . occurs between two people . . . demonstrating that they are part of the human universe” (Gobodo-Madikizela 26). Bigger’s remorse for his violence produces emotional connection, ultimately reversing his objectification and binding him to humankind.

As the novel comes to a close, Bigger is able to find peace through exploring his newfound human identity. It is evident, however, that Bigger will never

experience the full benefits of being human; humanization is not enough to save him from his impending death sentence. As Bigger's attorney Max prepares to leave Bigger for the last time, Max's eyes are "full of terror," but Bigger feels "all right" knowing that "what I killed for, I am! . . . What I killed for must've been good" (429). This ambiguous expression demonstrates both Bigger's progress and his inability to fully comprehend what it means to be human. In accepting responsibility for his violence and asserting that its motivation was "good," Bigger recognizes his human ability to make autonomous decisions. By identifying himself as the positive force that drove him to kill, he also demonstrates a newly developed self-awareness and peace with himself that he did not previously possess. However, it is also evident in Bigger's inability to specify the force that compelled him to kill that his understanding of his own identity is incomplete. Bigger himself recognizes this as he considers why he does not want to die: "He felt he wanted to live now . . . in order to find out . . . to feel it more deeply; . . . But there was no way now. It was too late" (363). Human identity must be experienced to be fully understood, and there are many things that Bigger will never experience through his new-found human consciousness. Bigger is grateful that violence has helped him to "feel alive," but he realizes as he prepares to die that he "didn't want to kill" (428). Ultimately this recognition allows Bigger to accept the fact that he is going to die without "a wholeness which had been denied him all his life" (362); his fate is the fault of a white society that "wouldn't let me live" (428). These reflections in the closing scenes of the novel reinforce the notion that white objectification breeds violence.

Bigger's life of violence ends in a state-sanctioned, violent death, suggesting that white objectification of blacks in *Native Son* not only results in extralegal black violence but ultimately legislates white violence. In response to Bigger's violence, "eight thousand armed men combed cellars, old buildings and more than one thousand Negro homes in the Black Belt in a vain effort to apprehend Bigger Thomas," and legalized vigilante groups provoked white-on-black violence "all over the city" (256, 251). These excerpts demonstrate that in *Native Son* both whites and blacks strive to regain control in powerless situations, exercising unwarranted and unjustified violence indicative of racial tensions; both whites and blacks inflict pain and suffering on the victims of their violent actions. Unlike black violence, however, white violence is provided for and protected by legislation. Writer Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that within the modern violence paradigm, distinctions between white and black violence are superficial and arbitrary: "certain things are violence, and certain things are

not. Certain things are the acts committed by thugs, and certain things are the acts committed by the law.” In the world of *Native Son* and, to some extent, the world in which we currently reside, black violence lacks the protection that permits white-on-black violence. While in theory violent acts committed by whites or blacks are equally reprehensible, the consequences of violence are significantly different for black citizens. In the eyes of *Native Son*’s white society, white-on-black violence means sacrificing black lives so that “peaceful and industrious people may be safe”; black violence, by contrast, is the expression of “sub-human killer[s] . . . who know no law, no self-control, and no sense of reason” (Wright 414, 408). This contradiction elevates whites, justifying their objectification of blacks and reigniting the ensuing cycle of violent expression. In their condemnation of black violence, whites are blinded to the ramifications of white violence; thus, the inescapable rhythms of violence remain.

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Who Wears the Pants

The Unraveling of Gender in *The Things They Carried*

Zoë Meyer

In Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, gender roles shift during times of war from the traditional, American standard of men as providers and women as homemakers to both genders taking on the characteristics demanded by the situation, regardless of sex. As is common in American culture, men went off to fight while the women showed support by sending care packages and letters, but both genders were forced to abandon these stereotypes as the realities of war set in. Mary Anne, who entered Vietnam as a soldier's girlfriend, but left as a soldier herself, "made you think about those girls back home, how pure and innocent they all are, how they'll never understand any of this, not in a billion years" (108). The girls back home would never understand war and its effects because their gender roles and sense of identity were still intact. The soldiers initially tried to identify themselves based on these roles, but as their known culture became distorted, so did their sense of identity. Only those who experienced the realities of war could comprehend the ways in which the chaos could dirty one's understanding of who he was.

Many critics have discussed war's detrimental impact on the meaning of gender for the soldiers and everyone affected by the struggle in Vietnam. A cultural definition of gender makes up an important part of understanding one's identity. What it means to be a man is directly related to being the

opposite of society's definition of a woman, and vice versa. It is for this reason that the soldiers, as American literature professor Benjamin Mangrum pointed out, "[found] pleasure in feminizing the enemy" and used degrading feminine descriptions to depict anything contrary to the ideal of an American, male soldier (33). Men tried to sustain their masculinity and define themselves as men against feminine characteristics, but as women fought in the war also, there became less significance in being a man, causing the soldiers to recreate their definition of gender.

While the critical conversation focuses mostly on the concept of gender as the main identifier for a soldier, experts in sociology have looked at all the components and experiences that make up one's identity as a whole. Modern research, like that conducted by social scientists Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama, indicates that the "self is composed of multiple identities, and these notions of identity are culture bound" (163). Therefore, a shift in any one aspect of identity, like gender, which comes as a result of the changing culture of war, leads to a destabilization of understanding one's purpose and existence. Because conservative gender roles are so widely accepted in America, what it means to be a man—one's definition of gender—is a product of culture and directly correlates to being an American. Consequently, when a soldier loses his understanding of his gender, he loses his identity and sense as an American. *The Things They Carried* suggests that gender is a result of societal upbringing. The soldiers' concept of gender changed with the constant chaos of war, thus altering their understanding of what it meant to belong to a specific sex. Because gender correlated with other cultural aspects of identity, the deterioration of their understanding of gender in turn hindered the soldiers' ability to identify with their nationality. The meaning of war was lost as it became a place where one's entire identity shifted along with their ability to find purpose in fighting or function in society after the fact.

During peace, American society impressed clear and understood gender roles as part of the American identity. Gender played a huge part in determining how individuals participated in war and defended their title as Americans. During the Vietnam War, men defined themselves as producers and providers, while women identified as homemakers. Women in America traditionally stayed home while the men put on their stars and stripes and headed off to war when duty called. In her correspondence to Lieutenant Cross, Martha "never mentioned the war" (23). This was not because she did not care about his well-being and what he was doing as a soldier; she never asked about the

war because that was not her place. Their relationship contained a “separate-but-together quality” as demonstrated by the good-luck pebble she sent Cross from the Jersey shoreline—the place that separates the land and the water (7). Even though they stayed in touch, they could never be wholly together because she could not experience war in the same context. As a woman, she was expected to stay at home, hold down the front, and not get tied down in the intricacies and details of battle. Looking at perceptions of gender at this time, women studies professor Bren Ortega Murphy suggested that women “seemed to regard their wardrobes and marrying into money as their primary foci” (64). It was out of place and, consequently, un-American for a woman to take on the role of a man by being too involved with war. Her place was, instead, taking care of her home and family.

As the American sense of identity was largely based on following expected behaviors, those who did not follow the status quo of their role as women challenged American society and the accepted standards of gender. As professor Lorrie Smith indicated, the woman “who understands war too well . . . threaten[s] male hegemony and phallic power” (23). Men cannot feel like men if women do not act like women. Because gender and identity are created and understood within American culture, an understanding of gender and national identity shifts when put in the context of war culture.

War caused the culture among the American soldiers to shift, and as a result, expected behaviors and gender roles changed. Suddenly, men and women found themselves in a completely different atmosphere. The general absence of the opposite sex in times of war caused men to abandon their expected gender roles and take upon themselves the personas that needed to be filled. While appearing tough on the outside as they hauled heavy artillery and other essentials, the soldiers took special care to pack sentimental items, like Henry Dobbins carrying “his girlfriend’s pantyhose wrapped around his neck as a comforter” (O’Brien 9). The fact that the men carried around these items of romance and nostalgia shows they had an underlying feminine sentimentality that came out because of the war. After Kiowa’s death, a young soldier felt distraught because Kiowa had the only picture of his girlfriend when he died. The young boy felt “alone. He’d lost everything. He’d lost...his girlfriend’s picture” (164). This soldier tried desperately to retrieve that photo because without it, he felt like he would “lose himself” (164). The great lengths at which these soldiers went to keep alive the memory of loved females back home demonstrates how much their sense of manliness depended on a female counterpart. Unfortunately for them, the

female soldiers with them in Vietnam did not act or look like the females back home, and consequently, could do nothing to fill that void.

The women who went to war did not fulfill their typical gender roles, but rather, took on characteristics generally associated with men because of the intense circumstances of war. Mary Anne took on traits assumed to belong to men because she was in a heightened environment of war where courage and apathy mattered more than personal hygiene. It is evident how quickly gender roles disappeared by how “she quickly fell into the habits of the bush” (94). Mary Anne’s concept of gender and how she should behave came from the society she grew up in. America told her to dress cute, wash her hair, and marry young. But she was not in America anymore. The war did not care what gender she was, and spending her time on “cosmetics” and “fingernail filing” would not help America win (94). Instead, Mary Anne simply did what she needed to in order to survive in her new environment, and that meant taking on the role of a man. This new war culture forced the soldiers to abandon understood gender roles for ones that better suited their purpose in fighting. However, this did not only affect how the soldiers behaved, it changed the meaning of gender to them completely.

Because the distinct division between gender roles disappeared, belonging to a specific sex no longer had any significant meaning. Mark Fossie was the first to criticize the breaking of these barriers because Mary Anne, his girlfriend, was becoming more of a man than he was. He brought her to Vietnam in the first place to show her off as a trophy, claiming that in order to bring a girl to Vietnam, all you needed was a “pair of solid brass balls” (89). Mary Anne’s presence alone proved that Fossie was the only soldier man enough to get a girl there. However, when that notion and his conception of his gender became threatened by Mary Anne’s descent into brute masculinity, he could not handle it. He laid down the law by declaring, “there won’t be any more ambushes” (99). From that moment on, Fossie forced Mary Anne to wash her hair, wear skirts, and ask for his approval before speaking. All this happened as an attempt by Fossie to reassert his dominance over his girlfriend and prove to himself and the other soldiers that he was a man, trying, albeit unsuccessfully, to keep his understanding of gender from slipping away.

The soldiers’ preconceived notions of how gender defined them vanished in the chaos of war culture due to diminished gender roles. This took a huge toll on the soldiers because they could no longer identify themselves by belonging to a specific sex. As professor of Vietnam War literature Susan Farrell pointed out, they came to realize “gender . . . really operated according to agreed-upon

rules,” and not as an innate characteristic or function of their identity (11). This was the new understanding the soldiers had regarding gender: gender is a product of cultural circumstance, and therefore has no significance outside of that culture. These soldiers claimed to be men because that is how they functioned back home. But this was Vietnam, and they served a different purpose here—one where being a man did not mean what it did in America. Here, during war, even women could behave like men. This new definition of gender caused a deep identity crisis in the soldiers.

Changing the meaning of gender caused the soldiers to lose their understanding of their identity, leaving both genders lost and confused because they did not know what to make of themselves and their actions now that they no longer had a standard to compare themselves to. The men could not tell if they were being manly because women were roughing it on the battlefield the same as they were. Mary Anne could not make sense of her identity in Vietnam either. No matter how hard she tried, “she was lost inside herself” and eventually became physically lost when she went missing in action (110). The damages done to her sense of identity while at war were so great that she could not fathom going back home. She became nothing more than “part of the land” because she had no other means of identification (110). She had no concept of who she was as a woman because she was acting contrary to how she had been taught her whole life. Because gender was such a huge part of how these soldiers defined themselves while in Vietnam, the loss of that definition put a hole in their understanding of their identity. While recounting old war stories, Rat Kiley explains that the “only difference between Mary Anne and the men” was the fact that she’s a “girl,” which “didn’t amount to jack” because based on how they behaved, there was no profound distinction between her and the male soldiers (93). The one difference between Mary Anne and the men, their sex, was insignificant because there were no inherent differences between American men and women when they were in Vietnam. All disparity between genders is a product of circumstance and cultural upbringing. With no contrast between the way men and women behaved during war, belonging to a specific gender no longer had significance or meaning. Gender is connected to the way soldiers identified themselves, and losing their definition of what it meant to be a man hindered their ability to have an understanding of their identity.

Due to the fact that the soldiers’ understanding of what it meant to be American directly correlated to their understanding of gender, changing what it meant to be men altered their idea of what it meant to be citizens of the United

States. As American cultures professor Margaret Wood found, citizens “were encouraged to develop a sense of complete identification with the nation which surpassed all other forms of identity” (277). These men and women initially acted the way they did because that was how America told them to act. The men went to Vietnam to “kill and maybe die,” to fulfill a patriarchal obligation, while the women “belonged to another world,” as their presence overseas existed mostly in the form of correspondence to the soldiers (O’Brien 57,16). However, when O’Brien received his draft card, he contemplated running away to Canada were it not for “some irrational and powerful force . . . pushing [him] toward the war” (49). Cultural expectation pushed O’Brien to the war, but when that call came, rather than march proudly onward, “all [he] could do was cry” (54). With the deterioration of their understanding of gender came the depreciation of their American identity. Because these men and women in Vietnam were no longer fulfilling the same roles, their actions contradicted their understanding of patriotism. O’Brien could find no solace in fighting the war because he did not understand his role in it. War culture brought into question the authenticity of their national identity and belief of what it meant to be Americans. With the dichotomy between set gender roles and American principles, the soldiers found no significant meaning in being American and were at a loss for a sense of who they were.

Because the soldiers could no longer be identified by their gender or as patriotic Americans, they lost their understanding of the purpose of war. Originally, these boys accepted the call into the draft because they were “embarrassed not to” as they tried to fulfill gender roles and expectations society placed on them (57). They came to fight as men and as Americans to protect their country and their girlfriends, but no longer felt that purpose because their women were “there,” fighting in the action right along with them (108). Mary Anne was just as tough as any man in Vietnam, if not more. With that knowledge and realization, these soldiers stopped seeing war as a way to be heroes and men, and so lost the desire and purpose to fight in it. To the soldiers, war ceased to be the place to earn a medal of honor; instead, it became a place where identity dissolved. The longer they were in Vietnam, the further their understanding of identity faded. The soldiers lost their purpose and devotion to the war because they realized they would rather have stayed home where they understood and fit accepted standards.

Having lost their previous sense of identity and their purpose in fighting the war, these soldiers had difficulty functioning back in America where traditional

roles and definitions were so firmly established. Commenting on the mentality of a soldier returning home from war, O'Brien writes, "The war's over. You close your eyes. . . . and think, Christ, what's the point?" (79). Because the Vietnam War backfired in the minds of Americans, the soldiers lost their support from the public and their masculinity was reshaped even at home to the point where they could not identify as American men or function in society. They went to war to fulfill their duty as men, but after hearing nothing but disapproval for their actions from the general public, they realized their definition of masculinity contradicted America's. The soldiers no longer had any sense of belonging or understanding anywhere other than combat. The soldiers, especially Norman Bowker, came home feeling lost. "There's no place to go," he explains. "My life, I mean. It's almost like I got killed over in Nam" (150). Bowker hung himself three years later. The effects war had on its soldiers, as pointed out in *The Things They Carried*, revealed war as a place where men lost themselves amongst blurred concepts of identity and created the inability for them to function within a community either at home or abroad.

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Wordsworth's Autobiographical Crafting

Drew Chandler

Creative shaping has always been an important part of autobiography. While you would think that a first-person account would yield the most accurate rendering of a person's life, even more than an outside source, the reality is that no one has more of an agenda than the subjects themselves. William Wordsworth is well known for writing about himself (decades before the American poet Walt Whitman sang of himself, Wordsworth made literary history doing the same), but while Wordsworth shaped his story with the best of them, he did so for very different reasons. His goal was not self-aggrandizement but the attaining of a better understanding of his own life and the world around him, an understanding which he could then share with his readers. Indeed, I assert that his efforts in writing autobiographically were not egotistical but rather empathetic, as he reached out to the common man by writing about everyday happenings and encounters. Wordsworth constructs his autobiography by carefully shaping, and in some cases fabricating, his memories of actual life experiences (such as in "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*). The success of his quasi-autobiographical efforts is evident in our ability as readers to draw from and sympathize with his fictionalized bank of experiences just as he did throughout his life.

In looking to his past and present, Wordsworth received inspiration for his work. Stephen Gill, a prominent Wordsworth biographer, asserted that for the poet “autobiography was the well-spring of his creative powers” (Gill, *A Life* 153). The first source of this spring is what I described as Wordsworth’s imaginative recounting of actual life experiences—what Gill refers to as “history-making” (153)—and is most famously exercised in his seminal works “Tintern Abbey” and *The Prelude*. These early works were initiated as attempts to find some clarity for himself in his past experiences as well as provide some direction for his future, much like a personal journal. In this way, this poem (which Wordsworth spent much of his life developing) was a living and working examination of Wordsworth’s own life. Gill writes that *The Prelude* was written, unlike most autobiographies, “not only to present a self-image . . . but to assist the writer to understand his own life, so that the rest of it might be lived more purposefully and in accordance with truths perceived in the act of writing the poem” (2). When Wordsworth says of his “Tintern Abbey” visit that “in this moment there is life and food / For future years,” he is referring to this spot of time’s ability to sustain him not only as a tender memory but as an instructive experience whose lesson he may keep with him throughout his life (Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” 290). Through “Tintern Abbey” as well as *The Prelude*, Wordsworth finds an outlet to comment on the truths and purposes of life (such as these “spots of time”) which can be universally applied.

That Wordsworth’s poetry is empathetic directly contrasts to what his detractors, such as John Keats, have consistently said about him. To Keats, the “Wordsworthian” was synonymous with the “egotistical”—by his reckoning, Wordsworth nurtured an undue, unpoetic sense of “self” (Keats, “Letter to R.W.” 973) and attracted improper attention to himself by shouting as a retired flower on the highway, “Admire me I am a violet! Dote upon me I am a primrose!” [sic] (Keats, “Letter to J.H.R.” 969). However, contrary to what Keats and others say, the reality is that the Wordsworth of 1798 was not pretending at all to fame and self-recognition. As Gill points out, Wordsworth commenced his autobiographic literature when he was an unknown in society, and neither *The Prelude* nor “Tintern Abbey” fit in with what would come to be the standard of autobiographies as “books written by people who have demonstrated their power and earned the right to present themselves as they think fit to a public whose regard they have already won” (Gill, *A Life* 3). While it is true that Wordsworth continued to revise *The Prelude* in his later years when he had garnered some fame, *The Prelude* never devolved into merely a means of blowing his own horn.

In fact, from the very beginning *The Prelude*, while autobiographical, was written as “a direct-love offering to Coleridge,” his great friend and companion. At the very heart of it, his autobiography was intended to reach out to and benefit others, not to call attention to himself or his own greatness.

There are, of course, limitations to his autobiographical endeavors, as Wordsworth was very much aware, such as the issue of the veracity of his work. Whether justified or not, many critics have critiqued Wordsworth for giving a false representation of what his life was really like. Gill says outright of “Tintern Abbey” that “factually it is not true” (*A Life* 153), citing Wordsworth’s inaccurate representation of his school days (21) as well as his supposed confidence in 1793—a disheartening time for Wordsworth—as being out of place in the reality of his life’s history (154). These inaccuracies are problematic, not only because they question the integrity of the rest of Wordsworth’s autobiographical accounting, but also because they put into question what effectiveness autobiography has at all if it cannot be based purely and entirely on what really happened. Wordsworth was fully aware of this problem, expressing in the 1798 “Preface” to his and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* that “[t]he obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the biographer and historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the poet who has an adequate notion of the dignity of his art” (Wordsworth, “Preface” 300-301). Wordsworth clearly found autobiography to be a difficult exercise, and yet his continued attempts at it show that he found great value in it nonetheless.

Despite these obstacles, Wordsworth turned limitations into opportunities. First of all, the time which separated Wordsworth from the events he was writing about can be seen on the surface level as an obstacle hindering him from an accurate recounting of those events, but Wordsworth took advantage of that time to let his thoughts and ideas develop and deepen. As Gill records, *The Prelude* is based on “events which impressed his mind with images which accrued significance with the passing of time” (*A Life* 9). Experiences which may not have meant as much to him at first came to mean more to him as he progressed in life, and his continual revising of *The Prelude* until his death shows his lifelong commitment to continue revisiting and reanalyzing those life experiences which came to form a part of him. As he wrote in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, “poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply” (295). Surely

Wordsworth had thought of nothing so “long and deeply” as his own life and *The Prelude* to which so much of his life was dedicated.

Wordsworth took advantage of his long lifespan (something that sets him apart from some of the other major Romantic poets) as an opportunity to look back at the past at different points in his life with different perspectives. As he changed and developed, so did his self-awareness. As Gill said, “the Wordsworth who began *The Prelude* was not the Wordsworth who finished it, and his awareness of that fact is one of the shaping powers of the poem”—that is, not only did he grow as he wrote it, but he was keenly aware of that growth and made it a part of the poem (*The Prelude* 11). Indeed, as the critic David Miall points out, even the famous “Tintern Abbey” poem is not written at Tintern Abbey but rather, as the title suggests, “a few miles above Tintern Abbey.” Wordsworth himself had to be removed and even elevated from the situation of his past to be able to see it in the perspective that allowed such a powerful reminiscence. Distancing himself from the situation yielded him the clarity not only of an elevated viewpoint but also of hindsight, and as another critic said, this “[d]istance serves Wordsworth as a principal means through which imagination exercises its power” (Ogden 246) and “enables him to perceive more clearly and more fully what is before him, to understand the significance of what he sees” (247). This distancing is especially effective in Wordsworth’s lyric poetry which resists being time-bound by a strict linear structure. According to Monique R. Morgan, Wordsworth’s lyric poetry “creates a timeless present, an indefinitely suspended moment, which contrasts with narrative’s past progression of events” and “creat[es] a sense of immediacy among the reader, text, and content” (Morgan 301). Wordsworth achieves this suspension of time and poetic immediacy because he is so aware of the passage of time and the limitations and opportunities inherent therein.

This sense of immediacy that Wordsworth creates for the reader is one of the fruits of his carefully reader-directed writing. In the case of “Tintern Abbey,” where someone else would see the difficulty of describing a place so important to the poet as accurately and as precisely as it should be, Wordsworth saw the opportunity to generalize and thus create a more accessible setting for his readers. Tintern Abbey could be anywhere—as Gill points out, the poem “strikingly avoids localizing detail” and while “[i]t opens with the evocation of a particular place . . . but for all its apparent specificity the scene remains generalized,” and thus universally accessible (*A Life* 152). By keeping the scene generalized, Wordsworth saves the natural elements of this famous locale (the

waters, the cliffs, the cottage-ground, etc.) from being fettered to this one place, and thus they can be just as meaningful to the reader as they are to the author. Wordsworth's autobiographical selflessness allows the moment of revisiting a familiar place to be just as much a part of our life's story as it was a part of his. Furthermore, he writes in the first-person to allow the reader to join him above the Abbey and to experience what he experiences. As I, the reader, go through "Tintern Abbey," it is I who hears the waters, I who beholds the steep and lofty cliffs, I who repose there, etc. (Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 288-89). Gill surmises that "[t]he poet is concerned not with what is seen in itself, but with the eye that sees" (153). That eye is our own as much as it is Wordsworth's, and Wordsworth often uses the first-person plural to invite us to see with him and join him in whatever experience he is undergoing.

In the end, Wordsworth's autobiographical writing, as real or as deliberately fictional as it may have been, served to fulfill his desire to understand life, even at its most common or vulgar roots, and then to help the reader to do the same. This is a man who wrote that, "[t]o me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," and perpetuated that principle of appreciation throughout his life's work (Ode 341).

Wordsworth always "kept his eyes open and wanted to hear what people had to tell" (Gill, *A Life* 26), and the fact that he "knew no certainty [whether in life or in philosophy] could be achieved did not stop him searching" (13). The underlying motivation of his autobiographical writing was his belief that "[t]he past and the present will combine . . . against all the adversities the future might bring, to sustain [the] 'cheerful faith that all which we behold / Is full of blessings'" (153), a conviction which has affected and inspired millions of readers all over the world for over two centuries.

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Beyond Reason

Ophelia's Quest for Truth

Jacob Nielsen

O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Historically, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has prompted readers to consider the uncomfortable proximity between sanity and insanity. Taking that proximity seriously, we might wonder what happens when reason and rational judgment fail to provide meaning and answers to the deepest questions of the soul. Readers of the play often assume that Ophelia's state of mind following the death of Polonius and the exile of Hamlet is insanity. Implicit in this characterization of Ophelia is the belief that her words and actions were merely the incoherent ravings of a lunatic, devoid of meaning and purpose. However, could Ophelia have moved beyond reason, entering a state of mind that allowed her to view herself and those around her in a radically different way? If so, she may have hoped to acquire personal truth that was previously unavailable to her within the realm of traditional reason. In the following discussion, I will explore the possibility of moving beyond reason as a means of understanding Ophelia's "new world." Ultimately, the distinction between those that merely lose reason and those that choose to reject its limitations allows us to see Ophelia in both life and death as more than a passive object of tragic circumstances: her move

beyond reason grants her freedom to actively adjust her interpretation of and perspective on the world she shares with Hamlet.

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* may be useful in helping to elucidate the meaning of reason as well as the implications of moving beyond it. For Kant, reason is the "highest faculty of the human subject, to which all other faculties are subordinated" ("Technical Terms of Kantian Philosophy"). He goes on to characterize mental illness as "not merely disorder and deviation from the rule of the use of reason, but also positive unreason; that is, another rule, a totally different standpoint into which the soul is transferred, so to speak, and from which it sees all objects differently" (Frierson 211). In this world, he claims that "there is a system in lunacy" that is founded on "a principle of unity" (Frierson 211-212). According to Kant, there are individuals whose minds have the capacity to reject the highest human faculty of reason ("positive unreason"), allowing them to view the world and those around them differently than the average human mind. Though Kant did not consider these individuals to be healthy or of a sound mind, he also did not reject the possibility of finding meaning in their thoughts and actions. While Kant would certainly classify some as having lost the ability to use reason, it also seems possible that certain individuals could choose to enter a state of "positive unreason" as a way of discovering truth. That is, in refusing to be bound by the limitations of reason, such individuals might be thought of as moving beyond reason into a world that facilitates the discovery of personal truth otherwise unavailable.

Many scholars have addressed both the origins of Ophelia's move beyond reason as well as the controversy surrounding her "doubtful" death (5.1.209). Traditionally, Ophelia is characterized as an innocent victim of the cruelties of those that used her dependent and submissive nature for personal gain. Carroll Camden vigorously refuted scholarship that placed the death of Polonius at the heart of Ophelia's move beyond reason, preferring to view Hamlet's madness and rejection of Ophelia as her motivation to reject reason and reality. Either way, Ophelia's perceived personal weakness is exemplified in the adjectives used by scholars to describe her. For Camden, Ophelia was "delicate-minded", "tenderhearted", "a tool", "sensitive", "susceptible", having a "weak personality" (247, 249-50, 253). The pain of losing Hamlet's love and affection, as well as considering herself as the source of his madness, eventually led Ophelia to her tragic, suicidal death. Linda Welshimer Wagner accuses Shakespeare of creating Ophelia's character as a "useful device" or "mirror" for "Hamlet's analytical scenes" as well as to provide a profound emotional impact on the audience with

her move beyond reason and death (94). Welshimer Wagner seems to agree with Camden that Hamlet was the source of Ophelia's demise, concluding that he used her "calculatingly" as "an excuse" for his own madness (96). Thus, scholars generally consider Ophelia's move beyond reason and death to be anything but her own, purposive decisions. This overarching narrative is accentuated in J.M. Nosworthy's analysis of Queen Gertrude's account of Ophelia's death. Nosworthy describes the Queen's description of Ophelia's "accidental" drowning as illogical, an "inspired but inconsistent afterthought" that seemed to contradict the overwhelming opinion that Ophelia had committed self-murder (345, 348). Even in death, Ophelia was dependent on the perspectives of those that observed her, yet did not fully understand her.

Ophelia's move beyond reason began when her current life became unmanageable, when all possibilities for reconciliation disappeared, and when all future prospects ceased to provide hope. While it is easy to classify Ophelia's quick move beyond reason as a natural consequence of her physical and emotional dependence on others, textual variance between the first and second *Quarto* and *Folio* publications of the play opens a window into her soul, suggesting that her move beyond reason was a deliberately chosen alternative to the unbearable tensions in her world. In analyzing these variants, we see that her move beyond reason exposes her hope that the unknown, yet limitless potential of that state of being would grant her freedom to discover truth in her restrictive world. Scholars fail to recognize something profound about this seemingly "simple," "minor character" when they attribute the entirety of her move beyond reason and death to the machinations and deceits of other characters (Welshimer Wagner 94-95). If Ophelia's character is to move beyond its traditionally simple role of providing "pathos" for the audience, then scholars and viewers must look beyond the reality imposed upon Ophelia for much of the play (96). In short, they must consider the freedom and truth that Ophelia stood to gain in her move beyond reason and death.

Initially, Ophelia's move beyond reason was motivated by the unsustainability of her deep emotional and physical dependence on both Polonius and Hamlet. Ophelia exposes her dependence on their controlling and manipulative desires during an exchange with Polonius concerning overtures of love made to her by Hamlet. Initially, she claims that Hamlet's actions represented genuine "affection" (1.4.101) and "love" (1.4.110), however, when challenged by Polonius' belief that Hamlet was merely using her, she contradicts her personal feelings by saying "I do not know, my lord, what I should think" (1.4.104). Her

innocence and willingness to believe in her own desirability and worthiness to be loved is crushed by the accusations of a controlling father. Subliminally, Ophelia is taught that her feelings have no inherent value when challenged by the reasoning and experiences of others. This tension between the world of reason and the world of feeling would eventually challenge Ophelia's perception of truth and prompt her to move beyond reason as a way of obtaining it.

Furthermore, Polonius demonstrates his desire to impose his own worldview and reality on his daughter by telling her what she "should think" (1.4.104). He does this by reducing her virtues of innocence, purity and a willingness to trust into vices, by defining her as a "green girl" (1.4.101), "unsifted" (1.4.102), "a baby" (1.4.105), as well as a "woodcock" caught in a "springe" (1.4.115). These unflattering descriptions of Ophelia's character connote gullibility instead of a trusting nature, immaturity instead of purity, and childishness instead of innocence. By employing the imagery of a woodcock, or innocent bird caught in a trap, Polonius suggests that Ophelia's innocence predisposes her to be easily beguiled by men like Hamlet. Thus, Ophelia is taught that her perceptions of truth are flawed, forcing her to rely on others to provide guidance and meaning for her own existence. Her willingness to submit is most apparent when she declares that she will reject Hamlet's love, despite her personal experience and feelings, by declaring to Polonius: "I shall obey, my lord" (1.4.136). The eagerness of others to impose their own perception of truth on Ophelia decreased her desire to utilize reason as a form of understanding the world. For her, reason represented a realm where her emotions and desires were consistently overshadowed by the viewpoints of others. While living in the world of reason, Ophelia led a rather meaningless existence that forced her to bury, divert, or dismiss her own personal truth.

For Ophelia, however, the unyielding subjugation of reason is challenged by the unpredictability of Hamlet's supposed descent into madness. Hamlet uses madness as a mask in order to disguise his intent to avenge the death of his father at the hands of King Claudius. Doing so allows him to enter a state of "controlled" lunacy that sends rippling effects through characters such as Ophelia. In a pivotal interaction, Hamlet mocks and disputes Ophelia's beauty, chastity, virtue, and affection, causing her to lament: "And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, that sucked the honey of his music vows . . . O woe is me, t'have seen what I have seen, see what I see" (3.1.154-155, 159-160). These despairing words provide insight into the paradigms that dictated Ophelia's mind. Viewing herself as "deject" and "wretched" (3.1.154), Ophelia reveals

the lack of meaning she perceives in her own existence. Unable to emotionally provide for herself, she must “suck the honey” (3.1.155) or forcefully extract sweetness from Hamlet, adding richness and meaning to her own life by satiating herself on his love and approval. Once Hamlet no longer provided the life-giving elixir upon which she was dependent, Ophelia lamented that seeing a broken, imperfect, and hostile Hamlet forced her “to see what [she] see[s]” (3.1.160). Is it possible that Ophelia finally recognized the unsustainability of her attempts to extract meaning from others and live vicariously through their perceptions of truth? Without the ability to pacify herself with Hamlet’s love and “noble mind” (3.1.149), Ophelia is left alone to examine her reality and the emptiness of allowing others to manipulate and control her. For the first time, the world of reason, of which Hamlet was such an integral part, became visibly unpredictable, untrustworthy, and even openly hostile. True introspection and a clear view of the world were made possible for Ophelia upon the collapse of the controlled and manipulative world of reason.

However, certain textual variants found within early publications of the play don’t allow the reader to see the beginning stages of Ophelia’s move beyond reason. Following Hamlet’s infamous “To be, or not to be” (3.1.58) soliloquy in which he contemplates the meaning of existence in a world full of cruelty and pain, Ophelia confronts him in obedience to her father’s command to sever ties. As she attempts to return his letters, which have become symbols of affection, love, trust, and romance, Hamlet forcefully declares, “No, no, I never gave you aught” (3.1.98). In short, he denies that he ever truly loved or cared for Ophelia, while simultaneously affirming that he did deceive her in the way that Polonius predicted. The *Folio* version of the play reinforces the perception that Ophelia was incapable of challenging the emotional and physical manipulations of Hamlet. In the *Folio*, she responds to Hamlet by saying, “My honoured lord, you know right well you did” (3.1.99). By declaring that only Hamlet knew the reality of the events that had transpired between them, Ophelia places all of the responsibility on Hamlet to define her world and reality for her. Her emotions, hopes, fears, and feelings of passion have meant nothing if Hamlet declares it so. The supposed weakness and frailty of Ophelia is compounded by her desire to continue turning to both Hamlet and the world of reason to find meaning. This portrayal of Ophelia gives her an irreparable dependent nature, exemplified in her lack of resilience as the world of reason suddenly ceased to provide meaningful truth.

In contrast, the first and second *Quarto* versions of the play present a different, yet more accurate description of the tension of mind that led Ophelia to move beyond reason. In these versions, Ophelia's response to Hamlet is, "My honoured lord, *I* know right well you did" (3.1.99). By simply changing the pronoun from *you* to *I*, the entire context of the situation is reversed, and Ophelia's character embodies a new layer of meaning previously inaccessible to the reader. Here, she forcefully declares that she knows that what Hamlet wrote her, said to her, and the romantic interactions that they had were, in fact, real. Though still dependent in nature, this variance illustrates Ophelia's desires to be free, recognize and affirm her own personal truth, and take ownership for her own part in severing ties with Hamlet. As the limitations of reason became apparent, Ophelia for the first time shows a desire to understand the world using her own experience and feelings, instead of those of another. Thus, she is transformed from one who is acted upon, to one that acts, making her move beyond reason even more intriguing to the reader. By demonstrating that she does have the capacity and desire to choose, it is more plausible to suggest that Ophelia could have chosen her move beyond reason and death.

Therefore, Ophelia's desires for freedom and truth are reflected in her move beyond reason, a state of being that granted her desires that had been suppressed by the world of reason. Following Polonius' murder by Hamlet and Hamlet's exile to England, the audience is suddenly presented with an Ophelia that has fully realized the fallibility and limitations of the two great symbols of reason in her life. In response, she chose to enter a state of mind that eschewed reason. Instead of merely losing the capacity to reason, Ophelia rejects its limitations, granting herself the power to adjust her interpretation of the world. As a way of warning Queen Gertrude of Ophelia's insanity, Horatio describes her by saying:

She . . . says she hears there's tricks i'th'world . . . speaks things in doubt that carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing, yet the unshaped use of it doth move the hearers to collection. They aim at it, and botch the words up fit to their own thoughts, which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them, indeed would make one think there might be thought (4.5.4-12).

In an interesting turn of events, Ophelia's move beyond reason gives her the power to control and dictate the thoughts, emotions, and feelings of those around her. Instead of a mere tool to be used as a source of manipulation (or the "tricks i'th'world"), Ophelia's progression into insanity elicits feeling and

“collection” (4.5.9) in the minds of those that interact with her. Her words “carry but half sense” (4.5.7) and are “unshaped” (4.5.8) because of their personal purity. They are no longer filtered or restricted through the lens of obedience, submissiveness, and propriety that previously governed her existence. Yet, to the great fear of everyone that wishes to dismiss her as an incoherent lunatic, something about her move beyond reason prompts them to continue to “aim at . . . and botch the words up fit to their own thoughts” (4.5.8-9). In vain, they desperately try to impose their own meaning on words and thoughts emanating from a world with which they cannot relate. The move beyond reason produced a free world unique to Ophelia.

While seen as insanity and lunacy to those still rooted within the realm of reason, Ophelia’s move beyond reason demonstrates her enduring and deep connection to the world and those around her. Fear of what can no longer be controlled or fully understood prompts mankind to dismiss and actively oppose those that perceive the world in radically different ways. This only reinforces the easy and safe classification of all those that perceive the world differently as being “not of sound mind” or “mentally deranged” (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). By promoting the paradigm that there are certain behaviors that make a human mind *sane* or *normal*, those that surrounded Ophelia opted to reject or belittle her active defiance of that paradigm of normality. Fear of the unknown or any sort of interaction with “the other” led them to believe that her move beyond reason was a rejection of life, instead of a viable gateway into a meaningful state of being. Teasingly, Ophelia “winks”, “nods” and “gestures” (4.5.11) to these characters, demonstrating that for her, there is coherence between this newfound world of freedom and the world to which she was formerly bound. This coherence and connection contrasts with those that merely lose the capacity to reason. As Ophelia synthesizes the world from a different viewpoint, she becomes a mirror to those around her, allowing them to see what they desire to see, while innocently and freely revealing the truth that she seems to have discovered. A move beyond reason then, though freedom from oppression for Ophelia, would never be seen as a purposeful state of being by those that could only appreciate that which they understood.

Additionally, by moving beyond reason, it became easier for Ophelia to both perceive and declare truth. As Ophelia moves around the stage in song, a symbol of joy and freedom of expression, she hands flowers with specific meanings to Claudius, Gertrude, and Laertes and says, “There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance. Pray, love, remember. And there is pansies; that’s for

thoughts . . . There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me" (4.5.173-174, 177-178). Whether those flowers represent remembrance, ingratitude, infidelity, or flattery, the audience can't help but feel that there is meaning behind who receives each distinct flower. Even in a move beyond reason, there is coherence. Perhaps it was only in this state that Ophelia could finally synthesize and express her own experience and feelings without fear of reprisals or being forced into submission.

Unfortunately, the realm beyond reason that Ophelia occupied was only capable of granting her a taste of the freedom and truth she desired. As King Claudius and Queen Gertrude continued to suppress and mistrust Ophelia's newfound personal truth, she chose to accept death as the only existence that would grant her the permanent freedom she desired. Death, much like Ophelia's move beyond reason, is not fully understood, and therefore many discount it as a legitimate and meaningful state of existence. The fear surrounding death, or the "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns" (3.1.81-82) is compounded even further by Ophelia's apparent suicide. Why would someone choose to die? Historically, suicide or self-murder has been perceived as an act of weakness. While it is true that most in Elizabethan England viewed suicide as "a heinous crime" as well as "diabolical and spiritually polluting," Michael MacDonald also notes that "a new ambivalence" towards suicide and "more tolerant ideas about self-destruction" began to emerge among the audiences that would have frequented the Globe Theater (310, 315). Applying new ideals of tolerance and sympathy may have allowed audiences to see something redeeming in Ophelia's decision to die. Thus, audiences were prepared to consider the uncomfortable and abstract subject of death, inviting them to assign meaning to Ophelia's suicide.

Death then became a rite of purification that allowed Ophelia to access the freedom and limitless potential she so desperately desired. In her account of Ophelia's drowning, Queen Gertrude related that she initially fell into a "brook" or "glassy stream" where "a willow grows aslant" (4.7.137-138). Water, in its purest interpretation is a substance that maintains life while also possessing the ability to cleanse and purify. Additionally, water represents the unknown, or vast expanse of matter and substance of which mankind is just a small part. It is here that Ophelia experiences a cleansing of her soul through her submersion in water. However, one must consider whether Ophelia was cleansed *from* something, or purified *in preparation for* an event that would radically alter her existence. Baptism, or the religious rite of submersion in water is a ritual

that symbolizes an individual's rejection of their old life and acceptance of the divine unknown that will aid them in navigating through a purer form of existence. Instead of rising from the water and returning to the repressive world to which she formerly belonged, death, or the great unknown, was the world that Ophelia was being prepared to enter. A willow, or symbol of unrequited love, was found along the banks of the river in which Ophelia experienced this purification. As the branch of the willow and Ophelia fell into the brook, she was reminded of Hamlet's manipulative actions and the world of reason that she would leave behind.

In the moments between life and death, Ophelia is forced to decide between being bound to the world of reason, or entering a new, yet undiscovered form of existence. Queen Gertrude goes on to say that, "Her clothes spread wide, and mermaid-like a while they bore her up; which time she chanted snatches of old tunes, as one incapable of her own distress, or like a creature native and endued unto that element" (4.7.146-151). The moment that Ophelia floated on top of the water was a moment of decision. Unable to remain beyond reason forever, Ophelia could choose to enter the unknown world of death or return to a world of reason where she would be controlled and manipulated. Ophelia truly was a mermaid, a mythic creature with the capacity to survive and balance between the mysteries of the unknown and the familiar, yet tainted realities of what is known. She was "incapable of her own distress" (4.7.149) because for her, it was not a state of distress. During this moment of freedom, Gertrude describes Ophelia as "a creature native and endued unto" (4.7.151-152) the water. For a moment, Ophelia found the true relief and harmony that the world of reason would never provide.

Once again, certain variants within early publications of the play contrast a weak and dependent Ophelia with one that courageously chose to die. In describing the final moments of Ophelia's life, the Queen declares in the *Folio* that, "long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with *their* drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death" (4.7.151- 154). The personification of Ophelia's garments serves as yet another example of her dependence on the physical and rational world for survival. It was the article of clothing that dragged Ophelia to her death and the end of her existence, not herself. Once the article of clothing had used her and weighed her down by soaking in and absorbing as much moisture as it possibly could, she eventually was forced to sink against her will. However, the *Quarto* versions of the play once again add a dimension of tension that seems to suggest that Ophelia chose

to die. In these versions, Queen Gertrude declares, “But long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with *her* drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death” (4.7.151-154). Instead of the garments pulling Ophelia down to death despite her will, in these versions, they pull her down *because* of her will. She died because she wanted to die. She drank, absorbed, and filled herself up with the very substance that would end her existence because she did not wish to subject herself further to the manipulative world of reason. Death did not come as a result of Ophelia’s tragic dependence on others, but as a source of freedom and liberation from a world that she longed to be a part of and experience, but could never truly call her own.

In conclusion, by eschewing reason, Ophelia embarked upon a journey that granted her the capacity to view the world and those around her from a unique viewpoint of her own. The limitless potential of the unknown and its capacity to influence Ophelia’s actions are evidenced in her remark to King Claudius that, “we know what we are, but know not what we may be” (4.5.42-43). By filtering and synthesizing the world through her own experiences, emotions, and feelings, Ophelia was able to discover meaningful personal truth. Her newfound clarity provided fleeting hope in a world in which she was systematically dominated and controlled by the “superior” reason of those around her. By choosing to reject the comfortable, yet unfulfilling world of reason, her character embodies a level of strength and courage rarely assigned to her. The tragedy of Ophelia’s move beyond reason and death lies in the seeming incompatibility that exists between reason and emotion. Reason’s capacity to make sense of the world will fail when individuals make their values, experience, and knowledge more meaningful than those of others. Although Ophelia’s move beyond reason was born from her subservience to others, in the end, her decision to reject reason’s limitations allowed her to discover truth and experience freedom. Thus, a more careful analysis of Ophelia will allow readers to see and recognize, as Laertes did, that “this nothing’s more than matter” (4.5.172).

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Wherefore art Thou, Bae Romeo?

An Argument for Modernizing Shakespeare's Texts

Erin Ritchie

Shakespeare's plays have been adapted thousands of times from generation to generation, each with updated settings, plot points, and concepts to mirror the values of the current society and critique social issues, as Shakespeare's works did with Elizabethan England—setting *Romeo and Juliet* in Verona, California with mobsters; reversing the racial roles of *Othello* into an all-black cast with a white Othello. While these updated adaptations offer unique insights into the cultures that produce them, they often draw their lines solely from the original text. However, there is a growing niche of Shakespeare adaptations in a variety of mediums that toy not just with elements of staging and production, but with the text as well. Because the text is considered as some of the finest English work, changes to the text are widely discouraged. When changes to the text with the intent of modernizing it occur, they are often critiqued as simplifying timeless classics for the lazy readers of today. However, I argue that twenty-first century Shakespearean adaptations that translate the original text into modern English vocabulary provide new ways to express the same universal social commentaries on

love, sacrifice, and ambition for a wider audience, while honoring Shakespeare's innovative wordplay and word-creation with our changing, growing millennial vocabulary.

Before we examine Shakespeare's texts and the modernization targeting that text, we must understand that a Shakespearean-era view of words was a utilitarian one. During the Renaissance, the ability to communicate ideas clearly was valued over the ability to choose elegant words with which to communicate those ideas. Language was viewed as a vehicle to convey concepts with rather than something to be valued independently for its structural beauty. It "existed to communicate people's ideas to other people—so the best language was that which communicated to the largest number of people" (Hope 6). This functionalist view based on language's communicative efficiency values the enabling power of language that allows us to transfer thoughts to a large audience. In Elizabethan England, language that "did not communicate across society" or "create society was pointless" (6).

While language was valued primarily as a vehicle of ideas rather than something inherently meaningful during his lifetime, Shakespeare's wordplay demonstrated language's ability to communicate complex ideas in beautiful ways. Although language's practical value was more important than its aesthetic value, wordplay was "a game the Elizabethans played seriously" (Mahood 55). They engaged in various forms of wordplay both in conversation and writing. According to Jonathan Hope, it denoted "intelligence and social engagement in the Renaissance" period (43). William Shakespeare mastered this game, to the delight of his contemporaries. Called "the master of the English language," he crams his plays full of hybrids of existing words and sly puns designed to complicate the meaning of the lines (Cox 1). Shakespeare generated new words and compound words, changed parts of speech into other parts of speech, and added prefixes or suffixes to common words—a blend of techniques that organize words into "intricate and pleasing patterns" (Womack 4). His wordplay has generated commonplace English words that have slowly been accepted as traditional parts of speech. We rarely trace them back to their origins nor realize how untoward the caliber and frequency of his new words was, even from a time period that valued wordplay. The word *uncomfortable* was first coined in *Romeo and Juliet* as Capulet howls, "Uncomfortable time, why camest thou now?" when he discovers Juliet's body (Shakespeare n.p.). Pithy sayings such as "Violent delights have violent ends" and "Parting is such sweet sorrow" both were first created by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare n.p.).

The phrase “wild goose chase” originated with a speech from Mercutio claiming that Romeo’s wits were “run[ning] the wild-goose chase” as he fantasized over Juliet (Shakespeare n.p.). Examining phrases that Shakespeare coined helps us understand how revolutionary his wordplay was and why his innovative imagery is valued by scholars for its ability to communicate common ideas in beautiful ways.

Because Shakespeare’s language is so popular, especially among scholars, English adaptations that alter the text of his plays are met with resistance and dismissal. Professor James Shapiro denounces making changes to Shakespeare’s texts with a metaphor about beer: “I drink 8.2 percent IPA, and by changing the language in this modernizing way, it’s basically shifting to Bud Light [which] just doesn’t pack the punch and the excitement and the intoxicating quality of that language” (Scott 4). Shapiro is not entirely wrong; adapting Shakespeare’s original texts inevitably loses some of the richness of the play. The No Fear modern translation of Juliet’s first words to Romeo does clarify the meaning of her speech: “After all, pilgrims touch the hands of statues of saints. Holding one palm against another is like a kiss” (“No Fear Shakespeare” 5). Yet it simply does not compare to the original speech’s wording: “For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch, and palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss” (Shakespeare n.p.). Understandably, literary purists argue against altering the Bard’s original wording. But Molly Mahood says that Shakespeare’s wordplay serves to clarify “the conflict of incompatible truths” in his plays and provides a “valuable means of access to the heart of the drama,” suggesting that while the wordplay should be treasured for its poetry and inherent beauty, it also functions as a tool through which Shakespeare expresses thoughts about and exposes tensions between the themes, such as love and sacrifice, that he tackles in many of his plays (Mahood 55–56). This functionalist view reflects the popular ideas about language of Shakespeare’s day, though it often takes a backseat to the assumption that Shakespeare’s value lies “not in his complicated characters or carefully orchestrated scenes or subtle ideas but in the singularity of his words” (Pollack-Pelzner 1).

However, Shakespeare’s language is not what appeals to his worldwide audience; the universally relatable themes of love, sacrifice, and ambition (among others) that he chronicles resonate with people with or without his original masterful wording to embellish them. His fame is often assumed to be connected to “his masterful use of the English language,” but translator AJ Hoenselaars explains that “more often than not . . . people’s familiarity

with Shakespeare around the globe comes via translations of his plays and poems into languages other than the playwright's own Early Modern English" (Hoenselaars 1). The argument that Shakespeare's original words must be preserved in English adaptations because of their brilliance loses its impact when we realize that all translations of Shakespeare forfeit his original wording in order to make his messages accessible for more audiences. To demonstrate the textual differences that inevitably occur when translating Shakespeare between languages, let us examine the Prince's final speech in the last act of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the original text, the Prince declares, "A glooming peace this morning with it brings: the sun for sorrow will not show his head . . . For never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (Shakespeare n.p.). A transcript of American Sign Language, or ASL, explains the signs that the translator needs to perform in order to approximate this message to their audience. The periods between each letter indicate the need to spell out the word by letter; the hyphenated words indicate combining existing signs to create that specific meaning. In sign language, the Prince might sign, "Peace have but bad, bad (head shake). We-all go-away (in off-stage direction) . . . Why? Never before story worse never. (Indicate the couple) J.U.L.I.E.T. R.O.M.E.O. Both. Sympathy" (Hoenselaars 210). Although this is a rough estimate of the play's wording, the ASL translation communicates the essential plot points and themes of the Prince's speech, albeit in a less sophisticated way. Yet when one considers the Renaissance view of language—that language is most valuable when it communicates ideas between the largest number of people possible—does the sign language not complete that task even if it loses the elegance of Shakespeare's phrasing? The phrasing is not as valuable as the comprehensibility, for we must understand something before we can appreciate the wording. If translating Shakespeare into other languages allows the non-English speaking world majority to understand his messages, which are at the heart of his wordplay, then that is worth the losses in intricate phrasing and the complexity such wordplay can add to the plot. As Hoenselaars explains, Shakespeare's plays have transcended centuries and cultural boundaries, remaining relevant today "despite the inaccessibility of the language to the modern audience" because of the "power of the plots" and the "nuances of the sub-plots, the richness of the characters, the tragedy of Lear and Cordelia, the twist of fate in *Romeo and Juliet*" (213). While Shakespeare's original words can be more elegant than their translations, the ideas in his plays still resonate with his global audience.

The value in adapting the original language of Shakespeare's plays to modern English so his commentary can engage a wider English-speaking audience justifies the changes to the text. Linguistic professor John McWhorter poses the following questions: "Do you want to listen to an English that we really can no longer take in without being scholars who are spending the kind of time that most of us . . . don't really have time for? Or we sacrifice some of that detail, some of that exquisiteness, so that we can get, say 95 percent of what the man meant?" (Shockman 1). While the basic gist of Shakespeare's plays is easy to grasp—each one has something to do with love or sacrifice or ambition, one could argue—some of the text is difficult to understand not because of the ornate language, but because of the antiquated social commentary and the changed meanings of words. Shakespeare often set his works in foreign countries and used the guise of telling foreign, fictional stories to "discuss the state of contemporary England without getting into trouble with the authorities" (Hoesenlaars 45). However, those subtle commentaries on Elizabethan England are lost on the modern audience who has little background studying literature, theatre or history. Bluntly put, those allusions are culturally irrelevant to today's pop culture and consequently, their wit and political weight is lost on modern audiences.

Furthermore, many words Shakespeare uses and puns with their meanings have changed in definition over the last five centuries. Though the changes in meaning for some words do not impact our overall understanding of the plot, they do impact our ability to understand several quick-witted jokes without "consulting stacks of footnotes" (McWhorter 1). McWhorter argues that "Shakespeare didn't intend for us" to not understand his text because "he wrote plays for performances" that were supposed to be understood by all "in real time" as the plays progress, not only by poring over the text (McWhorter 1). Recently, Oregon's Shakespeare Festival has commissioned a variety of playwrights to modernize all of Shakespeare's thirty-nine plays, with the intent of performing all of these plays over the course of a few seasons so that a wider audience could enjoy the gripping, relatable plots without getting lost in outdated illusions and antiquated language. Five of those plays' texts are already being modified and are slated for performance during the next annual festival season in 2016. This project was met with some disapproval from the general public, even though the Festival made it clear that their intent was to remain as faithful to the original text as possible while simplifying some of the most confusing parts of the text that bog down the action of the play. Aaron Scott

defended this modernization by explaining that “playwright Kenneth Cavandar says that people came up to him after the world premiere of [a modern adaptation of] ‘Timon of Athens’ at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 2014 to say this was the first time they’d fully understood the Bard” (Scott 4). Modernizing the text allows theatergoers to better understand what occurs and what is spoken onstage without sacrificing the enduring ideas about love and other facets of humanity that Shakespeare’s original plays conveyed.

Adapting Shakespeare’s plays to modern English not only engages a wider audience, but it also emulates his innovative wordplay by reworking his texts to reflect our changing, growing millennial vocabulary. One argument that appeared in the *New York Times* against the Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s project to modernize the language of Shakespeare’s plays exclaims, “Why not just rewrite Shakespeare in emoticons and text acronyms?” Much to this traditionalist’s horror, exactly that has already been done earlier this year in the book, *YOLO Juliet*. Translating some of Shakespeare’s most famous lines and wordplay into emojis while retaining not only the intent of the original speeches but also a large portion of the original text’s wording (albeit through pictures) is innovative, much in the same way that Shakespeare’s combining and altering of existing words from the Elizabethan English vocabulary was. When Paris presses Lord Capulet about marrying Juliet, he asks, “My lord, what say you to my suit?” and Capulet responds, “Let two more summers wither in their pride ere we may think her ripe to be a bride” (Shakespeare n.p.). In the *YOLO Juliet* version of this interaction, as displayed in Appendix Figures 1 and 2, the emoji-laden text messages not only simplify the exchange, but add humor to an otherwise humorless discussion. The humor in the adaptation stems from the juxtaposition of the conversation’s formal subject—a marriage suit declined by a protective father—and the medium used to conduct this conversation—a series of iMessages, perhaps the least formal means of communication available today. As Hoenselaars explains, “Language is invested with the values and norms of society” (34). The language used in these text messages reflects the speech of today, just as Shakespeare’s wordplay, with its heavy emphasis on puns, reflected the Elizabethan language trends of his day.

The creation of modern adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays allows the millennial generation to engage with the original text as they modify it to make social commentaries on the present day, as Shakespeare did with his original works about Elizabethan England. Another modern textual adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* occurred when an anonymous Internet user created

a set of social media interactions designed to sum up the play, using fake accounts named after the characters of the play to interact with each other on Facebook. As seen in Appendix Figure 3, the timeline of the play is summed up in a series of fictional Facebook posts, events, and groups that outline the major plot points of the tragedy. In the original play, Mercutio challenges Tybalt to fight by declaring he wants “one of your nine lives” and drawing his sword (Shakespeare n.p.). However, this Facebook adaptation notes the fight that leads to Mercutio’s death by posting a notification that “Tybalt and Mercutio are attending DUEL,” where “DUEL” is an event that both Tybalt and Mercutio’s profiles have been invited to (Fig. 3). The humor in this adaptation hinges on the joke that millennials’ real lives are entwined with their virtual lives. The idea that had *Romeo and Juliet* occurred today, Mercutio may have challenged Tybalt to a deadly fight using the social standard for making plans—a Facebook event—is humorous, yet it offers some social commentary on the pervasive use of social networking today. Similar fake accounts for other Shakespeare plays have been created on a variety of social media platforms, including Instagram and Twitter. They poke fun at Juliet by imagining what she might have titled her Instagram pictures with as she fell in love with Romeo. Would she post one final selfie before stabbing herself in the name of true love, captioning it, “O happy dagger! This is thy sheath!” (Shakespeare n.p.). These community-created adaptations allow the millennial generation to make Shakespeare’s words their own using a medium native to them. Creating modern English adaptations and parodies of these plays in any medium demonstrates an advanced understanding of the text necessary to adapt it into another vernacular while retaining the meaning of the original text. If these young adults driving Shakespearean adaptations, especially ones conducted using the social media slang that has developed recently, are able to manipulate their regularly changing vocabulary in order to make the same universal commentaries as the Bard did while injecting their adaptations with culturally relevant humor, they not only understand but appreciate the original text enough to make it their own. Doing so is a tribute to Shakespeare’s wordplay rather than desecration of the “best writing in the English language” (Mabillard 1). Modern adaptations allow Shakespeare’s plays to transfer thoughts to a large audience and in this way staying true to the standards of Elizabethan language.

Experimenting with and updating Shakespeare’s ideas through adaptation allows us to not only identify and connect with the universal values his plays espouse, but to rework them into social commentaries with the same punch

that his originals had because the subjects of his plays—love, sacrifice, ambition, to name a few—are still integral parts of the human experience. It allows us to experience the same masterful plots and enduring characters without getting confused by outdated word usage or allusions. In short, the language of modernized adaptations of Shakespeare allows his ideas to be communicated to an even broader audience than he has already reached, fulfilling the primary purpose of language that Shakespeare’s era so valued. The processes and results of modernizing the language of Shakespeare’s plays not only communicate across societal boundaries, but also continue to shape our understanding of humanity just as the Bard’s original work did nearly five centuries ago.

Appendix

Figure 1



Figure 2

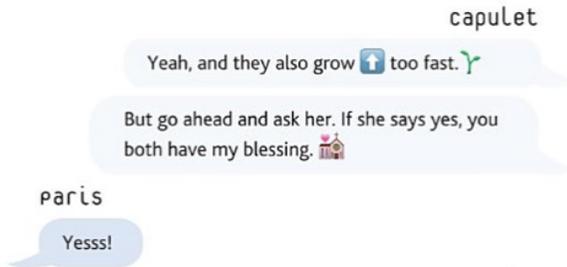


Figure 3

RECENT ACTIVITY

-  **Count Paris and Juliet Capulet** are now friends.
About 2 days ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Lord Capulet** likes this.
-  **Peter, Samson and Gregory and 11 others** are attending **Capulet Ball**.
About 2 days ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#) • [RSVP to this Event](#)
-  **Romeo Montague and Rosaline Capulet** are in a relationship
About 2 days ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet** are now friends.
About 1 day ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Romeo Montague** is single.
About 1 day ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
- Rosaline I effin h8 u.**
-  **Tybalt and Mercutio** are attending **DUEL**.
About 1 day ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#) • [RSVP to this Event](#)
-  **Romeo Montague and 58 others** have joined the group **RIP Mercutio**.
About 8 hours ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Lady Capulet and 34 others** have joined the group **RIP Tybalt**.
About 8 hours ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#) • [RSVP to this Event](#)
- Juliet Capulet** ▸ **Romeo Montague**: ;)
About 4 hours ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Lord Paris and 135 others** have joined the group **RIP Juliet**.
20 minutes ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#) • [RSVP to this Event](#)
-  **Lord Capulet, Lady Capulet and 3 others** have joined the group **RIP Paris**.
15 minutes ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Benvolio and 62 others** have joined the group **RIP Romeo**.
12 minutes ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Lord Capulet and 6 others** have joined the group **RIP2 Juliet**.
8 minutes ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#)
-  **Lord Capulet** is attending **Poison Prevention Education**.
Moments ago [Comment](#) • [Like](#) • [RSVP to this Event](#)

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The Scandal of Sources of Henriette- Julie de Murat's *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*

Jared Willden

In the foreword to *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*, Henriette-Julie de Castelnau de Murat claims the following as she makes the reader aware of two things: “First, that I took the ideas for some of these tales from a past work entitled *The Facetious Nights of Straparola* . . . The second thing I have to say is that . . . if I met with any of these ladies [Murat’s contemporary *conteuses*] while treating some of the same subjects, I took no other model than the original” (*Histoires*, Foreword)¹. Despite Murat’s insistence that Straparola is the only “model” for her *Histoires*, at least one of her tales is very different from the Straparola version. Murat’s “The Savage” (French: « Le Sauvage ») is clearly a retelling of Straparola’s “Costanza/Costanzo” tale. Deprived of an inheritance, Princess Constantine masquerades as a man in a foreign country, enters the service of a king there, and weds him once he discovers that she is a woman. There are, however, far more differences in the plots than there are similarities. The way in which the heroine’s womanhood is revealed, the roles

of the non-human characters, and issues of chastity and adultery are all significantly different between the two versions.

We would expect some embellishments and complications to be added in Murat's retelling, but the changes we see in "The Savage" surpass such expectations. Though Murat claims that there is "no other model than" Straparola, this seems to be an attempt to cast her work as bounded within the domain of the established literary canon of seventeenth-century France. By doing so, she could avoid criticism for her violation of *la bienséance* (the strict set of moral conventions to which both conduct and literature were subjected) and *le bon usage de la femme* (the ways in which it was proper for women to act and be portrayed; cross-dressing specifically was a severe violation). Three other tales, namely "Guerrino and the Savage Man," *Le Roman de Merlin*, and "Georgic and Merlin," present themselves as potential candidates for other models for Murat's changes; beyond these, a careful reading of "The Savage" suggests that Murat's own life was an even more significant thematic source for the tale.

Murat was repeatedly reported to be a "debauched woman" accused of "unruliness, libertinism, debauchery, and blasphemy," and these claims, along with allegations that she was lesbian, intensified when her husband disowned her (Cromer 3). Her first publication, *Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de M**** (1697), was published anonymously as a seemingly autobiographical account that tells of a young lady who becomes disillusioned with her increasingly jealous and abusive husband. The lady describes the repercussions of her flight as thus: "My reputation was cruelly attacked: so I knew that of all the decisions that an innocent or guilty woman may make, the worst is to leave her husband's house" (*Mémoires* 129–30). It is difficult to assert to what extent the events of the *Mémoires* reflect actual elements of Murat's life. Miorcec de Kerdanet considers them autobiographical "memoirs of her life that she wrote herself" and separate from her fiction, but certain elements of the narrative are without question fictional (205). Sylvie Cromer maintains that they are "apocryphal" accounts of Murat's own creation (3). Perry Gethner and Allison Stedman describe them as "pseudomemoirs" (*A Trip to the Country* 3). Stedman further states that "it is difficult to tell if these [elements] are personal or if they are simply novelistic tropes" and notes that "in the letters [Murat] wrote to Mlle de Loches while in exile . . . she doesn't . . . give any clue as to how much of her own life served as an inspiration for" the *Mémoires* (Stedman).

The *Mémoires* are most likely inspired by Murat's own life but embellished with fictional elements. However, though fiction is used, there is no doubt

that the narrator and Murat both experienced a fall, a transformation from an adored wife to a woman considered licentious and debauched. In 1698, rumors about Murat escalated into attempts to have her exiled, and Louis XIV eventually exiled her to the Château de Loches, probably in 1702 (Cromer 3). The threat of exile was therefore looming over her when she published *Histoires sublimes* in 1699.

Murat's scandalous reputation threatened her ability to have her work published as it had to be approved by royal censors to obtain the *privilège du roy*, seventeenth-century France's equivalent of publication rights (Scott 29). Given the serious nature of Murat's misconduct, we can conclude that her conformity to *la bienséance* would have been particularly scrutinized by the royal censors. Of all the violations of *le bon usage de la femme*, cross-dressing seems to have been a particularly sensitive matter for the French and was construed as offensive to society, God, and women. It was a sign of the worst kind of immorality. When we consider the following potential sources, we must be mindful of the ways in which the issue of cross-dressing and associated issues of transformation are treated and consider why Murat may have preferred not to cite these sources.

The titles alone reveal a possible connection between Straparola's "Guerrino and the Savage Man," also from his *Facetious Nights*, and Murat's "The Savage." In "Guerrino and the Savage Man," we see that, by a mix of persuasion and theft, the savage man coerces Guerrino into freeing him. We see a somewhat similar scene with Murat's savage, who exercises a partially persuasive, partially forceful influence on the king. "Prince, have no fear," he says after surprising him, "I won't do you any harm as long as you promise to do as I tell you" ("The Savage" 215). The savage once again obtains obedience, this time as captive rather than captor. Just as Straparola's savage man repays his debt of freedom by saving Guerrino's life and securing his marriage, Murat's savage spares the king's life and weds the princess. There are similarities, and given that Murat read Straparola's *Facetious Nights*, it seems reasonable enough to assert that "Guerrino and the Savage Man" was another source for "The Savage" in addition to "Costanza/Costanzo."

There is, however, a significant difference between the texts. Whereas the plot of "Costanza/Costanzo" is driven by a satyr, the plot of "The Savage" is driven by Obligeantine rather than the savage. Murat's savage instead represents hope for the woman who finds herself in a seemingly hopeless arrangement with a man. Murat's Princess Fleurianne is like the narrator of the *Mémoires*. Both are in danger of being mistreated by a man, the latter by her husband and

the former by her suitor Carabut. Thanks to Constantine's intervention and then Obligeantine's magic, Fleurianne is "spared . . . a monster" and weds the princely "savage" turned human (212). Murat's savage fills a completely different plot role than Straparola's satyr and helps present the theme of the abused woman, which does not appear in "Costanza/Costanzo." It turns out that both the theme and the plot of "The Savage" have little to do with Straparola.

Concerning French sources for "Costanza/Costanzo," Sylvie Cromer points to *Le Roman de Merlin* by Robert de Boron. This late twelfth-century or early thirteenth-century manuscript has survived to our day only in fragments. Cromer asserts that one of its narratives parallels "Costanza/Costanzo" with a few character substitutions. In place of a king is Julius Caesar, and instead of a satyr with semi-omniscient power, it is Merlin, "half-crazed, half-prophet" who is captured (4). Merlin's ability to shapeshift is his signature trait in *Le Roman de Merlin*. He was also sometimes depicted as a wild man, wearing cow or sheep skin, being "big and tall and black and bristly," "cruel and fierce," and even wielding a club (Loomis 130). This "wild man" aspect of Merlin is frequently overlooked but prominent in his myth. When considering this Merlin—wild man on the exterior, wise and gentle man on the interior—we can understand how the figure plays into the stories of "Guerrino" and "The Savage."

Beyond this paradox, however, Merlin can also be considered the embodiment of the principal of transformation. He is free to take on whatever shape or form—whatever aspect—he desires. Given the importance of transformation in "The Savage," we should consider the significance of this motif in possible sources. Cromer asks, "Does Madame de Murat have a direct knowledge of the story of Merlin?" but immediately continues, "Regardless, the only source cited is Straparola" (4). We do not know if any more of *Le Roman de Merlin* survived to Murat's day than has to our own, so tracing whether or not this mostly lost text played an influence in "The Savage" would be a challenge. The little that we do know is that *Le Roman de Merlin* played a large part in influencing later medieval Arthurian legend and that a great amount of emphasis was placed on Merlin's shapeshifting.

While it is difficult to say with certainty that the iteration in Boron's *Merlin* was a source text for "The Savage," another Merlin tale, "Georgic and Merlin," is a strong possibility for a source text. Merlin was closely associated with the folklore of Brittany, the purported place of his death—and Murat's native region of France, according to Miorcec de Kerdanet (205). Published for the first time in 1903 by Breton folklorist François Cadic, "Georgic and Merlin" has some

similarities to “Guerrino and the Savage Man” (Delarue 384). Both “Georgic” and “Guerrino” are considered Aarne-Thompson type 502, “The Wild Man,” which is described as “The prince sets the prisoner free. The latter becomes his servant and helper” (Multilingual Folk Tale Database). “Guerrino” is generally considered the earliest version of type 502, but there is no telling how long “Georgic” had existed before it was first published by Cadic in 1903. Given the remarkable perseverance of the Breton culture in the region, a tale from the oral tradition could go back centuries. Indeed, several aspects of “Georgic,” such as Merlin’s prevalence, the symbolic importance of birds, and the victory of the knight over the seven-headed dragon, are indicative of the medieval French tradition, and parallels can be drawn between “Georgic” and several Arthurian tales, including the quest for the Holy Grail. These connections suggest that “Georgic” may very well be medieval in origin, which would make it a predecessor to “Guerrino” and perhaps the oldest recorded variant of type 502.

Transformation is again prominent in “Georgic and Merlin.” Georgic’s father, a lord, captures a bird named Merlin. Merlin promises to sing to Georgic if he releases him. Georgic consents, and Merlin promises to come to his aid when Georgic calls upon him (Delarue 237–38). Georgic is forced to flee the city for fear of his father’s wrath, but Merlin protects him. Georgic must then save a maiden from a seven-headed dragon, and Merlin gives Georgic a horse, a sword, and a cloak. Now “transformed” into a knight, Georgic ultimately slays the dragon and saves the damsel (239–42). The maiden’s father declares that he who slayed the dragon shall have his daughter’s hand in marriage. A pretender arrives with the dragon’s seven heads as evidence, but the girl recognizes that he is not the knight. Georgic was “so well disguised that it was impossible to make out his features,” yet the girl eventually recognizes the knight as Georgic, and they wed (243–44). The rest of the story details how Georgic travelled abroad to obtain items needed to cure the girl’s father of an illness (244–48).

We can break the plot up into essentially four parts, each of which finds a parallel in “The Savage.” First, both protagonists leave home because of a conflict with the father. Second, both assume a false identity and meet both new master and future spouse. Third, both slay the monstrous villain to save a lady. Lastly, both reveal their true identity, wed, and travel. The stories follow the same pattern, with Constantine’s travel coming earlier than Georgic’s.

Furthermore, the motif of transformation is similar in the two tales. Beyond the transformative importance of Merlin as already discussed, Georgic and Constantine both transform themselves by how they dress. Georgic does

not cross-dress as Constantine does, but their disguises have the same purpose of allowing them to be portrayed as a *chevaleresque* figure and therefore allowing them to rise to the rightful status of their birth. Transformation through disguise hides the identity of the protagonist from his or her future spouse. Merlin's magic enables Georgic's transformation, and "Mother nature, aided by [Obligeanne's] powerful magic" is responsible for the transformation of Constantine's sisters and brothers-in-law. Magic is also responsible for the transformation of the "King of the Loving Islands" to the savage and back again ("The Savage" 218). We therefore have two texts with seemingly different yet actually similar plots and a shared motif of transformation employed to very similar ends.

While "Georgic and Merlin" seems a contender for a source text for "The Savage," there is no certainty that Murat knew the tale. There is no telling when it first originated, and like with *Le Roman de Merlin*, there is simply not sufficient historical record. We can, however, make a guess. Though some modern scholars dispute his claims, Miorcec de Kerdanet tells us that Murat spoke the Breton language and that she wore a traditional Breton costume when she was presented at Versailles (206). As prevalent as the *matière de Bretagne* was in the French literary canon of the time, it is very possible that Murat was rather familiar with Breton "literature," most of which was oral. It is entirely plausible that Murat knew "Georgic and Merlin" even though there is no definitive proof. Given the subtle similarities in the two stories and the strong possibility that Murat would know the folktale, "Georgic and Merlin" was likely an inspiration behind or a source text for "The Savage."

Nevertheless, Murat only referenced Straparola. It could be that she merely declined to reference "Georgic and Merlin" as the tale impacted only one in her collection. Perhaps the influence was a subconscious one or she was more concerned with asserting that her tales were not based on Madame d'Aulnoy's. Each of these possible responses leaves us with another complication, however. Murat refers in her foreword to *Histoires sublimes* only to the "ladies" who were publishing fairy tales and ignores Perrault, whose *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (the Mother Goose tales) had formed France's "fairy-tale language" just two years before the *Histoires sublimes* were published (François 179–180). Murat may simply have been trying to eschew the idea that she borrowed from her contemporaries, but there may be more behind the reasons for her claim.

We must remember that the great factor that separated Murat from many of her peers when it came to publishing was the previously discussed issue of

censorship. Murat needed to remain carefully grounded within the bounds of the French literary canon for the sake of literary safety. Anything out of the ordinary could have been grounds for an attack against her and her work and thus necessitate censorship and risk losing the *privège du roy*. Perrault's tales clearly took inspiration from Straparola, and in the foreword to the *Histoires sublimes*, Murat suggests that Madame d'Aulnoy and the other *conteuses* did so as well. Murat attempted to downplay any difference between herself and other tale writers, presenting them as one unit drawing on the works of Straparola in order to distance herself and her scandals from her work. This would have been advantageous to Murat because it was she herself who risked censorship more than her tales. Even if "Georgic and Merlin" was a deliberate source text, citing it may have led to attacks that Murat had perverted this story by taking a man who disguises himself as a man and transforming it into a story of a woman disguising herself as a man. It was much safer to only reference Straparola, for despite his own cross-dressing heroine, Straparola's influence of Perrault and the *conteuses* validated him as a canonically acceptable source despite the rules of *la bienséance* and *le bon usage de la femme*.

Murat therefore likely drew on "Georgic and Merlin" in addition to Straparola as a source for "The Savage" but declined to reference the former in an attempt to situate her work more safely in the tradition of the French literary canon to avoid censorship. She combines Georgic's transformation from "Georgic and Merlin" and Merlin's intertextual shapeshifting with the cross-dressing of Straparola's "Costanza/Costanzo." The resulting tale manages to explore transformation—both shapeshifting and cross-dressing—while escaping the censorship and criticism associated with cross-dressing.

Transformation, therefore, becomes the center of "The Savage." Murat's stated purpose for her *Mémoires* was to show that "appearances often deceive" (*A Trip to the Country* 3). This theme relates directly to the issue of transformation, particularly in "The Savage," where it is manifested by Constantine's cross-dressing and the King of the Loving Islands's shapeshifting. Murat's own life knew such transformations and deceptions. Like Constantine, she was deprived of being perceived as the woman she was. Like the King of the Loving Islands, Murat was transformed into a "savage" that was said to have violated society's and nature's laws ("The Savage" 217). Murat is, simultaneously, the protagonist of the work, the Princess Constantine, as well as the eponymous character, "The Savage."

Maria Tatar says of fairy tales, “The idea of personal transformation emerges logically from a genre that draws ceaselessly on shape-shifting and metamorphosis” (60). She is referring to the “personal transformation” of the tale’s audience, but in Murat’s case, Tatar’s statement is perhaps more true of the author than the reader. A victim of unwarranted abuse and slander, Murat underwent several transformations during her life; the most significant was the transformation from a cherished wife to an abused, “unfaithful,” and “licentious” wife. Murat desperately wanted to show what she said was the central theme of her *Mémoires*: “appearances often deceive” (*A Trip to the Country* 3). Constantine could make the transformation back to Constantine, but Murat could not make the transformation back to who she was before her reputation was stained and before her husband disowned her. The King of the Loving Islands could make the transformation back from savage monster to human nobility, but Murat could not. She was not given that opportunity by her accusers. There was no fairy magic to help her. Murat could only live her transformation back to her former life through her literature. She made her literature a reflection of her own scandalous life yet needed to remain safely within the bounds of canonically approved literature. She therefore chose to reference Straparola as her only source for her *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* to maintain a secure position for her literature despite her violations of *la bienséance* and *le bon usage de la femme*. Fear of censorship and its repercussions prevented Murat from citing the most crucial source for her *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*: the transformations in her own life.

Endnotes

- 1 All present English translations of Murat, including the foreword, are the author’s with the exceptions of those from “The Savage,” translated by Allison Stedman in *Marvelous Transformations*, and the introduction Stedman and Gethner wrote to *A Trip to the Country*. All present English translations of Cromer and of Miorcec de Kerdanet are also the author’s.

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The Revolution of Bath

The Writing and Re-Writing of Social History in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Erica Pratt

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the world exploded. Revolution broke out across the globe in an era which social scientists now designate as “the Age of Revolution.” Although much of Britain’s physical involvement in the revolutions of the era took place away from her center, revolutionary ideology permeated her political, social, and intellectual scene. Much of the revolutionary discussion focused on the moral, practical, and political ideology of physical revolution. However, in her last book, *Persuasion*, Jane Austen picks up on the less obvious, but increasingly powerful social revolution which was taking place across Britain.

The social revolution portrayed in the novel is not the deadly affair which saturated social discussion, but it is a fight which requires the characters, particularly Anne, to expand their borders socially and psychologically. As Austen’s characters travel through the landscape of social revolution, Bath serves as pinnacle of their journey—the battlefield where characters are invited to perform according to their social training. The initial skirmish takes place before the book begins and uses social fighting techniques of the pre-Napoleonic war. It is fought within an aristocratic structure and defeats our heroine. The second

battle is conducted under completely different training mechanisms, and consequently, this second skirmish signals the fall of aristocracy and the rise of meritocracy. Throughout *Persuasion*, Austen uses the constructs of political warfare to explore the personal and societal effects of social revolution. This exploration is particularly evident in the use of Bath as a battlefield, Anne's prisoner-of-war-like situation at the beginning of the novel, her subsequent liberation, and the final shift in societal values.

Austen is not typically credited with chronicling the processes of revolution. Rather, in the years since her death, she has been trivialized under "the belief that Austen was somehow 'limited' . . . that her content was restricted . . . her national and sexual politics were reactionary; and that the prime function of her novels was to serve as havens from too much reality" (Harris 11). However, viewing her works solely as a "haven from too much reality" offers a very limited perspective. Many of the socio-political questions of her day revolved around revolution, and as an author of the time, Austen confronts many of these issues. As Jocelyn Harris points out, "To praise Jane Austen as the creator of merely stylistic masterpieces is to strip her of the historical, cultural, and literary contexts that might otherwise illuminate her novels" (11). Particularly in *Persuasion*, Austen resists the simplicity with which she is often accused and produces a sharp analysis of the process of social revolution.

As we enter Austen's world, it is important to note that physical space takes on an important role. The physical settings of Austen's novels are typically rife with psychological, mental, or social significance. Rebecca Posusta remarks,

Austen uses space to define the emotional and intellectual limits of her heroines as well as to suggest the extent of the world in which they may move. Her physical spaces are not only used to illustrate the dichotomy between public and private interaction, but also to demonstrate a contrast between her heroine's psychological place on the one hand and her physical situation on the other (78).

Many of Austen's significant scenes are linked rather poignantly with a physical space. Elizabeth, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, reports she first fell in love with Darcy while viewing his Pemberley estate. In another of Austen's novels, Emma receives several harsh lessons on her first trip outside of her known world during the episode at Box Hill. *Persuasion* is no different in this particular aspect. As Anne travels throughout the novel, her physical location is often

a commentary on her social status. In particular, Bath forms the battleground of Anne's quest to socialize as she pleases.

Anne's initial experience in Bath sets the stage for the power play which occurs throughout the rest of *Persuasion*. While at Bath and away from the influence of her family, Anne meets and falls "deeply in love" (Austen 18) with a naval officer, Captain Wentworth. Although Austen describes Wentworth as "a remarkably fine young man, with a great deal of intelligence, spirit, and brilliancy" (Austen 18), Anne's decision to accept his attentions is generally deemed a poor one. The terms with which Anne's father, Sir Walter, and her mentor, Lady Russell, choose to view Anne's engagement is particularly interesting. It is never contested that Wentworth is *not* a fine young man, nor is it ever argued that he might not possess the qualities specified. Rather, he is rejected because he, "has nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence" (Austen 19). The means set forth for evaluating a potential marriage partner clearly delineate the differences between societal values. Anne chooses to see Wentworth through a perspective which closely aligns her with a meritocratic social structure. She admires his personal qualities rather than his lineage and therefore comes in conflict with the ideals of the aristocracy. Unfortunately for Anne, this first clash secures power for the established aristocratic social structure.

Austen briefly summarizes the courtship of Anne and Wentworth, his proposal, her rejection and the aftermath in Chapter Four. However, she glosses over the details so completely that it could nearly be mistaken for the story of any young couple. More time is spent on the emotions and thoughts of Lady Russell and Sir Walter than those of Anne and Captain Wentworth. Initially, this stylistic maneuver appears odd, however, Lady Russell and Sir Walter are the characters who hold power. The first words of *Persuasion* are "Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall" (Austen 1), and the following paragraphs are used to describe his personal importance. He takes precedence and is clearly determined to write the story. It is through the influence of Sir Walter and Lady Russell that Anne's engagement is dissolved in the first place, and although Austen records "not with a few months ended Anne's share of suffering from it" (Austen 19), it is generally accepted that Anne's broken engagement was for the best. As conquerors, Sir Walter and Lady Russell have the power to write the history. Therefore, Anne's story is trivialized and swept under the rug.

As mentioned earlier, the initial episode in Bath is important throughout *Persuasion* because of the results—specifically Anne's new status as a member

of the losing side. Although Anne had been in Bath for only a few months, she continues throughout the novel to suffer from her choice. Interestingly, her suffering does not seem to take the form of typical heartbreak. It is so silent even Lady Russell is surprised when Anne mentions regrets regarding Captain Wentworth. Instead, the suffering of Anne is marked by a loss of power—particularly in regards to her ability to move as she pleases, socialize with those whom she chooses, and even speak as she desires. These are strange consequences for a lover with a broken heart, but they are not particularly strange consequences for a defeated prisoner of war.

The first demonstration of Anne's imprisonment is her inability to choose her surroundings. Within the first few pages of *Persuasion*, Austen demonstrates Anne's lack of control. Although she sincerely dreads the idea of returning to Bath, Anne's voice is silenced, and she finds herself packing. She is carted from place to place on the whims of her family, and even when she strongly objects to their wishes, she finds herself following obediently along. Leaving for Bath, staying at Kellynch Hall, moving to Uppercross, and going to and returning from Lyme are all decisions made for Anne by her family members. If, as Posusta argues, physical space demonstrates the extent of control which Austen's heroines have within their world, Anne's lack of space surely demonstrates her lack of power.

This lack of power is further explored through Anne's inability to control her social surroundings. Jeff Nunokawa remarks in *Speechless in Austen*, "Another truth in Austen, if not universally acknowledged, at least universally felt: the pleasure of merely socializing is its own reward, and the pains of exclusion from this pleasure its own punishment" (6). Socialization is power in the world inhabited by Austen's characters. Those who have the power to socialize not only have the freedom to move about as they please, but notoriously select and reject their associates with care. Simply glancing at a list of people whom Sir Walter or Elizabeth, Anne's older sister, snub throughout *Persuasion* would provide ample evidence of this reality. Anne, however, has none of that power. Rebecca Posusta notes that at Kellynch Anne "very rarely takes part in conversation . . . She is imprisoned in her thoughts when she is surrounded by those she does not value and who do not value her . . . Anne only speaks twice in the first three chapters of the novel. On these occasions, the dash between her brief, measured words suggest a habit of inflexibility" (80-1). It has been said the victors write the history, and until Anne returns to Bath, those victors do not include Anne or her friends of the navy. Around the socially elite

presence of Kellynch Hall, Anne is silent and allows the victors—namely Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Lady Russell—to write the history. The lack of power in the few words which Anne does speak is quite evident.

Anne's inability to speak emphasizes her exclusion from society. She is not able to effectively enjoy even the most basic of social pleasures—that of communicating. Nunokawa further expands on this point by arguing, “In Austen's world, though, the body in pain less arranges the exile of its victim from the society of communication, the communication of society, than constitutes the horrors of that state of exile” (13). Therefore, one of the side effects of exile is the inability to communicate. Not until Anne moves to Lyme and away from the influence of Kellynch Hall does she begin to speak. Interestingly, when Anne finally has the power to hold a lengthy conversation, she begins with Captain Benwick, who likewise has difficulty communicating. His intractable grief and love of morbid poetry push him into social exile, but through this connection, Anne begins to voice her ideas regarding love. The process wherein Anne slowly breaks her communicative exile also signals a shift in the existing power play. She begins to speak, move, and ultimately prepare for a second battle in Bath.

Although Anne partially regains her voice in Lyme, it is not until she returns to Bath that she is able to fight the war which grants her true freedom. As mentioned earlier, Bath is the social center of England, and this war is fought for social power, therefore many of the skirmishes are fought through conversation and Anne's ability to spend her time with those she pleases. Marriage, the most binding of social contracts and the crux of Anne's previous battle, is the focal point of this revolution.

Throughout her stay in Bath, Anne finds strength in the company of those who share her values, but finding her voice amongst the socially elite proves to be more of a process than an event. For the most part, Anne is able to converse freely with Lady Russell and Mr. Elliot, the suitor selected by those who favor the ancient regime. Unfortunately, despite this small increase in communicative power, her ideas regarding society and marriage are trivialized and rejected. In a similar vein, much of Anne's conversation with Sir Walter and Elizabeth involves both parties attempting to control Anne while Anne attempts to resist this control. Particularly when Anne chooses to visit Mrs. Smith, an impoverished friend, over Lady Dalrymple, a social elitist, Austen records, “Elizabeth was disdainful, and Sir Walter severe” (104). As Anne begins to reject the social stigmas inflicted by her aristocratic family, she finds herself in a position of increased power. After a discussion with Mrs. Smith on the history of Mr. Elliot,

Anne muses, “Mrs. Smith had been able to tell her what no one else could have done. Could the knowledge have been extended through her family” (Austen 141). In this new world, family is not the measure of distinction. Mr. Elliot, despite his claim to familial ties, was not to be trusted and was not pardoned for his behavior. Anne’s victory is signaled by her increasing ability to communicate, but it is brought about by her choices to communicate with the right people. Had Anne continued her allegiance to the old values of aristocracy, she would have found herself aligned unhappily to a dishonest man. Fortunately for Anne, the victors from ten years ago have lost their power.

The world changes from an aristocracy to a meritocracy, and Anne’s victory is secured through her recognition and appliance of this new social structure. As Anne continues to seek power through socialization, Captain Wentworth is forced to fight a similar battle. In the beginning of *Persuasion*, Wentworth is characterized as a man of few words. He is quickly dismissed by those of the upper class, and often we hear of his perspective through the voices of other characters. Upon his return to Bath, Wentworth still does not appear to have gained the ability to speak. It is evident he desires to communicate with Anne, but is continually frustrated in his aim by those who are associated with the aristocracy. Even when he is finally able to make his desires for marriage clear, it is not through vocalization, but through the written word. His inability to speak openly is evident within his letter, “I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach” (Austen 158). Because of his previous experiences in Bath, Wentworth is likewise a prisoner of war. He does not act or speak as he chooses, but is driven by those around him. As Anne speaks openly about love to Captain Benwick, Wentworth is given the power to write and once again explain his feelings toward Anne. Only after his proposal and the subsequent liberation it brings does Austen remark,

Soon words enough had passed between them to decide their direction towards the comparatively quiet and retired gravel walk, where the power of conversation would make the present hour a blessing indeed; and prepare for it all the immortality which the happiest recollections of their own future lives could bestow (160).

It is through the power of conversation Anne is able to regain her happiness, and the next four pages are a testament to Anne’s newfound ability to talk. It is through these comparatively long conversations that Anne is not only able to talk through the years of misunderstandings, but also strengthen and establish

her position as victor. Voices such as those of Lady Russell and Sir Walter are largely silenced, while our heroine determinedly makes plans with her hero.

Through the new structure of the meritocracy, Anne, Wentworth, and their friends are able to rise. The social landscape is drastically altered, but Austen leaves us with little doubt about the victors. Anne follows the path of Austen's other heroines when she marries the man she loves. Wentworth leaves the scene happily married to a previously inaccessible woman, well-respected, wealthy, youthful, and with high prospects. Many of Anne's friends who were previously deemed socially inferior likewise gain from the shift in power. Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove are married, and their marriages are discussed in terms of companionability rather than social compatibility. In the case of Mrs. Clay, Anne is able to bring her from the dregs of society into a respectable position. The lives of those around Anne are dramatically affected by the shift in power.

Anne's physical and communicative liberation not only signals victory on the side of the meritocracy, but also coincides with the decline in the importance of those who held power over her. Nunokawa reminds us, "As much as the novels are lit by the brilliance of social success, they are littered with the casualties of social death, brought on by disasters large and small" (3). No revolution is complete without loss, and the social revolution of *Persuasion* is no exception. As the fortunes of Anne continue to rise, Elizabeth finds herself steadily aging without any marital prospects in sight. Even Mr. Elliot, Elizabeth's only potential suitor, chooses to "withdraw" after Anne announces her decision to marry Wentworth (Austen 165). Lady Russell experiences a sharp decline in her ability to control Anne, and although she is gratified by Anne's happiness, Lady Russell's loss in power is emphasized when Anne pronounces that doing justice to Captain Wentworth, "was what Lady Russell had now to do" (Austen 165). This statement not only demonstrates the immense amount of power which Anne now holds, but also the change in values.

Sir Walter, who is set up at the beginning of the book as a caricature of the old world regime, particularly suffers from this decline of power. Imagine his chagrin at the beginning of the novel if he had ever thought Anne would someday say of herself and a man of the Navy:

The disproportion in their fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment's regret; but to have no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good-will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be sensible of (Austen 165).

Much like King Louis XVI of France who had naively gone about fixing the clocks in the palace of Versailles while the commoners screamed for bread, Sir Walter's determined isolation from the real world leaves him irrelevant and socially cut off.

Sir Walter's location within Bath reflects this reality. As Parker notes,

Camden-place (now Camden Crescent) in the early part of the nineteenth century was nearly the northernmost point of the city, in other words, at nearly the highest point of its elevation. From this height Sir Walter could literally look down on almost everyone else in Bath, an important consideration for a man to whom rank, 'the place he held in society' (Austen 4), mattered so much (*What Part of Bath Do You Think They Will Settle In?*).

Sir Walter's move to Camden Place was a strategic maneuver designed to strengthen his position at the head of society. Unfortunately, his lofty situation above the city does not reflect superiority, but the instability of his situation (Harris 165). The building project which produced Camden Place was discontinued due to instability of ground (Parker). Despite his illusion of power, the very elevation which marks Sir Walter's aristocratic pride also signals the inevitability of his decline. Throughout Anne's second visit to Bath, Sir Walter struggles to maintain the illusion of power as he desperately seeks the favor of the socially elite, scorns the social choices of Anne, and continues in his lavishly vain lifestyle. Instead of securing his position in society, these elitist choices make Sir Walter's position all the more precarious. He continues engaging with society through outdated methods and remains oblivious of the shifting societal values. In the end, this blindness leaves Anne and Captain Wentworth as the social victors instead of Sir Walter and Elizabeth.

Social revolution is rarely given the same distinction as political revolution. Austen, however, interweaves the revolutions. The social revolution in England during the 1800s was technically bloodless, but as Austen demonstrates throughout *Persuasion*, the consequences were anything but insignificant. On a personal and national scale, the shift in social structures was as significant as the war with France. Anne suffers the consequences of social exclusion, yet rises to the top as she fights for and adapts to the emerging social structure. Sir Walter, Elizabeth, Mr.

Elliot, and others benefit from the social structure implemented by the old system, but then fall as the structure shifts. The decline of the aristocracy and rise of the meritocracy dramatically changed the landscape of European identity. In a world rife with revolutions, Austen brings the battle to the drawing room and proves the transforming power of societal revolution.

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Contributors

Drew Chandler was born and raised in Austin, Texas. Drew is an English major and plans to become a university professor. He is recently married, and his beautiful wife Christa is expecting twins. Drew loves old movies (especially those with Audrey Hepburn) as well as *Star Wars*, Disney movies and Victor Hugo's literature. His scholarly interests focus on film studies and British Romanticism.

Anna Gee is a Seattle native transplanted to Utah for 4 years at BYU and 18 months as a missionary on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. While at BYU, she majored in English with an economics minor and enjoyed additional studies in French language and culture, including a study abroad to Paris, France and a semester in the Foreign Language Student Residence. Some of her most formative experiences as a BYU student include classes taught by Professor Jamin Rowan, whose insights on *Native Son* inspired her article in this semester's journal. She currently resides in Cambridge, MA where she is a first year at Harvard Law School.

Zoë Meyer was born in Dallas, Texas to a family of nine kids. She is an English major set to graduate this December with aspirations of going to law school. In her spare time, she enjoys baking, playing volleyball, and playing the piano. Zoe has enjoyed her time at BYU as a First-Year Mentor and Intramural Champion, but she hopes her next step in life will take her somewhere a little warmer.

Jacob Nielsen was raised in Yorba Linda, California. As an international relations major and English minor, Jacob has developed a love for traveling, politics, literature, words, and understanding the world around him. He has made the most out of his undergraduate years by participating in two study abroad programs in Jerusalem and London as well as a two year mission in Cuernavaca, México. After graduation in April of 2017, he plans on pursuing further education as a graduate student of English with the hopes of becoming a professor of Victorian literature. He loves political humor, deep conversation, a good tennis match, and spending time with his fiancé.

Erica Pratt grew up in Woodland Hills, Utah—a place which looks as magical as it sounds. She is majoring in English with a European studies minor and hopes to graduate in the spring. Erica grew up surrounded by her mother’s stories and views those experiences as the foundation for her love of reading. She also loves to travel, hike, spend time with her friends, and run. Someday she hopes to return to the UK where she will meet and marry some incredibly hot British guy (or maybe just re-read *Jane Eyre* . . .). In the meantime, Erica is working towards graduation and then grad school.

Heather Randall calls Sandy, Utah her hometown. An English major here at BYU, she has loved studying literature and hopes to one day use her editing skills to edit and publish literary criticism. In her free time, you will find Heather laughing with her sweet husband, playing games with her family, or reading something by William Faulkner. Heather tries to live by her mom’s number one rule: “It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.”

Erin Ritchie The story so far: In the beginning, Erin Ritchie was an English major. This made a lot of people very skeptical of her earning potential and has been widely regarded as a bad move. So she switched to English Teaching and currently has a job (!) teaching ninth grade at Timpview High School. When she is not grading papers, Erin tackles the Rory Gilmore Reading Challenge, writes children’s stories (mostly about narwhals), and rocks out to *One Direction*. Currently, she and her husband are working to visit every national park in the US.

Jared Willden was born and raised in Charlotte, North Carolina. He served in the France Paris Mission before graduating magna cum laude from BYU in April 2016, studying English and French. His favorite coursework at BYU involved the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and French fairy-tale writers, and he won BYU’s 2016 Phi Kappa Phi Research Paper Competition for his work on Murat. Jared aspires to be a professional novelist.

