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A JOURNAL OF LITERARY CRITICISM

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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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Editors' Note

Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism, is a student-run journal associated with the English Department at Brigham Young University. As a journal we are dedicated to bringing quality pieces of literary criticism from the undergraduate and graduate levels to our readers. *Criterion* functions entirely through the exhaustive efforts of our volunteer editors. We would like to take this moment to thank our staff for the wonderful work they have done for this issue. Our staff devoted their time and energy to refining these articles and preparing them for publication. We could not have done this without their extraordinary efforts, and we appreciate the unique presence each and every one of them has contributed to the journal.

We would also like to thank the university's English Department, its faculty and staff, and numerous student volunteers for organizing and participating in the English Symposium from which this issue's submissions were drawn. The Symposium comprised many excellent sessions and panels addressing a wide range of authors, genres, and periods; selections were made from the finest pieces of work with engaging ideas and a level of professionalism that could be made publishable on our single-semester turnaround time for each issue.

It is always difficult to adequately express our appreciation to all of the individuals involved in the development of a student journal. However, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude for the guiding hand of our faculty advisor, Mike Taylor, for his continued investment in this journal. We would also like to thank Maddie Calder, who provided the design for our cover. Finally, we would

like to extend our thanks to the BYU Department of English for their patronage and support of our events, promotional materials, and final publications.

This issue includes several pieces dedicated to the topics of identity and nation, stereotype and gender construction, and religion's role in a largely post-Christian literary sphere. Authors, too, revised rigorously to bring their pieces to this present state, and their intellectual engagement remains the force fueling a critical endeavor such as this. As the Editors-in-Chief of this journal, we eagerly present our readers with the Fall 2018 issue of *Criterion*.

Maren Loveland, McKay Hansen, and Hailey Kate Chatlin

the devaluation of consent in *the rape of lucrece*

Anisa Call

Scholarly work on the enduring problem of rape has traditionally placed the blame of perpetuation on the flaws inherent in patriarchal systems. Some scholars have pointed to the constructed gender hierarchies of patriarchy as fertile grounds for rape to flourish (Pallotti 218). Scholars often read Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* this way, with an emphasis on how Tarquin's construction of Lucrece's femininity—as whole and inaccessible—is what motivates his rape (Quay 7). Other scholarship suggests that gaps in sex crime laws are responsible for the repetition of rape (Decker and Baroni 1167). This argument highlights the lack of legislative contrast between *The Rape of Lucrece's* setting in ancient Rome, the monarchical republic of Shakespeare's day, and even the modern United States. Other scholars claim that disproportionate representation in patriarchal systems could be culpable for making rape immortal (Lake 266). Reading *The Rape of Lucrece* through this lens suggests that the switch to a slightly altered form of patriarchy in republicanism is insufficient to crush the real cause of rape. Each of these traditional arguments finds sufficient backing for a compelling case in *The Rape of Lucrece*.

The consideration of all these arguments, however, coupled with a careful analysis of the poem itself necessitates arguing for a larger cause of rape: the devaluation of consent in patriarchal systems, on both a sexual and a political level. In Shakespeare's time, political consent was an ostensibly progressive concept nevertheless riddled with shortcomings. Growing emphasis on "government by consent" seemed negligible in the face of disproportionate representation; how could a system claim to value consent when only the powerful had a voice? (Lake 273). Literature by Shakespeare's contemporaries explores sexual consent, presenting female agency as both limited and necessary. Male anxiety shaped this kind of narrowly bound consent, depicted by authors like Thomas Heywood and Thomas Middleton, which actually fostered greater female subordination rather than autonomy (Detmer-Goebel 156). Today, the well-intentioned hyper focus on consent in rape cases has actually led to a submersion of agency beneath context or structure; victims' choices are labeled irrelevant or worthless when compared to factors of situation and the aggressors' agency (Munro 420). And if the Harvey Weinstein allegations have taught us anything, it is that contemporary America still undervalues consent. Some scholarship has even claimed that our society valorizes non-consent (Oliver 4).

With alarming repetition across centuries, sexual and political consent have been limited, undermined, or generally devalued. In Shakespeare's poem, Lucretia's interactions with her two servants—one female and one male—serve to expose the paradox of consent: that a servant's consent is not explicitly valued, yet the very power of his or her master is dependent upon such consent. This paradox is applicable across patriarchal systems including monarchy and, ironically, republicanism. In a republic, free-born-slave or male-female dynamics take the place of the master-servant relationship portrayed by Lucretia and her servants. I will argue that this paradox of consent is the basis for the devaluation of consent in *The Rape of Lucrece*, and by extension in republicanism; and that this devaluation results in the gender hierarchies, gaps in sex crime laws, and disproportionate representation that perpetuate rape.

The poem's first significant interaction between Lucretia and her maid justifies the devaluation of female consent by constructing gender hierarchies that portray femininity as irrational, helpless, and in need of protection. The poem's description of the maid's empathy and its effect on Lucretia utilizes imagery of overwhelming forces of nature to characterize female

reactions and underscore their helplessness. For example, the poem compares the maid's tears to "swelling drops" of morning dew, triggered by "those faire suns set in her mistress' sky' who in a salt-waved ocean, quench their light" (1228–31). In a similar description, the poem equates women with "ivory conduits coral cisterns filling" (1234). These images highlight the overwhelming quality of the natural elements; things are filling, swelling, and being quenched, as if beyond the control of the women. As Shakespeare points out, the maid's emotions have no basis in reason as there is "no cause but company of her drops' spilling" (1236). The poem even ventures so far as to claim that the "gentle sex" are prone to emotion devoid of logic to the point of self-inflicted violence—"they drown their eyes or break their hearts"—which becomes a haunting foreshadower of Lucretia's suicide (1239). The insinuation present in this snapshot is that women, when left to their own nature without male guidance, are incapable of overcoming emotionality with rationality. This construction of femininity is consistent with other 16th century literature like Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, which declares that women are not "rationally equipped to respond to ethical dilemmas" (Detmer Goebel 153). Such a conclusion justifies "protectionists" who use an over-inclusive definition of "vulnerability" to push paternalistic agendas. These agendas are grounded on initiatives designed to empower the vulnerable, such as educational posters about how consuming alcohol increases vulnerability. Yet these programs can actually reduce individual safety and options by increasing marginalization through victim-blaming and offering support only to those who conform to "less transgressive gendered lives" by dressing, socializing, and behaving in the prescribed way the majority protectionist group approves of (Munro 428). Ultimately, the construction of the maid's femininity in *The Rape of Lucrece* as irrational and helpless shifts the value of consent's balance away from autonomy and toward protection. This shift moralizes maintaining gender hierarchies as male duty while ignoring how such hierarchies also contribute to rape, as in the case of Lucretia.

As the interaction between mistress and female servant progresses, *The Rape of Lucrece* further validates the devaluation of female consent by suggesting that women are merely the product of their context. The poem presents a stark image of men with marble minds and women with minds of wax, which implies that women's minds are malleable, "formed as marble will" (1241). Much like a marble seal forms an impression in wax, so women's minds are impressed or determined "in them by force" which

force is unequivocally male and inextricably tied to sexual force (1243). The theory that emerges from this image is that women are what is done to them. Although the application of such a theory is well-intentioned in leveling the playing field for victims in modern rape trials, an overemphasis on concepts like “exploitation” and “vulnerability” relating to context can actually undermine the value of the victim’s consent (Munro 420). Believing that women are the products of their context dismisses the importance of their own agency, thereby creating a second kind of victimization on the underbelly of “justice.” The poem expands this dangerous idea of women as products by absolving them of any guilt while also absolving them of their will: “No man inveigh against the withered flower, But chide rough winter that the flower hath killed” (1254–55). While this line clearly places the burden of blame on the aggressor, it also surreptitiously portrays the woman as an inanimate object, insignificant in size compared to the male force of nature and incapable of making any choices to combat his force. The final image the poem leaves to support the idea that women are the products of their context, is that of the lord-tenant relationship: “those proud lords, to blame, make weak-made women tenants to their shame” (1259–60). In such a feudal system, women as the tenants would have been little more than property to their lords, with lives shaped in large part by the will of these men. The danger in these lines is the synchronous absolution and devaluation of consent through the subversion of agency to structure. Although scholars may argue for the implementation of non-coercion and non-deception legislation to close the gaps in sex crime laws that perpetuate rape, it is troubling that these proposals invariably find their roots in the argument for context over consent (Decker and Baroni 1167). *The Rape of Lucrece* makes connections between metaphorical images and the devalued state of female consent under a patriarchy that says women are not only incapable of rationality on their own, but are actually incapable of being their own, free from impression by their male context. These connections suggest that scholars who advocate for verbal consent laws strike more efficiently at the issue of victim justice by prizing agency over contextual elements that drown out the victim’s voice. In combating the traditional paradox of consent, verbal consent laws allow for a clear understanding and prioritization of agency that reverses the paternalistic mistakes of contextual legislation.

The Rape of Lucrece then zeros in on the paradox of consent by presenting Lucretia with limited agency that is nonetheless necessary for her to support

her husband, and by extension the very patriarchy that devalues her consent. Lucretia has authority over her maid, derived from the patriarchal structure of Collatine's household. Though she may weep and share her grief with the maid, in time she reasserts her superiority over the girl when she suddenly speaks rationally: "If tears could help, mine own would do me good" (1274). This pattern of the rational mistress chastising her servant repeats when the emotional maid "request(s) to know your heaviness" and Lucretia emphatically replies, "O, peace!" as if to command the maid to calm herself down, and then presents her logic: "If it should be told, the repetition cannot make it less" (1283–85). It is significant that of the two women it is Lucretia, despite being the actual victim of the crime, who is capable of rational thought in this moment. Yet this rationality, which the poem juxtaposes against the maid's emotionality to highlight its masculine connotation, is all Lucretia is capable of in reaction to her rape.

In early modern rape stories, rape victims never enacted their own revenge; the few stories with heroines who tried, as in John Fletcher's *Bonduca*, characterized these women as dishonorable (Detmer-Goebel 149). Rather, these stories limited the victim's options or agency to support of her husband through actively resisting the rape even after it happened to keep it from turning into adultery. Lucretia fears "shame that might ensue, by that her death" or rape "to do her husband wrong;" and it is "by this" fear that she musters an incomprehensible strength to be rational in a moment of utter despair (1263–64; 68). She realizes that if she reveals her story to the wrong person at the wrong time, it may bring deeper shame to her husband and herself. Thus, her despondent assertion that it is torture "when more is felt than one hath power to tell" emerges not as a traumatic inability to speak, but a repressed desire to do so in the face of shame (1287–88). So she uses her acutely limited agency to sacrifice her needs for Collatine and choose rationality, by refusing to share her plight with the maid and instead sending for her kinsman to do what she cannot: seek revenge against Tarquin. This interaction provides an example of a woman whose agency is clearly limited to a few options, but is in the same moment necessary for her husband's support. This is the first instance in which the poem grapples with the paradox of consent, by showing how Lucretia's inferior consent is simultaneously limited or unvalued and necessary for her husband to maintain power. Such a paradox could not exist without the gender constructions previously discussed which depict women as "sexual, dangerous, irrational" and the product of

context (Pallotti 218). This uneven footing between man and woman is what creates the paradox of consent in the case of marriage, but other disparate power relations can produce the paradox as well.

The Rape of Lucrece uses the interaction between Lucretia and her male servant to show how this paradox of consent leads to its devaluation in a mistress-servant dynamic. When the male servant, a messenger, comes before Lucretia to collect her letter, he is “blushing on her with steadfast eye” which signifies his admiration for and unshakable loyalty to her as his mistress (1339). Lucretia, however, “thought he blushed to see her shame,” which fills her with mistrust and even greater shame (1344). Thus they stand at an impasse, as “her earnest eye did make him more amazed,” or terrified, and “the more she thought he spied in her some blemish” (1365–58). Regardless of the noble intentions on both sides of this interaction—in his case, loyalty, in hers, redemption—the servant and Lucretia trap each other in a cycle of pain by inciting growing shame and terror respectively. Lucretia has a limited measure of authority over this boy by virtue of her place in Collatine’s household, which indicates she should not need his consent to govern his actions. Even so, he gives it silently but fully, submitting to her authority with “true-respect” and as a “pattern of the worn-out age,” indicating his antique sense of chivalry and service (1347–50). Yet his silence keeps Lucretia frozen; he “talk[ed] in deeds” and “laid no words to gage” which “kindled duty kindled her mistrust (1348–52). Simply because the boy does not verbally consent to her command, Lucretia’s confidence and efficacy as mistress crumbles in a striking illustration of the paradox of consent. Although as mistress she should not technically value the servant’s consent, she clearly cannot maintain her power without it.

Faced with this same paradox on a grander political scale, radicals in Shakespeare’s time proposed a surprising solution: government fundamentally based on the consent of the governed. Such an idea doubtless seemed counter-intuitive to those in political power who wished to stay there. Yet these progressive “crown-in-parliament” advocates argued that the people, by virtue of them first choosing a king, were actually the fundamental creators of the kingdom. In theory, “just as voices of consent at the first produced a political head out of the political body, so now the political body could repeat the trick again, producing a new head for itself out of its own political materials” (Lake 273). The idea was that if the governed were the source of the government’s original power, then creating a political system

that valued their consent would actually protect the powerful. In application, however, valuing consent was easier said than done because the proposed “tempered republicanism” relied on flawed, disproportionate representation. This representative system allowed only gave voice to the powerful, while shutting out minorities and those on the fringes of society. Once again and under the guise of improvement, the political system was rapidly devaluing consent. This same devaluation continues in modern republics like the United States, where an ever-widening gap between representation and the governed reveals a disturbing lack of concern about consent. Given such clear apathy, we cannot feign surprise at the perpetuation of rape in the United States, or even at scholarly assertions that non-consent has become openly valorized or celebrated in our society (Oliver 20). Think of the *Access Hollywood* tape released in 2017, which captured now President Trump bragging about his sexual assault conquests in graphic detail, including his attitude towards seeking consent: “I don’t even wait” (Fahrenheit 4). Against this modern socio-political backdrop, the perennial relevance of Lucretia’s interaction with her male servant becomes unsurprising considering what it reveals about devaluation through the paradox of consent.

Some scholarship might suggest that Lucretia’s reaction to the impasse with her male servant is not about consent at all, but purely about their sexual dynamics given that a man just raped her. This track could cite that “she thought he blushed as knowing Tarquin’s lust” or because he understands and perhaps even shares it (1354). Such a reading suggests that Lucretia, as the victim of traumatic sexual assault by a male, faces a confrontation with this male servant soon after her trauma, which reduces her to shame and fear of further violence simply because of his gender. Yet soon after, Lucretia speaks most eloquently to her husband, kinsmen, and all the “other company” of men Collatine rushes home with (1584). If general distrust of men were the issue in her interaction with the servant, she should not have been able to inspire a whole group of them to “plight your honourable faiths to me” and “be suddenly revenged on my foe” (1683–90). Rather, it is the paradox of consent that plays a key in both of these interactions between Lucretia and men. When she speaks to her avengers, she manages to extract a promise that as “knights, by their oaths” who “should right poor ladies’ harms,” they will “chase injustice with revengeful arms” (1693–94). No disparate power structure exists to complicate the issue of consent here; these “knights” and “fair lords” have free-volition and an ability to consent that is valuable in

Ancient Rome. But in the case of Lucretia's servant, his silence highlights the mistress's dependency upon his consent; its absence incapacitates her. Thus, *The Rape of Lucrece* exposes the destructive effect the paradox of consent can have on those in power, which elucidates why those powerful individuals consistently devalue consent.

This devaluation through the paradox of consent was certainly inherent in the power structures of monarchical rule, found both in Tarquin's corrupted kingship and Elizabeth's early modern court. Yet ironically, the system of government put in place by those who overthrow Tarquin and the same system proposed by Elizabethan radicals, is republicanism, which itself depends on hierarchies that engender the paradox of consent. Therefore, it is erroneous to read *The Rape of Lucrece* as a political commentary advocating republicanism as the solution to tyrannical behaviors like rape. Indeed, it is erroneous to suppose rape is a tyrannical behavior at all, rather than a societal product perpetuated by the devaluation of consent in monarchies and republics alike. Because those in power wish to decrease their dependency on their lessers' consent by devaluing it, gender hierarchies proliferate, gaps in sex crime laws widen, and disproportionate representation runs unchecked in a horrific cycle that reproduces rape. It is this trifecta born from the devaluation of consent that forces us to relive, repeat, and retell *The Rape of Lucrece* in versions from ancient Rome to Weinstein's Hollywood.

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Criterion

annunciation, crucifixion, resurrection

Christian Symbolism in Joyce's "The Dead"

Noelle Dickerson

From the beginning of "The Dead," published in 1914, James Joyce hinted to readers that the story is rich with biblical symbolism. He makes these symbolic intentions clear by setting the story during the Feast of the Epiphany, a holiday celebrating the visit of the wise men to the young Christ. Each story in *Dubliners* features an epiphany of sorts, and as the conclusion to the collection, "The Dead" and its setting promise an epiphany to complete the work and Joyce's message to Ireland. This setting also allowed Joyce to utilize Christian symbolism throughout the piece without it seeming out of place. As such, critics have explored the biblical implications of many aspects of "The Dead." Many have examined Gabriel and Michael's names, both in regard to characterization and biblical symbolism. Gabriel and Michael are both angels of high standing in the Bible, and there are multiple interpretations this relationship can give readers of "The Dead." In his essay, "Gabriel and Michael: The Conclusion of 'The Dead'," Florence Walzl examines this relationship in depth. He brings up many interesting points, such as the contrast between the progressive West and stagnant East and the literary implications of angelic symbolism. At one point in his analysis, Walzl recognizes Gabriel for his role as an angel of rebirth and renewal (29). He also astutely identifies Michael Furey as a symbol of Christ (27).

From these points, Walzl brings new light to the snow epiphany at the end of the story by arguing that Joyce offers “rebirth and renewal” for Ireland (31). However, what Walzl’s analysis does not do is connect this comparison with the other Christian symbolism apparent in the story. For example, he does not bring up Gretta as a symbol of the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, though he notes the Michael-Christ symbolism, he does not link this symbolism to the Annunciation, Crucifixion, or Resurrection. Additionally, C. Roldan Wagner argues that Gretta is a Marian figure, and the Annunciation appears symbolically through this connection. Again, however, Wagner does not connect the appearance of a Mary symbol to the other biblical symbolism in “The Dead.” I argue that James Joyce intentionally included representations of the Annunciation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection throughout “The Dead,” and that we must read these events in relation with each other in order to fully understand and interpret Gabriel’s snow epiphany. By examining the symbolism of Gabriel as Gabriel, Gretta as Mary, and Michael as Christ, we can interpret Gabriel’s snow epiphany as Joyce ending *Dubliners* with a sense of resurrection and rebirth for Ireland.

Given his name, Gabriel is the easiest character to identify as religious symbolism and thus tie to the Annunciation. The archangel Gabriel generally represents “God’s strength” (Schork 21). Fittingly, Gabriel Conroy’s obsession with strength can be seen throughout Joyce’s text. Whenever someone challenges his authority or power, it leaves him feeling helpless. When Lily does not take kindly to his advice, he takes it personally. He is “discomposed by the girl’s bitter and sudden retort. It had cast a gloom over him” (Joyce 155). Later, when Molly Ivors accuses him of being weak and a West Briton, his mind flies to ways to reassert his strength. He plans to regain his dominance by including hospitality in his speech, noting, “that was one for Miss Ivors,” wanting to put her back in her place (167). His obsession with strength again becomes clear as he lusts after Gretta. He thinks, “She seemed to him so frail that he longed to defend her against something” (185). Still later, “he longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her” (189). Gabriel’s need for strength and dominance over others emphasizes the symbolic ties between him and “God’s strength,” the archangel Gabriel.

Furthermore, in occult Christianity, the angel Gabriel is associated with fire (Walzl). Gabriel Conroy constantly thinks in terms of fire, strengthening this tie. The most prominent example is while he is walking home after the

party and begins to lust after his wife. Almost every image in this scene has to do with fire. As he watches her on the stairs, he sees that the “flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before,” describing her with words like flame, bronze, and fire (Joyce 184). His memories of her “burst like stars” (185). One memory involves a man at a furnace, and Gretta’s question, “Is the fire hot, sir?” the memory of which sends a “warm flood” through Gabriel’s body, again using terms related to warmth and heat (186). He felt he had not “quenched [her] soul” (186). He constantly sees things in terms of heat and flames. Gabriel’s association with the fiery archangel Gabriel is subtly enhanced by this imagery, further solidifying Gabriel’s symbolic role as God’s angel. These ties strengthen Gabriel Conroy’s connection to the angel Gabriel, introducing Annunciation symbolism to “The Dead.” The most obvious role of Gabriel the archangel is that of a mouthpiece. Gabriel appears a total of three times in the canonical Bible. His most famous appearance is when he visits Mary in Galilee. The gospel of Luke says,

The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin...and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women...And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. (King James Version, Luke 1:26–28, 31)

Here, Gabriel announces the conception of the Christ child, informing Mary that she will bring him to earth. Mary’s cousin also receives an announcement, as Gabriel brings the message of Elisabeth’s conception to Zacharias: “there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord . . . the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (Luke 1:11–13). Gabriel is mentioned in only one other verse of the Old Testament, while telling Daniel of the arrival of the Messiah. We see from these instances that his primary role as an archangel is that of announcing new life and rebirth. Walzl also brings up this connection, saying of Zacharias, “to a man who was old and sterile and whose wife was barren, the angel Gabriel brought the promise of new life. Does this name symbolism suggest birth and renewal for Gabriel?” (Walzl 29). Walzl suggests that Joyce leaves the answer to this question

unclear. However, in this analysis Gretta's role provides convincing evidence that Joyce's use of Gabriel's renewal symbolism is intentional.

Gretta's clothing identifies her as a symbol of Mary. Where Gabriel is connected to one Annunciation figure through his nature, Gretta, his wife, is connected to Mary through her dress. When Gabriel sees her standing on the staircase, he can see the "terracotta and salmonpink panels of her skirt," two shades of red. Later he notes her "blue felt hat" (Joyce 182). Joyce's subtle use of color links Gretta visually with Mary. In most artistic depictions of the Virgin Mary, she is wearing red, blue, or a red robe with a blue mantle, and the blue is usually above the red. The colors signify her royalty, her elevated status, and her passion for Christ (Stokes). Gretta's blue hat and red skirt are positioned the same way as many portraits of Mary, visually linking the two.

This scene on the staircase has been argued to represent the Annunciation in more ways than one. As Gretta stands on the staircase, she "[leans] on the banisters listening to something." Gabriel, standing at the bottom of the stairs and slightly removed, watches Gretta as she listens to Mr. D'Arcy sing "The Lass of Aughrim," a song also about a lord-like figure and impregnation (Joyce 182). C. Roland Wagner argues that this moment of stillness represents the scene of the Annunciation. He suggests that D'Arcy represents "an image of the mysterious, bodiless voice of God the father" and later that he is "a stand-in for God the father, speaker of the 'word'" (454, 457). This is true in the sense that D'Arcy's song first places the thought of Michael Furey in Gretta's mind, evidenced when Gretta says, "I am thinking about that song, 'The Lass of Aughrim' . . . I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song" (Joyce 190). Gretta first remembers Michael Furey, the Christ figure, in this Annunciation moment on the stairs. In other words, D'Arcy's song figuratively impregnates her. It sparks Gretta's memory, ironically fulfilling the image of the Annunciation even though Gabriel, the traditional messenger, knows nothing of Gretta's situation yet.

Gretta's role as Mary is further solidified as she explains her relationship with Michael Furey to Gabriel. When Gabriel finally learns of Michael Furey, he asks Gretta if she was in love with him. She responds, "I was great with him at that time" (Joyce 191), echoing almost exactly Luke 2:5 which states that Joseph went to Bethlehem "to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child." The phrase "great with child" refers to pregnancy, completing the imagery of Gretta pregnant

with the concept of Michael Furey. The parallel language also links Gretta to the Virgin Mary herself.

Gretta's ties with Michael Furey first suggest his role as a symbol of Christ. Michael Furey is commonly read as Michael the archangel. While this symbolism adds much to the story, his symbolic connections with Christ are too apparent to be disregarded. As Gabriel is "God's strength," Michael is "God's likeness" (Schork 21). This is first manifest in the evidence mentioned above. During D'Arcy's performance of "The Lass of Aughrim," a Marian figure figuratively conceives Michael. Gretta, as Mary, is constantly linked to being "great with" Michael. After the initial Annunciation, Michael is figuratively "born" when Gretta describes Michael to Gabriel. After Gabriel asks what she is thinking about, she replies, "It was a young boy I used to know . . . named Michael Furey. He used to sing that song . . . he was very delicate." She describes his life, saying she "used to go out walking with him" (190) and that he "was in the gasworks" (191). Having figuratively born the concept of Michael, Gretta explains his significance and gives him a chance to take hold on Gabriel.

Quickly, however, Gretta reveals that Michael has died. The scene describing his death is rich with Crucifixion symbolism. First, she says that Michael "died for [her]" (Joyce 191), and Gabriel later identifies that "such a feeling must be love" (194). In John 15:13, Christ states, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This creates yet another tie between Michael and Christ; Michael died out of love for Gretta, just as Christ died out of love for mankind. Florence Walzl says, "To love a cause or a person more than life is the action of the hero and the God, and Michael is so identified" (27), asserting that Michael's love is his main identifier as Christ. The Christ symbolism is just as strong when Gretta describes Michael's last moments. He was "at the end of the garden . . . standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree" (Joyce 192). The garden represents the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ spent the last hours before his death, just as Michael spent the last hours before his death waiting in Gretta's garden. The tree symbolizes the cross, the final moment for both Michael and Christ. As he reflects on the snow covering Ireland, "through Gabriel's mind runs the imagery of Calvary. He imagines the snow on . . . the crooked crosses and head-stones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns" (Ellmann 259). These images further utilize Crucifixion symbolism, with the crosses invoking the image of Christ's cross, the spears

representing the spear that pierced Christ's side, and the thorns symbolizing Christ's crown of thorns.

While Michael's primary symbolic role in the story is as a Christ figure, Joyce draws on traditional ideas of the archangel Michael to enhance his effect on the story, intertwining the two ideas. Where the angel Gabriel is associated with fire, the angel Michael is associated with water (Walzl). As Michael stands in Gretta's garden, he gets his "death in the rain" (Joyce 192). As he stands under the tree in his final moments, he is covered in rainwater. It is also notable that "The Dead" ends with all of Ireland covered in snow, or water. This snow, a projection of Michael Furey onto all of Ireland, is a type of resurrection. Michael, though once dead, was figuratively brought back to life by Gabriel, who only knew him after his death. Gabriel reflects on Michael's meaning for a while, noting that "a man had died for her [Gretta's] sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life" (Joyce 193). Michael is brought back as a chance for Gabriel to turn inward, to change. This representation of the Resurrection allows him to experience his own rebirth. He receives a reminder to look past himself and his needs. This is precisely what Gabriel does as he sees "himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous wellmeaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts" (191). Only through Michael's, or Christ's, resurrection is this epiphany possible. As he observes the snow falling across the country, this chance at resurrection extends beyond Gabriel to all of Ireland.

One last, important function of the archangel Michael comes from ancient Christianity. There is a "very old tradition of Michael as the receiver of the souls of the dead" (Schork 20). Considering Joyce's title for the story, "The Dead," this fact becomes significant. As the last story in the *Dubliners* collection, "The Dead" is the last chance for Joyce to make a statement to the Irish people. He describes Dublin as paralyzed, its people inwardly dead. As Michael is projected to all of Ireland through snow symbolism, he waits as a receiver for its dead citizens.

Viewed through the lens of the Annunciation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, the ending of "The Dead" draws its interpretation from Christianity. Walzl says that Gabriel lives up to his reputation of "rebirth and renewal" (31). Examining Gretta's role helps us make this hopeful conclusion because it is she, through her symbolic bearing of Michael Furey, through telling Gabriel his story, who offers a gift of life to the world. She presents

Gabriel with the chance for epiphany. Michael's story then offers Gabriel a chance to change and be reborn. While having his epiphany, Gabriel projects this chance at new life to all of Ireland through snow symbolism, giving each of its citizens the opportunity to change and be resurrected in their own sense. The Annunciation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection work together to show Joyce offering a chance of hope and new life for Ireland.

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the power of identity forged through border crossing

Mallory Lynn Dickson

For the characters in Sandra Cisneros' novel *Caramelo*, physical and mental border crossings affect their understanding of self-identity. Celaya Reyes, the book's narrator, and her family cross physical and cultural borders between Mexico and the United States, where they misunderstand and are misunderstood by those native to the United States. Their journey also takes the Reyes across mental borders, where they attempt to reconcile the past, the future, and a strange in-between space called "Nepantla." Nepantla refers to coming to terms with the reality of living between two cultures and countries or "a way for marginalized populations to be rewired and gain a deeper understanding of self" (Ramirez 304). Through Nepantla, Lala finds herself stuck between various physical locations, feels disconnected from both Mexican and American culture, and tells stories and witnesses experiences of people who are stuck halfway between life and death. Mental, physical, and in-between border crossings define Lala as a girl who is not only connected to a Mexican family, but to her American home as well; she is able to bridge the gap between the two cultures of Mexico and the United States, remembering her family's past as she moves into her future. In the

following analysis, I will explore Lala's encounters with physical, cultural, and mental border crossings. After analyzing how these border crossings force Lala to question her identity, I will discuss Nepantla and how this in-between experience helps Lala discover her Mexican roots and American future, serving as a blueprint to help other Mexican-Americans cross borders successfully by sharing their stories.

Lala does not comment on how crossing the border between the United States and Mexico affects her family for either good or bad, although she states that while "crossing the border, nobody feels like singing" (Cisneros 16). In fact, having a physical border between the two countries creates a "third country" or "border culture"; borders generally "define the places that are safe and unsafe," create a "dividing line," and are often "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldua 3). Lala crosses the border a handful of times throughout the novel, and these crossings make her question her heritage and identity. She notices this dividing line, stating that "as soon as we cross the bridge everything switches to another language . . . sweets sweeter, colors brighter, the bitter more bitter" (Cisneros 17). Having family in both Mexico and the United States and knowing both Spanish and English, Lala is literally living in this third country. Her family crosses the border every year, and Lala points out that "every year I cross the border, it's the same—my mind forgets. But my body always remembers" (18). Lala is both American and Mexican, although not wholly either. Having grown up in the United States, Lala and her siblings are more comfortable speaking English and living in the U.S. In fact, when Lala's brother Rafa is left in Mexico for a year, he says that he felt as though he had been "abandoned by [his] parents and left in a country" where he didn't "have enough words to speak the things inside of [him]" (23). Rafa and his family not only cross into a different country every year, but they cross cultural borders as well.

These cultural border crossings create prejudices between United States citizens and Mexicans. Lala's family that live in Mexico label United States citizens as reckless and barbaric. Soledad, Lala's grandmother, tells Lala not to pretend she is not Mexican and to remember that "in this country we don't throw food away" (55). Even during Lala's infancy, her grandmother sees Lala as more American than Mexican. A family friend, Señor Juchi, thinks that taking advantage of girls is just what happens "to girls over there on the other [American] side" (392). Lala's father adds to this negative image,

claiming that Americans are “ignorant” people who “can’t bother to learn” about the family’s Mexican culture (308). Even though the family lives in Chicago and Texas, they raise their children with Mexican culture and values. This difference is highlighted when a man gives Lala a handshake and calls her by her first name. She claims that his behavior is “rude, like barbarians, but they don’t know any better” (320). Although Lala’s family has crossed the border and now lives in the United States, they retain “ties with their country of origin” and struggle to write their own story (Baron 99). Although Lala lives in the United States and holds United States citizenship, she values her Mexican culture and heritage over her American status.

Similar to the misunderstanding of Americans from a Mexican perspective, those living in the United States judge Lala and her family as Mexicans who all look alike, have no worries, and have fewer values. Lala encounters people at school that ignorantly believe all Mexicans look the same. Because Lala does not look like the stereotypical Mexican, she is mocked. Lala points out that, contrary to these opinions, “there are green-eyed Mexicans. The rich blond Mexicans . . . The curly-haired, freckle-faced, red-headed Mexicans” (Cisneros 353). A man Inocencio meets claims that Mexicans people only “live for the now. The past and the future mean nothing to them. They are people who live in the clouds and are better off for it” (211). Even after crossing the physical border between the U.S. and Mexico, Lala’s family faces multiple “borders” within a U.S. society that “tolerates them but does not embrace their culture” and knows little about their Mexican upbringing (Montes 131). Instead of treating the Reyes with respect, U.S. society treats Lala’s family like thieves or low class citizens. Soledad notices that when they cross the border into the United States that “instead of being treated like the royalty they were, they were after all Mexicans, they were treated like Mexicans” (Cisneros 289). When she says “treated like Mexicans,” she refers to the incorrect belief that Mexicans are criminals or lower beings. Lala and her friend also experience this prejudice when they leave a store and face accusations of stealing. This angers Lala, who asks herself if they have been accused because they are “brown,” or Mexican (338). These cultural borders challenge Lala’s identity on all fronts, defining her as an outcast to both Mexicans and Americans.

The family’s border crossing challenges Lala, who must choose to accept the United States as either her home or as a type of prison. This prison, where Latinos find themselves “unwittingly stranded . . . has less to do with the

violation of the line created by some other hand and more to do with the future once the crossing has occurred" (Muñoz 72). While Lala's parents make the decision to cross the border into the United States and make it their new home, they cannot make the choice for Lala, who is the "future" result of the family's crossing. Because the border has been crossed, Lala enters a "no man's land, the place in which you cannot go back but never fully belong, a place of extreme anxiety about the joy of belonging, the escape from restriction and pain, and the . . . threat of being . . . found wanting" (Walkerline 12). Due to the cultural judgment of her American peers and Mexican family, Lala is constantly "found wanting." People at school ask her if she is Mexican "on both sides," and that she "sure doesn't look Mexican" (Cisneros 352). Her own mother describes her as "a girl born on the other side who speaks Spanish with an accent" (208).

Lala's "no man's land" is understood in terms of the family's past, present, and future. On top of the physical and cultural borders she constantly crosses, Lala crosses the mental border of trying to reconcile the past with the future. She mentions several times that both she and her family live in the past. Lala's grandmother, Soledad, suffered in her marriage, "haunted by [her husband's] future and terrorized by [his] past" (184). Inocencio, Lala's father, faces accusations of living in the past as well (292). Lala obsesses over the past, describing the family's trip to San Antonio as "dragging the past" with them (304). She directly compares the past with the border between Mexico and the U.S. when she says, "In less than three hours we could be at the border, but where's the border to the past, I ask you, where?" (380). This border between the past and the future is a type of physical entity in *Caramelo*. Lala laments her current circumstances and turns to less complicated and hypothetically "happier" times in search of respite. However, she recognizes quickly that she is unable to cross the border into the past and is constantly being pushed towards her own future.

Even more than the physical and mental border crossings of the book, the moments stuck between borders impact the lives of Lala's family. These moments of Nepantla effect both the Reyes' physical location, their mentality, and their movement between life and death. Nepantla, caused by physical location, occurs when the Reyes move to San Antonio. Soledad decides to move to the United States after her husband dies. However, after the move she realizes "she missed her old house too much and was too proud to admit she'd made a mistake. She couldn't go backward, could she? She

was stuck, in the middle of nowhere it seemed, halfway between here and where?" (287). Soledad straddles two worlds: the world of Mexico and the world of the United States. She experiences *Nepantla*, which represents "the liminal space in between zones, where a process of transformation begins," and where Latinos realize "they exist in two worlds" (Ramirez 305). Soledad begins to transform after the move, realizing how much she took for granted in Mexico. She misses her independence and dislikes feeling like a burden to others. After she moves in with Lala's family, she crosses borders once more, becoming "aware of that familiar feeling of shedding her body once again. It both delighted and frightened her" (Cisneros 347). By speaking to her granddaughter after she passed on, Soledad attempts to move beyond the borders of life and death but finds herself stuck in *Nepantla* once more. Soledad speaks to Lala and asks Lala to tell her story, but Soledad cannot cross the border into the afterlife or the border into earth life. It is only after Lala tells Soledad's story that Soledad crosses the border into the next life.

The move from Chicago to San Antonio causes Lala to question where she belongs. She asks her father, "Home? Where's that? North? South? Mexico? San Antonio? Chicago? Where, Father?" (380). She realizes that she identifies with both her Latino and American home. Lala asks her father these questions because she believes that at some point each of these places was home. She and her family cross the border between Mexico and the U.S. every year; this border crossing feeds Lala's strong desire to understand her identity. This new identity connects to each identifying aspect of her person: race, gender, and class. Through crossing "symbolic borders and border crossing along institutional, racial, gender, class, and sexual orientation lines," questions of identity arise (Gallo 182). Lala and her family move to Texas, a state connected to the border. Living on the border of two cultures, languages, and worlds, Lala attempts to keep "intact [her] shifting and multiple identity and integrity" (Anzaldúa preface). Although she has grown up in the United States, Lala seems to relate more to her Mexican roots. At school, she defends her Mexican heritage, identifying herself as Mexican even when other kids at school call her "a white girl" (Cisneros 354).

Lala notices in San Antonio that many of the street names and signs are in Spanish, and she describes living in Texas as "almost like being on the other side, but not exactly" (304). Similar to Soledad's reaction to moving to the U.S., Lala suggests that her father regretted that "he moved [the family] to San Antonio, a town halfway between here and there, in the middle of

nowhere" (380). Moving to Texas leads not only traps the family between physical borders, but it leaves them trapped in mental borders as well.

This feeling of living in the middle of nowhere causes Lala to question where she belongs. She complains, "I never belonged here. I don't know where I belong anymore" (356). The Reyes struggle between their expectations of how Mexico and the United States should be and how they are in reality. Lala feels ties to Mexico, a place connected to her childhood. However, when she revisits her grandmother's town she realizes that her memories of Mexico may be incorrect. She describes her grandmother's street as "smaller than I remembered it. Noisier. Could it have gotten noisier, or could it be I forgot the noise . . . How come I never remembered being scared?" (261). These thoughts about her grandmother's street reveal how Lala also crosses the borders of memory, unable to retrieve a perfectly clear image of her past.

Cisneros encounters the same problem as Lala as she attempts to mentally cross over the border between her present and past memories of Mexico. She says, "I don't know how it is with anyone else, but for me these things, that song, that time, that place, are all bound together in a country I am homesick for, that doesn't exist anymore. That never existed. A county I invented. Like all emigrants caught between here and there" (434). Cisneros realizes that, similar to physical borders, she cannot cross the borders of her past memories without creating a place that "never existed." Lala is unable to discover her true identity until she visits Mexico again, older and without her family. Only when she returns does she realize that her childhood summers spent in Mexico were in a place she had mentally created. Lala's self-discovery begins by realizing the power and duplicity of these mental borders. She spends the first half of the book believing that Mexico is some kind of sanctuary where she will find the happiness and a sense of belonging that eludes her in the United States. However, Lala's later visit to Mexico is anything but ideal. Realizing that Mexico is not the perfect safe haven she thought it was, she returns to the U.S. and makes new memories and a new home there.

Although Lala has crossed the physical border between Mexico and the United States multiple times, faced judgment from family and persecution from classmates due to cultural borders, struggled to reconcile the past with the present, and experienced *Nepantla*, she pieces together her identity only after understanding the shifting borders between life and death. Before her encounter with Soledad, Lala attempts to come to terms with her identity in a vacuum, using only herself as reference. However, after unearthing and

recreating the story of her family Lala begins to understand just how thin the border is between life and death. Even though her grandmother died, Lala continues to communicate with her. The two become co-creators of Lala's identity, weaving together fact and fiction, Lala's life and Soledad's life. Cisneros refers to death as crossing a border on the acknowledgments page of *Caramelo*, where she states that those who have died "slipped across the border from this life into the next" (444). Lala also writes about death in terms of border crossing and decides to write the story of her family. This decision makes her a speaker for those who have passed on.

Lala, the one telling the story and using artistic license to capture the emotional truth of the Reyes (rather than the strict historical facts), emphasizes the prison between life and death for a reason. She recognizes during the course of the novel that she is inseparably connected to her ancestors, especially Soledad. Lala even says, "the Grandmother's face in mine. Hers. Mine . . . Amazing the way I look different now, like my grandmother is starting to peer out at me from my skin" (394). Lala's path to discovering her true identity and learning how to voice her border crossing experience is found through Soledad, especially after Soledad dies but her spirit lingers on, a spirit only Lala can see. Soledad emphasizes the border that prevents her from moving from this world to the next. She feels "so lonely being like this, neither dead nor alive, but somewhere halfway, like an elevator between two floors" (408). Lala also feels caught in Nepantla, trapped between her Mexican and American heritage, her family and friends, and the past and future. Soledad specifically asks Lala to help her cross over this border, even though the two were never close in life. She and Lala have a conversation, where Soledad begs Lala to "help [her] cross over," and Lala asks if Soledad can "get somebody else to carry [her] across" (408). After Soledad explains that only Lala can see her, Lala serves as a bridge from life to death. However, instead of only helping Soledad cross borders, Lala herself crosses her own borders of self-discovery.

At the end of the book, Lala attends a party where she thinks she sees a crowded dance floor full of "everyone, but everyone, moving in a lazy counterclockwise circle. The living and the dead" (424). Her family connections, regardless of physical borders keeping them apart, lead Lala to discover her identity. By crossing the physical border between Mexico and the United States, Lala realizes that she is both Mexican and American and that her family has roots in both countries. At first this is challenging because Americans

challenge her American status and Mexicans challenge her Mexican roots. This leads to mental border crossing, where Lala tries to cross into her past in an attempt to hide from her future. Lala is clearly stuck between these several borders in the last third of the book. However, it is also during this difficult time that she realizes her deep connection to both dead and living relatives.

Instead of deciding to be only Mexican or only American, Lala understands that inhabiting the middle ground gives her power. Lala's power comes through the art of writing her family's story, allowing her to reconcile her inward clash of identities: old, new, and still forming. Lala effects powerful change through her sentences, using words that tell her family's story (and therefore her story) of crossing physical and mental borders boldly and unapologetically.

Lala not only represents a member of the Reyes family who learns how to successfully live between borders, but she also serves as an example for all Mexican-American people. Her ability to connect with both American and Mexican culture, while remaining firmly tied to her family, gives her stability. Instead of simply repeating the past and living the same life as Soledad, Lala chooses to live a different life. She listens to the mistakes made by her ancestors, and instead of remaining confined to her supposed "destiny," she trecks her own course. Lala, as well as all Mexicans who come to live in the United States, realize that "borders cross people, often without their choosing" (Valdivia 303). Lala represents the border crossing experience, demonstrating that the change from Mexican to Mexican-American is challenging but not impossible.

Rather than casting off her Mexican culture and family, Lala discovers her identity by embracing them and their stories. By serving as the narrator to these family stories, Lala demonstrates what Mexicans can and should do: hold tightly to their Mexican heritage and values while embracing their new American home. By telling her story through art (in this case a book), Lala challenges current American literature. Her story, and the real stories of immigrants moving to the United States from Mexico, change the canon so that "American literature and culture... are no longer considered to be limited by the borders, or even powers, of the United States" (Nas 127).

Caramelo is a feat of American literature, a book that cannot be contained or restrained by its white readers. Cisneros, the voice behind Lala, wrote *Caramelo* for a mostly white audience. Instead of writing the book in such

a way that American readers can completely understand and relate to Lala, Cisneros leaves these readers in the middle of two borders. White readers have to reconcile a mix of Spanish words sprinkled throughout the text and read through various struggles of Latino peoples. She invites her readers into Lala's family, only to hold them at arm's length. Like most Latino texts, the story catches white readers in the middle of Latino and American culture, refusing to completely reconcile the two countries. Readers are kept in a state of Nèpantla, with the hope that they will be just as transformed as the characters they read about. Cisneros empowers her character Lala by making Lala the narrator and "author" of these family stories.

Lala's experience with border crossing teaches Mexican immigrants to challenge their past memories and future lives in their artwork and literature. This allows all Americans to become part of the Latino past and American future; these new Latino stories and depictions will become an integral part of American society, one where identity is formed—not stolen—from the borders Mexican-Americans crossed and continue to cross. Lala represents a blueprint of the Mexican-American experience. Her story is not neat and perfect, but this blueprint shows what is possible and what must be overcome in order to find happiness while living between borders. Success is not achieved by simply getting over the border, but by remaining rooted in Mexican culture while growing American branches. Successful border crossing involves having the power and words to tell the many stories of Mexicans on their journey to become Mexican-Americans.

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"our day will come"

Echoes of Nationalism in Seamus Heaney's "Bogland"

Moe Graviet

On 5 October 1968, a civil rights march ended in bloodshed in the streets of Londonderry. This event sparked the beginning of the Irish "Troubles"—a civil conflict between Protestants loyal to British reign and nationalist Catholics that would span nearly thirty years. Seamus Heaney, an Irish poet living through the turbulent period, saw many parallels between the disturbing violence of the "Troubles" and the tribal violence of the Iron Age, exploring many of these tensions in his poetry. Poems such as "Tollund Man" and "Punishment" still seem to catch attention for their graphic—verging on obsessive—rendering of tribal violence and exploration of age-old, controversial questions concerning civility and barbarism. Poetry became Heaney's literary outlet for frustration as he struggled to come to terms with the plight of his nation. As Heaney recalled later, "The problems of poetry moved from being simply a matter of achieving the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament" (*Preoccupations* 56). Accordingly, the majority of scholars agree that Heaney's poetry during this time manifests strong political context, with scholarly conversation typically centering around poems included in his collections *Wintering Out* (1972) and *North* (1975), written and published during the "Troubles." Scholars have examined these and other collections repeatedly for political parallels, including exploration

of questions that seemed to take form from the disturbing ways the nation was brought to confront violence, nationalism, and identity politics.

Curiously, one poem has escaped such attention. Despite the fact that “Bogland” was published one year after the Londonderry riots in 1969, scholars have failed to fully examine its weighty political undertones. The absence of this poem in this critical conversation seems strangely inconsistent with scholarly analysis of the chronology of Heaney’s political writings. Tim Hancock, a critic who has explored politics in the bog poems perhaps most extensively, argues that Heaney was an actively political poet who fully stepped into this role in 1969. However, he centers his analysis upon Heaney’s later collections instead of the poetry that was published during that year. He writes of Heaney’s work, “Death was to leave the more significant mark on his poetry after 1969, as increasing levels of violence in the province made issues of allegiance and identity more pressing. A ‘political’ writer was born during the summer of that year” (Hancock 112). Though *Door into the Dark*, the collection that features “Bogland,” was published during this period in which Hancock claims Heaney’s transformation into a political poet took place, he makes no further reference to it. As the critical conversation surrounding bog poetry and politics has taken shape, Hancock’s claim still emerges as representative of the body of Heaney scholarship in which “Bogland” remains a shadow despite its publication during the year of his supposed political birth.

As Hancock’s analysis exemplifies, a variety of scholars similarly seem to subtly dismiss the possibility of political undertones in *Door into the Dark*, taking their analyses in various directions. The main line of inquiry examines this poetry as the sacred embodiment of Heaney’s exploration process, positing that “Bogland” in particular manifests Heaney’s psychological journey to identify himself and to establish a congruence between self and country. One proponent of this claim, Magdalena Kay, argues that the bog poems embody a psychological excavation through which Heaney addresses his deepest fears and the endless search for national identity, citing “Bogland” as exemplary of Heaney’s efforts to achieve access to the Irish center. Edna Longley evaluates “Bogland” in a similar vein of psychological exploration, further establishing its role as a process poem that Heaney wrote *prior* to his political poetry. In doing so, she takes particular care to establish “Bogland” as a preparatory inner searching that preceded Heaney’s main political commentaries on Ireland’s struggle to find identity under English oppression,

seen in *Wintering Out* and *North*. Longley asserts, “1969 thus coincided with Heaney’s readiness to pioneer the frontiers of Irish consciousness,” offering this poem as evidence of the transformation period before Seamus Heaney took a public stance in the world (35). Both Kay and Longley seem to touch upon the political context of the piece, picking up on the nuances in the search for identity as echoing the political sphere and acknowledging “Bogland” as a poem that forecasts Heaney’s political role. However, with such labels as “pre-political” and “process poem,” they also seem to neutralize the potency of the poem as they fail to go deep enough. Both Kay and Longley appear to dismiss the possibility that by this point, as Hancock’s chronology implies, Heaney was already political and delivering valid, potent, and openly political messages—even in “process” pieces such as “Bogland.”

In response to this seeming lack of exploration, the context and content of the poem reveals “Bogland’s” compelling nationalistic echoes. Its background indicates that “Bogland” contains clear political context and even a deliberate political agenda. Furthermore, the poem itself reveals several compelling allusions to Irish nationalism through its use of nationalistic symbols and political metaphors of Ireland as a united world power. Such evidence suggests that contrary to previous scholarship, “Bogland” constitutes an embodiment of Heaney’s openly political stance in favor of Irish nationalism and a promotion of national Irish identity as a call for the people of Ireland to end civil strife and become a united, independent, nationalist power.

In several of his writings and interviews, Heaney offers a number of hints as to deliberate political complexity in “Bogland” and the existence of nationalistic undertones. In his interview with Scott O’Driscoll, Heaney says of “Bogland” and “Requiem for Croppies,” “Obviously the vantage point from which they were written was that of a Northern Irish Catholic with a nationalist background” (O’Driscoll 90). In suggesting that the poem was written with a nationalist mindset and intention, Heaney also implies that politics play an important role in the formation and unfolding of the poem. In *Preoccupations*, Heaney continues to explore the background and intent of his poetry; he explains, “I had a tentative unrealized need to make a congruence between memory and bogland, for the want of a better word, our national consciousness. And it all released itself after ‘We have no prairies’—but we have bogs” (54–55). Heaney here expressly asserts that “Bogland” was written to bridge the landscape of Ireland and the national

consciousness; through the poem, he aligns the two concepts and thereby promotes nationalism in connecting with this consciousness.

On a textual level, Heaney's call for nationalism echoes throughout his poem, commencing as he calls for the Irish to take pride in their country by designating a national landscape. The bold voice of national pride echoes with incredible gravity in the very first line of the poem, "We have no prairies" (1). Previous to writing "Bogland," Heaney had read extensively about the great American plains and the frontier as "an important myth in the American consciousness" (*Preoccupations* 54). Recognizing the ways in which the plains helped to promote the enviable American spirit of national pride and unity, Heaney realized the value in establishing a defining national landscape and proclaimed bogland as Ireland's own "great open plains." He declares, "I set up—or rather, laid down—the bog as an answering Irish myth" (54). While Magadalena Kay notes that Heaney uses this line to begin the poem defensively, Heaney actually seems to go beyond the defensive, designating a mythic landscape that can "answer" or be equal to that of others in a competitive way (24). With this definition of bogland as Ireland's national mythic landscape, Heaney begins to relay a vision of nationalism that includes building up Ireland's legacy to be equal to those of other powerful countries and thus produce similar effects. Through these first lines, Heaney lays claim to the bogland as an embodiment of Ireland's own expression of nationalistic freedom.

Having established a unifying landscape, Heaney designates a national Irish symbol when he resurrects the long-buried skeleton of the Great Irish Elk, drawing upon the power of ancient Irish prosperity and majesty in order to encourage national unity. In the following passage, Heaney recounts an event from his school years when his neighbors famously discovered a massive elk skeleton that had been preserved for thousands of years in a nearby bog. He writes,

They've taken the skeleton
Of the Great Irish Elk
Out of the peat, set it up
An astounding crate full of air. (9–12)

With the imagery of pulling the skeleton "Out of the peat," and then making efforts to "set it up / An astounding crate full of air," Heaney designates the elk as a national symbol around which the Irish can rally. The elk becomes a

symbol of the past, of ancient Irish majesty, referring to a time before English colonialism and Irish inner warfare when Ireland claimed independence and self-sufficiency. In describing the “crate” (possibly referring to the rib cavity where the lungs are housed) as being “full of air,” Heaney conveys a picture of the elk skeleton filling itself with air, or taking a breath. The imagery of an elk skeleton recovered, set up, and breathing implies a resurrection of the old, of what was majestic and great that has been forgotten—but that can be rediscovered. Heaney seems to insinuate that despite Ireland’s forlorn circumstances as a war-torn nation subject to the rule of foreign countries, the Irish can recover the strength they have lost by rallying around a national symbol of what they once were. Though one could consider the air associated with a long-buried skeleton to be empty and lifeless, perhaps insinuating that the Irish can dig forever and find only emptiness and dead promises, the fact that the skeleton is pulled out of the *bog* is notable. Bogs preserve their inhabitants almost perfectly, maintaining even color and texture for thousands of years. Maintaining these semblances of life, the skeleton is preserved in such a way as to almost exactly conserve the state in which it entered the bog. Thus, in such context, the bog prevents the skeleton from losing all of its life in death—it does not completely moulder and disintegrate, but instead only waits; it comes out not lifeless and empty, but breathing. Lastly, in employing the word *astounding* to describe the skeleton after it is set up and recovered (12), Heaney hints that the Irish will be in awe of what they will find if they will endeavor to resurrect what they once were.

Alongside the symbol of the Elk, Heaney further attempts to form a national identity through his presentation of bog butter. By portraying the miraculous recovery of butter that has been perfectly preserved—in form, color, and salt quality—for thousands of years in the bog, Heaney encourages hope as he re-affirms Ireland’s chosenness. With this reference, he also implies that Ireland can recover the pure identity that it has lost. He writes, “Butter sunk under / More than a hundred years / was recovered salty and white” (13–15). As butter was difficult to make and very valuable in the Iron Age, communities used bogs to act as preservers (with their high acidity and cool temperatures), keeping it fresh and safe from thieves. Heaney claims that the butter was recovered “salty and white”; in this instance, the biblical allusion to salt which has “not lost its savor” illuminates elements of chosenness and inherent value (Matt. 5.13). The Irish, in this case, though oppressed and exiled in many ways, are still the chosen people. The white quality

further suggests purity and innocence, insinuating that though Ireland has been oppressed, she has not become morally corrupt. With these connotations, Heaney suggests that the identity or essence of Ireland is still undefiled as the landscape has protected it, as it has the butter. And just as the bog has perfectly saved this remnant of history for discovery, the Irish can recover their identity in its pure form. As this second ancient artifact of a time before English oppression and Irish civil strife is retrieved from the bog, Heaney implies that the Irish can pull the free, independent, and improved Ireland out of the bog as well—preserved, and undefiled.

Moving from bog butter to the Irish ground in the last line of this same stanza, Heaney deepens his appeal for national unity by establishing a poignant familial relationship between the Irish and their landscape through elements of the feminine and maternal. He writes, “The ground itself is kind, black butter” (16). The word *kind* is derived from the word *kin*, meaning family or relatives. By reverently revealing the ground as “kind, black butter,” he establishes Irish ground—the Irish landscape itself—as family. In establishing ties of kinship, Heaney erases the barriers that alienate one from a barren, bog-ridden Irish landscape, revealing instead a soft, kind, life-giving land that has long sustained its people. This combination of “kind” and “kin” also seems to insinuate the land as a motherly figure. Heaney appears to invoke a feminine power within his poem as he acknowledges the ground as female in its nourishing aspects, calling to mind some semblance of the soul of Ireland, perhaps even Kathleen ni Houlihan. This wild, rural, motherly figure was traditionally believed to embody the soul of Ireland and was considered the maternal personification of Ireland, associated strongly with Irish nationalism as she was traditionally depicted as an elderly woman who needed young Irish men to defend her from colonial rule. In drawing upon such connotations, Heaney awakens the defensiveness that comes with the connection to mother, an age-old instinct to protect the being who has given one life. With the implementation of this familial concept and its accompanying connotations, Heaney strengthens his argument that Irishmen have a special duty to unite and support their country as they would unite and support their mother.

Heaney’s call for the Irish to act on this familial duty expands to defending the motherland and ending the English control of Northern Ireland as he addresses issues of colonial plunder and economic dominance. At the time “Bogland” was written, many Irishmen still relied on traditional bog peat

for fuel—an adequate source of fuel, but nowhere near as efficient as coal. Across the sea, Britain largely symbolized commercial and impersonal life in contrast to the rustic and communally produced peat as the motherland of coal (with mass mining in Wales) and leader of the Industrial Revolution. In light of this context, Heaney pens the famous fighting words, “They’ll never dig coal here,” in what seems to be a direct reference to this disparity and the ways in which Britain had wrongly oppressed Ireland by plundering her economic goods in the past (20). With this line, Heaney essentially writes that Great Britain will never dig coal in Ireland, or exploit and commercialize his native land. As he pronounces a common enemy “they,” Heaney subtly unites the Irish under an implicit, implied “we.” Thus, through delicate yet deliberate pronoun usage, Heaney strongly others England and foreign forces that might attempt to colonize Ireland and unites the Irish in common defense by default. He seeks to inspire his countrymen to throw off the chains of English colonialism as this line calls all Irishmen to take a stand against English invasion by defending Ireland and everything that she represents, beginning with the fuel that she provides.

After addressing the outward conflict in this manner, Heaney turns to the devastating conflict of the inner state as he deepens his plea for fealty to the nation, begging his countrymen to stop the civil strife in implying that such conflict keeps the nation stuck in the past. He writes, “Our pioneers keep striking / Inwards and downwards” (23–24). While Edna Longley uses these lines as evidence of psychological fusing of poet and nation and efforts to excavation (34), it seems that Heaney might offer a different message concerning the result of such digging. With this line, Heaney seems to mourn the meaninglessness of Ireland’s inner strife and suggests that as the inner fighting continues, so too does the nation’s digression. Contrasting with the traditional “upwards and outwards,” Heaney responds with “inwards and downward,” warning his countrymen that if they persist in disintegrating inwardly, they will continue regressing downwards rather than progressing upwards. Up to this point in the poem, historical artifacts have been brought out of the bog and into the light. In this case, departing from these previous instances in the poem in which he indicates digging as a way to recover Irish identity, Heaney seems to suggest that a return to old ways of tribal warfare by spiraling deeper into past feuds will yield nothing as the pioneers keep “striking” and finding nothing (23). In these ways, he complicates previous methods of recovery, seeming to suggest that while the past may often be recovered for good, some

elements are dangerous to recover and are better left behind. Heaney increases the potency of his claim as he writes, “Every layer they strip / Seems camped on before” (25–26). Here, the layers of peat in a bog symbolize the history of Ireland, unfolding ever deeper into what has been buried before. Kay notes that this stanza offers digging into the bog as a “vertical dig into history,” but with fear and voyeuristic intent to uncover as its implicit and guiding motivation (24). Heaney seems to also call upon a different motivation, warning that if the Irish continue to go the way that they are going, history will only repeat itself, with ruin and failure as its result.

Setting his sights on the future, Heaney uses strong circular imagery in order to paint the possibility of an independent, united nation of Ireland, thereby illustrating what progress and moving upwards and outwards could lead to. Throughout “Bogland,” we find ubiquitous circular imagery in the traditionally circular sun, tarn, cyclops’ eye, bog butter container, and bogholes. The “big sun” providing light, the bog butter providing food, and the bogholes producing these treasures insinuate circularity as representative of wholeness and abundance throughout the poem, which wholeness Heaney seems to suggest as the future of Ireland. In a more sinister vein, the imagery relayed in the lines, “Is wooed into the cyclops’ eye / Of a tarn” seem to depart from this wholeness and abundance as they take on a much darker tone, suggesting the image of one being drawn into, or swallowed by the eye of Ireland that takes form in the traditional Irish “tarn”—a small, brackish bog lake laden with bog matter and sediment that can appear black (5–6). With this picture in mind, and as the bog is described on the last wavering, hungry word of the poem as “bottomless,” insinuating elements of voracity and insatiability, the circular imagery here becomes symbolic of a black hole (28). Thus, Heaney uses circular imagery to not only promote wholeness and abundance, but to depict Ireland as a black hole that will become the center of the world—creating a compelling paradox of Ireland as a nation that will take as much as it will give. And in associating the concept of the black hole with Ireland, Heaney draws upon the inevitability associated with the black hole to insinuate the inevitability of Ireland’s rise to both wholeness and power.

Heaney’s call for nationalism echoes throughout time in the last, endless line in which the term “bottomless” seems to adopt a two-fold meaning, expanding beyond its previous connotations of voracity and consumption to depict Ireland’s influence as eternal and world-reaching. Heaney writes, “the wet centre is bottomless” (28). In this context, ‘bottomless’ adopts a

ringing effect as it reverberates outward, designating Ireland's "wet centre," or essence, as one that will become vast and unending in its reach and influence on the world. Though Kay argues that the 'bottomless' bog manifests Heaney's childhood fear of being swallowed by the bogs, Heaney describes the center of Ireland itself, manifested as the center of the bog, as being bottomless, seeming to go beyond such fears as he does not describe the bog swallowing in upon itself, but unfolding and spreading outwards (25). Heaney also precludes the metaphor with the line, "The bogholes might be Atlantic seepage" (27). Here, Heaney seems to imply that the bogs of Ireland are so deep that they are seeping out into the ocean itself, touching every shore. With these lines in conjunction, 'bottomless' seems to imply that the call for nationalism will penetrate everywhere; it will sound in every ear and never end as it echoes throughout the world and beyond (25). These lines evoke elements of destiny in their vision of a powerful, undaunted, dominant Ireland—a direct reversal to the Ireland in which Heaney wrote, but one that may have echoed what Ireland once was and consequently had the potential to become.

Ultimately, while the argument for "Bogland" as a process poem constitutes what seems to be a valid and substantiated designation, the role of the poem is in fact more complex than it originally appears. "Bogland" is not just a process poem, but a manifestation of political intent and nationalist agenda. It does not simply preclude Heaney's political poetry, but begins it, forming the foundation on which Heaney's later political writings find bearing and forging a path to bridge the Irish to their national consciousness and to close the chasm that sectarian violence had ripped into Irish unity.

On a larger scale, we might consider that "Bogland" is not a political poem just about Ireland. It does not simply apply to Irish politics; it is not only commentary on the "Troubles." "Bogland" seems to transcend time and space in its remarks to the politics of the world. It addresses universal principles of oppression and need for identity and nationhood. In its scope, the poem seems to reach out to the plight of downtrodden and victimized peoples, teaching them how to move forward through unification under their own national signs, symbols, and legacy—their shared history. Through "Bogland," Heaney openly declares to Ireland and to oppressed nations and peoples, "Our day will come."

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the cursed self

Anxiety and Unspoken Curses in Richard III

Hannah Laudermilch

Shakespeare utilizes curses as prophetic indications of what will come in many of his plays, including in the well-known Weird Sisters' curses in the tragic *Macbeth* and Caliban's cursing in the romantic *Tempest*. Curses, particularly in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, add an eerie element of mystery and the suggestion of a higher power for the audience and, perhaps most importantly, play a clear role in the plot and in characters' reactions to various events. The curses integrated throughout *Richard III* have an unnerving effect, causing certain character to comment that their "hair doth stand on end" upon hearing curses (1.3.300). They recognize some power in curses which they find difficult to understand. These curses ultimately determine, to a large extent, the fate of the characters and the conclusion of the play.

However, not all the curses in *Richard III* are verbalized; unspoken cursing often occurs inside Richard's head. These unspoken curses, found between the lines of the text, come into play in *Richard III* in the form of Richard's anxieties. It may seem impossible for a curse to be unspoken in a play, which inherently relies on what is spoken; however, while the dialogue does not display Richard's anxieties explicitly as curses, his anxieties often serve as prophetic indications of the future. These anxieties act as curses in that they signal and even determine what will come, and Richard's responses to them bring about his eventual downfall.

Richard's fears can essentially be rolled into one single anxiety: an obsession with power and a fear of losing it. In his obsession with varying aspects of his power—most visibly masculinity, loyalty, and maintaining the throne—Richard unwittingly and nonverbally curses himself. By acting on his anxieties, he dooms himself to fulfill his unintended prophecies of losing everything he cares about. The power of these unspoken curses lies in human action. As characters seek to combat a curse—whether another's spoken prophecy or their own unspoken curse—they unintentionally fulfill it in the process. In other words, psychological action and reaction, not access to the divine, is the source of the power of curses: Richard, internalizing external forces and seeking to prevent his anxieties, or unspoken curses, from being fulfilled, actually gives them power over him, ensuring that certain feared events come to pass. Richard's unspoken curses play into the bigger picture of curses in the tragedy, determining the fate of the characters and bringing about Richard's ultimate downfall and the rebirth of the nation.

In order to understand the role of unspoken curses in *Richard III*, it is helpful to understand how normal, spoken curses function in the play, especially as discussed critically among scholars. As an important aspect of language and corresponding action, cursing comes up regularly in critical discussion of *Richard III*. However, this critical conversation is often strikingly limited to cursing's ties to women and Christianity. Cursing, as it is often associated with witches and other feminine characters across literature, is similarly tied to women in the play, as Kristin M. Smith demonstrates when she argues that women access a kind of illegitimate feminine power in cursing to tear down the failed masculine power. Additionally, critics discuss cursing in a biblical or Christian context. Brian S. Lee discusses how Margaret's curses reflect a "moral discourse of the pains of hell" (19), and Richard P. Wheeler discusses the correlation between Margaret's curses and a fulfillment of God's "divine plan" (305). Further discussion revolves around whether curses are God's work and whether they actually cause events to occur. These critics focus largely on how cursing as language impacts the plot.

These spoken curses follow a general pattern, pointing to things to come and acting as a form of power. More than simply foreshadowing what will become of certain characters, these curses either foretell or cause future events, as seen when Grey mourns, "Now Margaret's curse is fallen upon our heads" (3.3.13). Repeatedly, whether Margaret psychologically influences or merely predicts future events, her curses come to pass, which suggests that

she must indeed be the “prophetess” she claims to be (1.3.297), or else her curses have some other form of power. Yet cursing extends beyond foretelling and prophecy: curses operate with an actual power within the play. Unlike *Macbeth*’s Weird Sisters, who obviously have supernatural powers, or Caliban in *The Tempest*, who is a product of magic, the characters who curse in *Richard III* are ordinary human beings. One must therefore consider whether cursing in *Richard III* stems from higher powers or merely from the human psyche. If the power comes from on high, then Richard is, as Wheeler argues, “the scourge of God” with his actions aiding a “divinely ordained” purpose to end the line of York and bring about the better Tudor reign (304). This would mean that the curses either call upon powers from on high or align with what God already has in mind. However, if there is a psychological basis for curses’ power, then cursing may, as Maurice Hunt says, “reflect [characters’] hostile needs rather than demonstrate God’s benign Providence” (12). Cursing from this perspective is more about the characters’ reactions to curses than it is about some higher power. Curses are, simply put, a presentation of the future which eventually comes to pass through human action. Overall, although these critics significantly illuminate several aspects of curses in *Richard III*, what consistently goes unconsidered is unspoken cursing and how it expands one’s understanding of curses and contributes to Richard’s personal and political downfall.

To fully understand the new scope of cursing that *Richard III* offers, which lies in the unspoken, one must begin by understanding Richard’s anxieties as not simply fear but as a clear obsession with power. While he is plainly afraid of what may occur—as evidenced in his frightful waking from a dream in Act 5 when he tells Ratcliffe, “I fear, I fear” (5.3.211–12)—his anxieties stem from a deep obsession with rising in and remaining in power. Consumed with being the heir of York and maintaining the throne, Richard manages to kill everyone (except Richmond) who poses a threat to his chance at the throne, and he attempts to court the right women to obtain the position of power he seeks. His every action, from “seem[ing] a saint when most [he] play[s] the devil” (1.4.334) to killing his own family members, revolves around an obsession with power and the ever-abiding worry that someone will prevent him from having it. These power-driven anxieties are effectively prophecies against self in that they consume him and lead him directly toward the very outcomes he anxiously tries to avoid.

In understanding how Richard's anxieties operate as unspoken curses, it is apparent that it is a psychological, not divine, power at work in the curses of *Richard III* as characters act and react in various situations. Richard's anxieties, as curses, present in his mind undesirable concepts of the future which he hopes to avoid, but in dwelling on them and trying to prevent them from coming true, Richard merely ensures their fulfillment. There may be allowance within this perspective for God's part in cursing: it may be true that, as Stephen Greenblatt asserts, "Psychology is itself the tool of a supernatural scheme" (378). However, whether the divine influences the plot or not, the effects of cursing on the characters are clearly psychological. Though not supernatural, this psychological cursing holds a real power as characters react to curses: Hastings and Rivers with a visceral, hair-raising fear and Buckingham and Richard with scoffing disbelief. The way the characters choose to interact with curses influences how they come to pass. Curses aren't just automatically fulfilled. Power is always involved, even if that power is not divine or supernatural. The power of curses, both spoken and unspoken, lies in human action. When characters hear a spoken curse, as evident in instances when Margaret curses, they internalize the curse and unconsciously act in a manner that leads to the very future they wish to avoid. In the case of Richard's unspoken curses, he obsesses over his anxieties about power, acts to prevent what he fears, and then unintentionally ensures his failure in the process. His anxieties aren't mere prophecies or predictions of what will occur; he makes them occur through his actions. In both instances, the reason curses have power is that characters give the curses psychological power through their actions in response to curses. These curses are, in a sense, self-fulfilling when a hearer (or thinker, in the case of Richard's non-verbal curses) internalizes them and acts in reaction to them.

Richard's anxieties further fit into one's understanding of curses when one examines the method of cursing prescribed by the play itself. When Elizabeth asks Margaret to "teach [her] how to curse" (4.4.111), Andrew Moran argues, "Margaret's instruction is to exaggerate" (154). Margaret tells Elizabeth that this exaggeration of her "woes" will make her words "sharp and pierce" (4.4.119). When taken out of a linguistic context, the same criteria apply to all cursing, including Richard's internal curses. An obsessive exaggeration of his "woes" and anxieties allows him to curse himself with them. This exaggeration of anxieties can be seen in the extremes he presents: he must either be a lover or be a villain (1.1.28, 30), be a saint or be a devil

(1.4.334), love himself or hate himself (5.3.185–187). For Richard, there is no middle ground, and this exaggerated polarity enables his anxieties to have power over him and direct his actions toward the unhappy future which they foretell.

Richard's most obvious anxiety is masculinity, and it demonstrates how external forces can be internalized to become a curse. Richard is obsessed with being masculine enough to please those around him. After killing Henry at the end of *Henry VI Part 3*, Richard declares that because others say that he "came into the world with [his] legs forward" and was "born with teeth," he will be morally "crooked" to match his appearance (5.6.71, 75, 79). Characters throughout *Richard III* refer to him as a devil. Having internalized others' perceptions of him as cursed because of his body, Richard sees his disfigurement as a roadblock to being as masculine as other men. This anxiety is evident from the first scene of *Richard III*, in which Richard's opening speech brims with his frustrations with his disfigurement as he says that he is "rudely stamped" (1.1.16) and "deformed, unfinished" (1.1.20), concluding that "since [he] cannot prove a lover," he is "determinèd to prove a villain" (1.1.28, 30). He is not merely self-conscious about his deformities or that he "cannot prove a lover" like other men; he is obsessed—even to the point that this is his first motivation to be the villain, as if villainy will compensate for his inherent lack of sexual manhood. It turns out that his villainy overcompensates for a lacking masculinity, becoming "unruly masculinity" which "pose[s] a threat to [the] patriarchal order" already established in England (Moulton 251). In making villainy his marker of masculinity, Richard overcorrects and acts out in ways that later tear down the masculine power he seeks to build up. Richard, though he doesn't intend to speak a curse, acts out in response to his masculine anxieties to provide "narcissistic compensation for [his] low self-esteem" (Hunt 23), or bring others down and build himself up politically to counter his anxieties. Because Richard has internalized others' perceptions, his fears regarding a lacking or fallen masculinity become a guide by which he acts.

This pattern of internalizing external factors extends into Richard's perception of love and its consequent anxieties. Because of his deformities, or his perceived lack of masculinity, Richard thinks that he cannot be a lover, even though he successfully woos Lady Anne in the second scene of the play. He mourns in the final act, "There is no creature loves me" (5.3.198). Although Richard can woo, he already perceives himself as a loveless creature, and he

therefore acts accordingly. In internalizing others' perceptions of masculinity and its inherent ties to love, Richard lets his anxiety determine the fact that he cannot and will not be a lover. Interestingly, his desire for love is also tied to power. The inability to produce an heir would mean the end of the York line, which Richard fears. But this anxiety of the lack of love extends beyond romantic or sexual love. Richard is unloved by even his mother, who says she has an "accursèd womb" and that her son is a "cockatrice" (4.1.48–49). Because Richard fears that no one will love him, he acts without tenderness and thereby ensures that not even his own mother will care for him.

Examining Richard's power-driven fear of disloyalty helps one see how Richard's obsessive anxieties prove to be self-fulfilling prophecies. As Richard seeks to ensure the loyalty of those who serve him, he actually drives them away, thereby fulfilling his unspoken curse that people will leave him. This dread is illustrated when he asks Ratcliffe, "What think'st thou, will our friends prove all true?" Even after Ratcliffe's reassuring "No doubt, my lord," Richard says, "O Ratcliffe, I fear, I fear" (5.3.210–12). Richard knows that his power will fall if his followers to desert him. It is with this mindset that he threatens Stanley earlier in the play. Though Stanley assures Richard that there is "no cause to hold [his] friendship doubtful," Richard forces him to leave his son behind, threatening to kill the young man if Stanley proves unfaithful, but Stanley deserts him for Richmond. Richard's threat, though intended to ensure Stanley's loyalty, only makes Stanley more inclined to side with Richmond. Richard's obsession with the possibility that people might desert him causes the very thing he fears. In seeking to ensure the loyalty of those who follow him, Richard actually does the opposite, turning people away from him with his murders and threats.

This pattern of Richard fulfilling his own worst fears is furthered by Richard's psychological, unspoken curse that his power will fall. He acts under the influence of his obsession with being the powerful, male heir of York and his anxieties over maintaining the throne. When he hears that Richmond is coming, Richard asks, "Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? / Is the king dead? The empire unpossessed?" (4.4.383–84). Only under these circumstances can Richmond take the throne and become king, but Richard doesn't see that as an option. "What heir of York is there alive but we?" he asks; "And who is England's king but great York's heir?" (4.4.385–386). Unfortunately for Richard, his actions in trying to secure his place as the heir of York enable the unforeseeable circumstances to occur. He

has killed the rest of the line of York, and he doesn't have an heir. Because of him, the line of York can't continue. His obsessive concern that the line of York will end ultimately does come true. In this way, his self-fulfilling anxieties, like the other curses in the play, play a part in destroying the current political system.

Richard is surprisingly anxious that his conscience will haunt him, as is evident in one of the seemingly insignificant executioners sent to kill Clarence. When Clarence makes a comment about the man's voice, the second executioner responds, "My voice is now the king's" (1.4.152). The audience could take this to mean simply that he is on the king's errand and following his commands. However, the king's voice is being heavily influenced by Richard's own voice, which is a product of his anxieties about another taking the throne. Therefore, this executioner's voice reflects Richard's own feelings. After the first executioner kills Clarence, the second says that this is a "bloody deed, and desperately performed," calling it a "grievous guilty murder" (1.4.245, 247). While this second-guessing, remorseful executioner sounds nothing like the heartless, devilish Richard seen through most of the play, the audience does see Richard battle with these feelings after the ghosts visit him while he sleeps. "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me," he says upon waking (5.3.177). Not only does this fulfill Margaret's curse when she exclaims, "The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul" (1.3.218), but it betrays another of his anxieties acting as a curse. Though he tries to suppress it, he fears that his conscience will condemn him: "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, / And every tongue brings in a several tale, / And every tale condemns me for a villain" (191-93). Instead of acting in accordance with his conscience to combat the villainy, he has suppressed his conscience and attempted to embrace the villainy throughout the play. He illustrates this when he says in his opening soliloquy that he is "determinèd to prove a villain" (1.1.30). He has tried to respond to his conscience by going against it, hoping this will overpower his anxiety. However, as manifested in his fright upon waking up before fighting Richmond at the end of the play, this action has not served him. His conscience does, as Margaret prophesied, "begnaw [his] soul," and it will lead him to his death with "despair" and guilt (5.3.198).

Each of these unspoken curses illuminates how curses impact not only the cursed but also the curser. While curses like Margaret's are generally aimed at others, Richard's anxieties highlight a different aspect of cursing evident in the play: an unintentional condemnation of self. This leads the

audience to consider the part Richard plays in his own ruin. Although the play is considered a history, the full title, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, rings true. Richard, like any tragic hero, brings about his own downfall through these unspoken curses. He condemns himself in the “fearful symmetry” of “the ironic fulfillment of one[’s] own casual oaths or curses” (Hunt 11). While Richard’s evildoing undeniably affects others, his unspoken curses ultimately damage him the most.

Finally, Richard’s unspoken curses eventually culminate into a spoken curse: “And if I die, no soul will pity me” (5.3.199). It serves as the spoken “amen” to his unspoken curses just before everything falls. This curse shows Richard as the producer and the audience of his own cursing. Though the unspoken curses have influenced his decisions throughout the play, Richard is displayed as both the cursed and curser in this moment. Here “cursing is presented as both self-serving and self-destructive” (Overton 6). Though Richard has tried to counter his anxieties by acting to prevent them, initially serving himself and harming others in the process, this has been a self-destroying act. As both the creator and receiver of the curse, Richard experiences the curse as it is directed at both the speaker and the audience. Just as Rivers and Hastings respond to Margaret’s curses with hair-raising fear, Richard follows his own spoken curse with “I fear, I fear” (5.3.212). This fear is not only a result of external forces like Richmond but of his own internal forces. Richard’s fear after speaking a curse illustrates that he recognizes that it is possible to curse himself. This is seen once more in a conversation about those who have wronged Margaret. Rivers remarks that Richard is good to “pray for them that have done scathe,” and Richard responds by saying, “So do I ever . . . For had I cursed now I had cursed myself” (1.3.313–15). Richard fears cursing himself; however, because his unspoken curses have been present throughout the entire play, even if Richard realizes at the end what he has done in speaking this pitiful curse (or *pitiless* curse), it won’t make a difference. His curses have already taken effect in his action.

In taking this added element of unspoken curses to the rest of curses in the play, one sees how they help further Richard’s personal downfall and the rebirth of the nation. Both spoken and unspoken curses help in “purging England of evil and clearing the way for Tudor ascension” (Wheeler 304–05). As people act either in accordance with or in opposition to Margaret’s curses, they allow the curses to exercise psychological power over them and bring destruction upon larger politics. Likewise, because Richard is obsessed with

acting *despite* his anxieties but acts *in response* to them, he also plays a part in tearing down the current political system. Because he kills anyone from the York line who could potentially take the throne and fails to produce an heir, thereby fulfilling his own unspoken curses, Richard's death marks the end of the line of York and creates space for Richmond and the new Tudor line—a rebirth of the nation. Richard's unintentional cursing of self through his anxieties, and subsequent responses to those curses, ends in his own demise.

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navigating orthodoxy

The Calvinist Self in Lucy Hutchinson's On the Principles of the Christian Religion

Jeremy Loutensock

In 1668, the English translator, poet, and biographer Lucy Hutchinson, composed a letter to her daughter containing what she refers to as a “little summary” of “sound truths” (1). This work, now published with the title, *On the Principles of the Christian Religion*, functions as a “last exhortation” (2), wherein Hutchinson carefully defines and urges her daughter to adopt what modern scholarship knows to be orthodox Calvinism. However, Hutchinson’s *Principles* is far from being a mere reiteration of common religious thought. Rather, as Elizabeth Clarke notes, *Principles* “starts as an orthodox summary . . . [but] becomes a very interesting and original piece of theological thinking” (78). David Norbrook concurs with this view of *Principles*, noting that although Hutchinson does not stray far from the tenets of Calvinism, she demonstrates an acute awareness of and ability to address the potential pitfalls within contemporary theology (146). Such an awareness is evident within Hutchinson’s perception of the Calvinist self, as defined by the doctrines of human depravity, predestination, and irrevocable grace. As Norbrook observes, Hutchinson seems to be aware that the implications of these beliefs could trap some believers in a “despairing impotency” (155), wherein they “doubt their election and conclude that diligence and religious observances would be futile” (146). Interestingly, however, no scholarship has thoroughly explored the precise manner in

which Hutchinson addresses this point of sensitivity within *Principles*. The current examination, therefore, will demonstrate that by selectively emphasizing specific *principles* within the framework of orthodox Calvinism, Hutchinson successfully navigates the potential pitfalls of Calvinistic belief and thereby produces a hopeful view of the self. In turn, by adopting this hopeful view of the self, Hutchinson ultimately transcends her own alleged mortal and gender deficiencies to assume a priestly religious authority.

In constructing an optimistic view of the self, one might expect Hutchinson to stray from the core tenets of orthodox Calvinism and their often demoralizing implications; this, however, is far from being the case. As a whole, the doctrines that Hutchinson upholds deviate little, if at all, from the tenets of orthodox Calvinism, including human depravity, predestination, and arbitrary bestowal of grace. The degree of Hutchinson's adherence to his belief system can be seen in the striking resemblance between Hutchinson's own "little summary" (1) and other Calvinist documents, such as The Judgement of the Synode Holden at Dort, a credal statement that was jointly conceived by a gathering of Calvinist divines. For instance, within *Principles*, Hutchinson refers to mankind as "the children of darkness and slaves of Satan" who "can neither resolve nor execute any good work of [themselves]" (35). Similarly, *The Synode* asserts, "All men are conceived in sin [and] born the children of wrath, untoward to all good tending to salvation, . . . slaves of [sin], and neither will, nor can . . . set straight their own crooked nature" (32). It is not coincidental that both *Principles* and *The Synode* characterize mankind as "slaves." In each of these documents, human beings are portrayed as disempowered entities who are incapable of correcting their natural disposition toward unrighteousness. Thus, if *The Synode* is considered to be a reliable measure of Calvinist theology, then Hutchinson's view of unaided humanity closely aligns with the Calvinist tenet of human depravity.

In like manner, *Principles* and *The Synode* demonstrate a uniform view of predestination and the bestowal of grace. These views are evidenced in Hutchinson's assertion that "by the decree of God some men and angels are from eternity predestinated to everlasting life, and others [are foreordained] to everlasting death" (20). Clarifying the means whereby the elect gain everlasting life, Hutchinson then asserts, "all who are elected in Christ . . . are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit, working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power" (21). Similarly, *The Synode* claims that "in process of time, God bestoweth faith on some and not on others, this

[proceeding] from his eternal decree.” (3). The stress that each of these works places on the arbitrary decrees of God when describing the fate of human souls unmistakably reflects Calvinistic predestination. Likewise, by attributing the faith and consequent redemption of the elect to the enabling intervention of deity, both *Principles* and *The Synode* demonstrate a Calvinist view of salvation and the bestowal of grace. Thus, the striking similarity between Hutchinson’s theology and a creedal document, such as *The Synode*, demonstrates that Hutchinson’s “final exhortation” is firmly grounded in the overarching theological context of mainstream Calvinism. As a result, the construction of the self-found in *Principles* is not an unconventional notion but a carefully constructed view of the elect, Calvinist self.

Despite Hutchinson’s close adherence to orthodoxy, however, her view of the self-consciously avoids the demoralizing implications of Calvinist theology and seeks instead to construct a more optimistic concept of the self. Norbrook points out that the doctrine of predestination caused many in Hutchinson’s time to despairingly assume that they were reprobates, or those who are predestined to damnation. However, although Hutchinson acknowledges that part of mankind is doomed to “dishonor and wrath” (21), she rejects the notion that God should be viewed solely as an “offended judge” (39) and maintains that those who “despair of [their salvation]” as a result of this belief are in error (23). Instead, Hutchinson advocates for a view of the self that hopes for election and carefully watches for the “means” or evidences of divine favor (23), ultimately declaring that “no man ought to determine of himself, or any other, that he is a reprobate” (20).

Hutchinson’s construction of an optimistic view of the human self begins with her characterization of mankind’s relationship with sin. Calvinist theology maintains that the reprobate are left to “their own ways” (*The Synode* 9), or in other words, they remain in a state of sin and are incapable of performing good works or preaching the word of God. In spite of this belief, however, Hutchinson strongly emphasizes that recognizing the presence of sin in one’s life should not drive that individual to assume that he or she is reprobate. Rather, she stresses that being painfully brought to acknowledge one’s moral fallibility could, in fact, be the first step to realizing one’s election. Describing this process, Hutchinson states that the redemptive process begins with the elect “being awakened with the terrors of the law, and [finding themselves] . . . under the bondage of [sin]” (62). By emphasizing that such “convictions” for sin are the first steps or “preliminary

work” to redemption (63), Hutchinson effectively blurs the indicative signs of one’s status as either elect or reprobate and thereby displays the difficulty of ascertaining one’s standing before God. Stating this more explicitly, Hutchinson declares, “The reprobates, as well as the elect, have convictions and humiliations for [sin], which are not easily distinguishable from each other” (66). Thus, by conflating the experiences of both the elect and the reprobate with sin, Hutchinson incorporates a sort of uncertain hopefulness into her view of the Calvinist self. After all, Hutchinson states that such convictions are an integral part of redemption and God’s enablement of the elect to love and become devoted to him. This is made abundantly clear in an analogy, wherein Hutchinson observes, “he that is [asleep] complains not of the darkness, but he that wakes in the dungeon greets the light with more exceeding joy” (64). Thus, by emphasizing that both the elect and reprobate experience conviction for sin, Hutchinson enables a view of the self that resists the despair associated with assumed reprobation and preserves the possibility of one’s election.

In a similar fashion, Hutchinson’s treatment of regeneration, the process by which God relieves the elect of convictions and enables them to perform good works, also fosters an optimistic view of the self. Orthodox Calvinism maintains that God, through the Holy Spirit, overcomes human depravity within the elect and moves these individuals to assume godly states of mind that then lead to obedience and good works (The Synode 38). In *Principles*, Hutchinson supports her optimistic view of the Calvinist self by emphasizing the individualized intensity, timing, and pace of this process. Speaking of this, Hutchinson submits,

The manner of the [work] of regeneration, though the [work] be the same, is different [almost] in every child that is [born] of God; as in the [natural] birth some have longer, some more [painful] pangs, some more desperate hazards and faintings, so according to the [several natural] constitutions, and other circumstances of various persons, and the force of the Spirit wounding the [soul] more deeply or more indulgently, some immediately close to Christ, some lie many days, months, and years under [cruel] agonies of [spirit] and are brought almost to the gates of hell before Christ snatch[es] them out of the power of death. (66-67)

As this passage demonstrates, Hutchinson adamantly teaches that regeneration is an individualized and unique experience for each elect person. According to her, all elect individuals experience some preliminary form of

convictions. However, the “hazards” and “agonies” experienced by some are of a much greater intensity. Likewise, this painful state endures longer for some individuals than others before regeneration begins. Finally, while regeneration is a quick process for some, bringing them “immediately close to Christ,” others experience a more gradual alleviation and may feel that they are “brought almost to the gates of hell.” Like Hutchinson’s discourse on convictions, this characterization of regeneration encompasses a wide breadth of human experience with deity and maintains the possibility of election in circumstances where evidence of such may not be prevalent or signs to the contrary may seem to exist.

By thus emphasizing the presence of convictions and the nature of regeneration within the process of redemption, Hutchinson ultimately constructs a view of the Calvinist self that is founded upon an uncertain but very much plausible hope for redemption. Her religious thought, encapsulated within orthodox Calvinism, creates a scenario for humanity in which sin and guilt are not indicative of reprobation and may even be the first evidences of election. Combined with Hutchinson’s unwavering certainty that “all who are elected in Christ . . . are redeemed by Christ” (21), this view of the self-advocates for optimistic vigilance, wherein individuals carefully and hopefully watch for God’s “means” (23) or evidences of election. In turn and through process of time, Hutchinson maintains that these unknowingly elect individuals will eventually experience a gradual “mortification of [sin]” (78) and someday overcome temptation all together. As she states, “though [the] remaining corruption sometimes [prevail], through the [continual supply] of grace from Christ by his [Spirit, sin] shall in the end be totally vanquished, . . . and the regenerate part shall overcome” (79).

Not surprisingly, Hutchinson’s orthodox but optimistic conceptualization of the self is not only a universal concept but one that she also subtly applies to herself individually. Indeed, as Norbrook observes, “[Hutchinson’s] writings give no signs of anguished debate about her own salvation” (147). This is especially clear in *Principles*, wherein Hutchinson acknowledges her own fallibility as both a deprived human being and as a woman but consistently portrays herself as an elect person who is in the midst of regeneration. Beginning in the opening lines of her doctrinal dissertation, Hutchinson confesses the reality of her own “infirmities and imperfections” (1) and later recognizes that at times these cause her to “weakly” and “confusedly” relate the word of God (89). In conceding these weaknesses, Hutchinson explicitly

concedes that the most fundamental symptoms of human depravity—an inability to fully engage with and relate to artifacts of righteousness—are present within her life. By doing so, Hutchinson actively accepts depravity as a basic component of her self-conception.

In like manner, Hutchinson also accepts the alleged weakness and susceptibility that contemporary theology assigned to women. This can be seen clearly in Hutchinson's choice of genre. Modern scholars agree that Hutchinson seems to have deliberately written *Principles* as a "mother's legacy." Based on the work of Jennifer Heller, this certainly seems to be the case. Heller observes that mothers' legacies function on the basis of maternal authority and are therefore almost always directed toward a "tender reader," usually including the writer's own child or children (43). Additionally, the mother's legacy often acknowledges the writer's deficiencies and relies on the author's love for her intended recipient to generate credibility, rather than asserting an academic pedigree (40). Clearly, *Principles* conforms to these generic parameters. Like other works within this genre, *Principles* exclusively and privately addresses Hutchinson's daughter. More specifically, Hutchinson fears that her daughter, for whom she has received "good hopes" of election (8), will fall into error by joining an unidentified sect (3-4). Thus, *Principles* resembles a group of mothers' legacies that specifically address wayward children. Likewise, as has been demonstrated, Hutchinson confesses her own weaknesses, relying on her daughter's "duty to [hear] and receive [her mother's] instruction" (90). Therefore, as Clarke purports, the generic structure of *Principles* demonstrates Hutchinson's awareness that she is writing within a designated, female literary space (81) and consequently reflects the contemporary belief regarding women's lesser ability to discourse on religious topics. Hutchinson's explicit acknowledgement of women's "ignorance and [weakness] of judgment" (5) further evidences the submission of her own self-conception to the doctrines of contemporary theology and her complete reliance upon deity to overcome weaknesses.

Despite the implications of contemporary religious belief for her self-conception, however, Hutchinson's emphasis on the process of redemption ultimately allows her to transcend the alleged weaknesses of her mortality and gender. This is plainly demonstrated in the introductory letter within *Principles*. Therein, Hutchinson claims, "Through mercy I find [myself daily] more [fixed] and [established than] I have sometimes [been], when the miscarriages of many that [professed] the truth, were a great

stumbling block to me" (6). Clearly, although Hutchinson accepts that she has at times fallen into doctrinal error, the intervention of deity has enabled her to become "fixed" in what she believes to be correct principles. The resemblance of this passage with Hutchinson's description of her daughter's situation makes this passage especially significant. Hutchinson is explicit in warning her daughter that joining a sect often leads believers to "espouse all the [erroneous practices] and opinions" of that particular group (4). By then touching on the susceptibility of women to "[entertain] fancies, and [be] pertinacious in them" (6), Hutchinson directly links female weakness to theological error. Consequently, when Hutchinson claims to have overcome the "miscarriages of [those] that [professed] the truth" (6), she seems to indicate that grace has allowed her to overcome a significant fallibility that is associated with her gender, as well as her more general human depravity.

The manner in which Hutchinson deviates from the generic conventions of the mother's legacy also reveals her divinely enabled status. Unlike most female writers of her time, Hutchinson's discourse in *Principles* is grounded firmly within scripture and the work of contemporary theologians. Likewise, Hutchinson's focus on arriving at a correct understanding of doctrinal principles differs greatly from the practical advice on modest dress and spousal duties that characterizes the writings of most other contemporary women (Norbrook 142). Finally, Hutchinson's source of authority also departs from the norm of the mother's legacy. Based on the amount of confidence that she places in her interpretation of correct theology within *Principles*, Hutchinson seems to indicate that her authority on this subject is more priestly than maternal. Whereas most legacy writers rely exclusively on maternal affection as a source of authority, Hutchinson also claims to have received the "characters" contained within *Principles* directly from God (91) and thereby possess a divinely appointed duty to relate these to her elect daughter (90). This model of authority creates the impression that Hutchinson is functioning as a divine messenger who represents God to his people. Consequently, although some of Hutchinson's rhetoric is similar to other mothers' legacies, her subject matter and claim to divine authority differentiates *Principles* from the works of other contemporary women. Thus, by stressing the ability of deity to enable the elect, Hutchinson seems to suggest that she, herself, has been empowered to overcome the fallibilities of both her fallen, mortal state and gender.

Ultimately, despite Hutchinson's description of *Principles* as a "little summary" (1) of preexisting religious thought, this work represents an educated and skillful ability to navigate Calvinist theology. By selectively emphasizing specific Calvinist beliefs, Hutchinson combats the believer's inclination to despairingly assume that he or she is predestined to damnation and instead constructs a scenario in which individuals are to patiently watch and hope for eventual evidences of their election. Additionally, by applying this conceptualization of the self to her own situation, Hutchinson creates a theological space in which she can transcend many of the weaknesses of her mortal state and the limitations attached to her gender. As a result, Hutchinson assumes a priestly and independent religious authority. At a time when nearly 2,000 nonconformist clergymen were forced from their parishes and livelihoods (Spurr 43) and independent believers, such as Hutchinson, were barred from gathering in all but the smallest of conventicles (51), such divinely enabled authority was no doubt essential to Hutchinson's religious life outside the established Church of England. Indeed, based on Hutchinson's perception of her time as a day in which truth was "[clouded] with mists of error" (3), this ability to independently discover and relate the word of God seems to be foundational to Hutchinson's capacity to defy the standing religious order and the civil authorities that supported it.

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Criterion

empowered motherhood in tracy k. smith's *ordinary light*

Rilley Kaye McKenna

In 1955, Mamie Till Bradley, mother of Emmett Till, “claimed the public role of grieving mother and thus reformulated conceptions of . . . African American motherhood” (Feldstein 266). By seeking justice, refusing to be silenced, and having an open casket funeral for her slain son, Bradley refused to conform to societal expectations as a black mother, instead showing the world her humanity. Since the time they were enslaved, black mothers in America have endured the burdens of stereotype and misconception. In addition to the challenging nature of raising their children, black mothers are also faced with overcoming a host of harmful stereotypes that attempt to erase their identity and lump them into one homogenous category. Despite emancipation and gaining “freedom” in 1865, black mothers today remain constrained by unique challenges—racism, discrimination, and economic inequality—in their efforts to raise resilient, productive, and optimistic children who are prepared for what they will face in a world that tells them their lives do not matter.

Representations of black mothers found in contemporary literature illustrate the complexity and diversity of experience for black mothers in America,

and the ways in which black mothers seek to empower their children, as well as recognize their own power and strength. This is especially evident throughout Tracy K. Smith's depiction of her mother and her perspective as a mother in her memoir *Ordinary Light*. By examining what empowered black motherhood looks like in Smith's life, we come to better understand how depictions of empowered motherhood can change the stereotypes and ideas about black mothers in America today.

Negative stereotypes about black women, and especially black mothers, have played a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of who black mothers are. These stereotypes, such as that of the "welfare queen," referring to women (especially black women) who irresponsibly take advantage of welfare services because of their status as mothers, and the "strong black woman," which refers to women who are so independent that they are "portrayed as adversarial, confrontational, unattractive and unlovable" (Cole), influence the lives of black mothers negatively, compounding the difficulties they face while raising their children. Depictions of black motherhood such as Smith's, which admit to both strength and weakness, fight against these stereotypes while also challenging the idea that black women must be perfect to be considered "good mothers." Smith writes of her mother with honesty, resisting the urge to "protect . . . the idea of [her] mother" (6) by only speaking well of her. Instead, she is "searching" (347) to depict her mother as honestly as she can given her "own incomplete vantage point" (346). Such narrative provides a portrayal that emphasizes, above all, her mother's humanity, in direct contrast with such dehumanizing stereotypes about black mothers.

Speaking of the difficulty inherent to being a black mother in America, author Tope Fadiran Charlton proclaims:

Part of my struggle is to challenge the notion that good motherhood cannot exist in bodies like mine. But I can tell you something I want even more . . . [something] better than being acknowledged as a Good Mother: to be seen as a mother and fully human at once. This is liberation. (184)

Charlton begins by acknowledging a struggle that she faces as a black woman: the struggle to be considered a "good mother." But she moves past that, speaking of her deeper yearning for a world in which black mothers are considered valid and human, allowed to make mistakes and still be seen as worthy. Her declaration that liberation is found when black women mothers

can be viewed as both mother and human, or “fully human,” highlights the work that Smith performs in her memoir.

Tracy K. Smith’s memoir records both her and her mother’s stories, taking up the charge made by Michele Wallace in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*: “Whereas then I spoke of black women making history and being written about, I now think it is more important that black women ‘write’ their own histories, since the power to write one’s own history is what making history appears to be all about” (xxi). The power to write one’s own history, argues Wallace, is the act of making history; Smith recognizes and wields this power as she writes about her own mother, and chooses to write in such a way that she reveals her mother as “mother, and fully human at once” (Charlton 184). In Smith’s memoir, it is clear that her relationship with her mother is complex and multifaceted. The honesty with which she reflects upon her mother—as heroic yet imperfectly human—brilliantly demonstrates the empowering pictures of black mothers that are emerging in the work of many female black authors, artists, bloggers, musicians, and poets. Smith does far more than simply refute the stereotype of the “welfare queen”; she brings to life her powerful, strong, yet flawed and beautifully human mother, a woman who combats the difficulties of being black in America and of raising black children in America by overcoming challenges with quiet strength and imperfect dignity, even while succumbing to the cancer that wracked her body. Smith’s memoir captures not only her relationship with her mother, but Smith’s own growth. This progression occurs over time, as she goes from seeing the home her mother creates as “the only heaven [she] needed to believe in” (125) to recognizing that, perhaps, the world and the hereafter might be “larger than [her mother] had known to imagine it” (323). Smith transitions from seeing her mother as all-knowing and superhuman to seeing her mother as an imperfect, complex human being. Smith recognizes that although her mother is flawed, this makes her no less “worthy of our attention” (287).

If we are to fully comprehend the revolutionary nature of Smith’s memoir, we must begin by understanding the ways in which black motherhood has been historically undermined and stripped of legitimacy. In “‘Us Colored Women Had to Go through a Plenty’: Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women,” Thelma Jennings writes of the horrors faced by enslaved women, specifically enslaved mothers. Often, enslaved women were controlled by slaveholders through threats, since these men

could “force them to mate with whomever [they] chose, to reproduce or suffer the consequences, to limit the time spent with their children, and even to sell them and their children” (46). Procreation was forced upon young girls from “the beginning of adolescence” (46), and “after giving birth, most slave mothers usually had to trust the care of their babies to someone else in order to return to the fields. From that time on, the contact they had with their children during the day was limited” (58). Often, mothers were separated from their children, as in a case when “the slave woman herself was sold to Georgia away from her three-month-old baby because the baby’s father was the young master” (64). These interviews reveal the horrific treatment of enslaved mothers and the lack of respect for or recognition of enslaved women’s motherhood as legitimate or equal to that of white women’s motherhood.

Motherhood for enslaved women was a bittersweet experience, as their desire to have a family was often superseded by their desire to protect children from being born into a life of slavery. Motherhood was seen by some enslaved women as a triumph—a way to assert some degree of autonomy, control, and normalcy into their lives (Jennings). By other enslaved women, however, motherhood was seen as a way to be controlled in the future, as threats of harm coming to children or mothers being separated from children were often used to control enslaved mothers (Washington 188).

Although slavery was abolished in 1865, the dehumanizing ideas held by whites about black motherhood did not disappear. Instead of recognizing the role slavery played in destroying black families, white anthropologists, social workers, and healthcare professionals made various claims about the fitness of black mothers based on biased perceptions and little else (Bennett). Representation of poverty in the United States shifted from focusing on white people to focusing on people of color. “In 1964, only twenty-seven percent of the photos accompanying stories about poverty in three of the country’s top weekly news magazines featured black subjects; the following year, it rose to forty-nine percent. By 1967, seventy-two percent of photos accompanying stories about poverty featured black Americans” (Black and Sprague). Black mothers, specifically, were blamed for poverty in the infamous Moynihan report, published during the Civil Rights Era by Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Formally titled *The Negro Family: The Case of National Action*, this report claimed that black mothers were contributing to the failure of the black family by their aggressive and controlling nature,

and that the matriarchal structure of the black family brought with it a host of social ills. By casting black mothers in such an unflattering and downright harmful light, white politicians were able to scare voters into supporting their policies. Both the perceptions left behind by these political attacks against black women as well as the policies themselves have since negatively affected black mothers and their families in American society.

In light of such a fraught historical context, Smith's depiction of motherhood is brave. By telling her story and sharing her personal relationship with her mother, she is standing up against years of violent physical oppression, as well as rhetorical and emotional abuse. As writer Brit Bennett stated, "Writing about ordinary black people is actually extraordinary . . . It's absolutely its own form of advocacy" (Alter C1). This "form of advocacy" is valuable because it provides representation that refutes the idea of the "bad black mother" without falling into the trap of creating extraordinary, perfect characters. By including negative and positive traits as she describes her mother, Smith demands readers reexamine their ideas about black motherhood and its legitimacy. She demands readers recognize her mother, specifically, and black mothers more generally, as imperfect, human, strong, and empowering all at once.

Smith credits her mother with making their home into a safe, comfortable space, crafting a place for her children to feel at ease as they prepared to face a world which would treat them as inferior. Reflecting on her childhood, Smith acknowledges the important role her mother played, recognizing:

It was the life she assembled for us . . . a life that would tell us, and the world, if it cared to notice, that we bothered with ourselves, that we understood dignity, that we were worthy of everything that mattered. No matter what the world thought it knew about blacks, no matter what it tried to teach us to believe about ourselves, the home we returned to each night assured us that, no matter who was setting the bar, we could remain certain we measured up. (19)

In this passage, Smith pays homage to the incredible yet often invisible work her mother performed in order to construct a safe space for Smith and her siblings during their formative years. Unlike the stereotypical "welfare queen," Smith's mother sacrificed much, striving to perform great emotional labor on behalf of her children so that they might recognize their worth, even if the world failed to do so. It is this vision of black motherhood—as empowered

enough to focus on empowering the next generation—that has been too often absent from portrayals of black motherhood, and this is revealed in a wonderful way in Smith's writing.

Although she speaks of her mother's love, Smith also discusses the distance that develops between them as she attempts to grow into adulthood and leave behind the parts of her mother's teaching that no longer suit her. She grieves, finding it "impossible . . . to imagine" her mother accepting her choices, and struggling as she watches her mother fight against the life she is choosing to lead (297). As a young adult, Smith recognizes that despite her mother's best efforts to teach and guide her, Smith must make her own decisions and find her own path. She describes experiencing the "beginning of [her] life as someone other than [her] mother's child" (277), and recognizes the discomfort this causes for her mother. Smith describes feeling that her mother has become unsure around her, saying that she "looked at me from a different kind of distance, as though I'd gone feral and she was afraid I'd threaten her with my teeth if she got too close" (258). This distance closes slightly as Smith recognizes that, despite her mother's imperfections, her mother is dedicated to doing what she feels is best for her daughter; but the proximity Smith enjoyed with her mother during her first years of life never fully returns. Smith accepts the necessity of this distance as she meditates on the way her mother, for many years, "filled the space around [Smith] with her calm warmth," but how "what [Smith] needed was privacy to find out if [she] even had desires of her own and, if [she] did, to figure out what exactly they were" (215). As she grows, Smith must make the trade off between security and freedom, and in so doing, create separation from herself and her mother.

Smith's perception of her mother changes as she sees her mother, this woman of quiet strength, battling cancer. Her understanding and empathy towards her mother grows as her mother gets sick, and then especially after she has passed away. This experience deepens Smith's vision of who her mother was. The strength she had previously associated with her mother is tempered in an emotional scene, when Smith first learns of her mother's cancer diagnosis: "She wanted to be strong. She wanted to stand on faith...but I could tell she was afraid by the way she steadied herself with both hands against the countertop and smiled an almost apologetic smile" (226–27). It is in the scenes that take place after this one, near the very end of the book, in which Smith comes to see her mother as "a mother and fully human at once" (Charlton 184). At the memorial service for her mother, Smith recognizes

how little she really knows about her mother's life outside of her role as a mother, sparking her to ask, "How many more lives would we find, if we only knew how to seek them, within the life we recognized as hers?" (325). Because of the way Smith has structured her book, readers are able to come to see her mother as a "good mother," someone who cares for her children and defies negative stereotypes of black motherhood. Then, later, readers are able to see Smith's mother as "fully human," as the book shows how her role as a black mother shapes, but does not wholly define, her life.

In 2018, black motherhood in America is defined by both progress and a lack of progress, by both rejoicing and mourning. As black women represent themselves as mothers on stage, online, in music, and in writing—as they create representations of black motherhood that are as deep and varied as the women themselves—we begin to see Tope Fadiran Charlton's dream materialize. Black mothers are seen, at least for a moment, as "mother[s] and fully human at once" (184), regardless of poverty level or marital status. This dream is still far off in the distance in reality, but through art, we see what it might look like. As Tracy K. Smith states, "when we tell our stories, we make power" (278). For Smith, telling her own story "is both a prayer for power and the answer to that prayer" (279), suggesting that empowerment for black mothers comes not only from mothering itself, but also from "writ[ing] one's own history" and therefore claiming power (Wallace xxi). By valuing depictions of empowered, imperfect, and honest black motherhood over caricatures and stereotypes, we see the "power" that black women have made for themselves, as mothers and as people. We honor that power by standing back and listening, as they tell us what it really means to be a black mother in America today.

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excavating friel through post-christian theory

Ryan Meservey

In Brian Friel's play *The Freedom of the City* (1973), Friel gives voice to such a myriad of social groups in Northern Ireland that critics can hardly decide which viewpoints deserve the most recognition. Because so many character perspectives exist, Friel's work has been mined by critics for its cultural insights into a variety of topics. Early commentators approached the play's subject matter head-on as a critique of the British army and the government tribunal following Bloody Sunday. Other critics prize the play for its insights into the political dynamics of Northern Ireland, with George O'Brien describing the play as "a model for how a culture does not work, represented by the language of stereotype" (82). From a legal perspective, the play offers insights into Western and Northern Irish law, like the role of emergency laws as Peter Leman argues in his analysis of the play's perspectivalism (3). Even the play's Catholic presence, however scanty and inconsequential to the plot it may be, serves as evidence for a broader analysis of Irish priest characters, to which Mária Kurdi correctly concludes that Friel treats priests as a detriment to society in all but one play (69). Despite being one of Friel's less popular stage plays, *The Freedom of the City* clearly has much to offer critics and historians alike in identifying attitudes and trends of the recent past.

To add to this enterprise of understanding Friel and his society through *The Freedom of the City*, in this paper I will analyze *Freedom* using the theories of Australian historian Alan D. Gilbert from his book *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society*. My analysis will cover three theories: the theories of meliorism, scientism, and the secularization of death. In doing this, my goal is not to give the final word on each of these theories; rather, I plan to show the conflicted relationship Brian Friel has with secular philosophy. Applying Gilbert's theories will reveal how the playwright accepts and rejects secular culture and how the playwright ultimately undermines the political establishment in Northern Ireland.

Before proceeding to this analysis, it is worth noting that my endeavor differs significantly from other Post-Christian readings of Friel's work. Out of dozens of close readings on Friel, my research found only three papers that fit the Post-Christian lens. Although only one of these papers describes itself as "Post-Christian" (Block 1), all three begin by acknowledging Friel's abandonment of religious institutions, which constitutes a sort of Post-Christian acknowledgment. From there, the critics examine transcendence in Friel's plays and draw separate conclusions. Ed Block Jr., in his "Post-Christian, Christian" reading of Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* (1980), determines that the transcendent elements of that play ultimately guide the reader back to the Christian faith which Friel had been accused of mocking (204). On the other hand, Tony Corbett's essay, "Effing the Ineffable", interprets *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) as accomplishing exactly the opposite, with the "final epiphany . . . [being] that there are no epiphanies" (231). Dan Cawthon's examination of seven plays is neutral on the relationship between transcendence and Christianity, although he does describe Friel as "religious" (152). These papers succeed in their own right, but they differ from my project. While I aim to show the effects of Christianity's decline on interpreting Friel, these papers focus on the nature of the decline itself and what that means for Friel personally. On the whole, these papers focus on explaining the implications of religious mystery in Friel's plays, against the backdrop of the playwright's apparent abandonment of Christianity.

From the vantage point of Alan D. Gilbert's theories, understanding how the text approaches religious mystery only tells part of the story. For Gilbert, a Post-Christian society "is not one from which Christianity has departed, but one in which it has become marginal" (ix). In British society, religion became marginal with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, when an

“areligious culture” grew and eventually displaced religion’s hold over the wider British culture (xiv). In my analysis, I will focus on Gilbert’s study of this areligious culture that critics leave peripheral or absent in the other interpretations of Friel’s work. Although *Freedom* is a Northern Irish play set in Northern Ireland and not Britain, I find that the close geographic and economic relationships between these two countries make Gilbert’s theories relevant to the play, and, in the spots where those theories fail, Friel lets them fail with a political purpose. Thus, *The Freedom of the City*, a play which marginalizes religion and remains unstudied by Post-Christian critics, reveals how Friel subverts the government’s authority by tugging at the secular culture on which it rests. In rejecting and, at times, embracing the worst of secular culture, Friel characterizes the government as callous, cruel, and contemptuous of the Northern Irish people.

Because my analysis will move from one theory to the next with examples in between, understanding the structure of the play will be helpful in contextualizing my examples. *Freedom* follows two main story arcs. In one, three Northern Irish protesters, Michael, Skinner, and Lily, find shelter in a city building after riot police violently break up a protest. The three then discover that they have walked into the Mayor’s parlor (or office). After some time spent frolicking in the parlor, the military orders them out of the building and shoots them. The second story arc follows reactions to the protester’s situation from the media, religion, academia, and cultural icons, as well as a government investigation into the deaths of the protesters. The play opens in the future with the investigation and closes in the past with the protesters staring out at the audience as gunfire sounds, leaving viewers with a morbid ending to Friel’s morbid tale.

The dark, dismal plot of *Freedom* contrasts sharply with the first component of Post-Christian theory, the theory of meliorism or a belief in human ingenuity. This theory maintains that life is not a “vale of tears” on the path to heaven; it is a puzzle waiting for the diligent application of human effort (Gilbert 47). Although melioristic attitudes have certainly existed throughout history, it only became a cultural force in Britain once 19th century industrial advances made comfortable lifestyles possible for more people than merely the extraordinarily wealthy (48). While this optimistic view of the world does not itself contradict religious belief, the rise of meliorism lead society to prioritize human solutions over spiritual ones.

In *Freedom*, Michael represents melioristic philosophy more than any other character in the play. As a student, he expresses confidence in his academic efforts and looks forward to a “big future” in gas works, despite already losing two jobs and becoming unemployed (Friel 122). As a protester, he believes the government must eventually succumb to peaceful protests because civil rights are “something every man’s entitled to and nothing can stop us from getting what we’re entitled to” (161). Michael remains optimistic over his efforts right up to his death, despite the constant negativity of Skinner, a fellow protester.

Because of his negativity, Skinner could be interpreted as opposing melioristic views; however, a closer reading reveals otherwise. Skinner doubts Michael’s tactics (Friel 141), but he does not doubt the existence of a solution to government oppression. Instead, his attempt at persuading Lily in Act Two that poor people everywhere share economic interests suggests a qualified belief of that change can happen (154). Likewise, Skinner’s last words to himself that “if you’re going to decide to take them on, Adrian Casimir, you’ve got to mend your ways” suggests the possibility of a way forward (150). Thus, in Skinner and Michael, *Freedom* exhibits the meliorism present in modern British culture.

If these two characters represent melioristic philosophy, the plot which puts both of them to death certainly raises criticism of meliorism’s functionality. Perhaps, in regards to the vast insecurity and inequality dealt to the Northern Irish poor, the play teaches that human efforts become insignificant in the face of powerful opposition. While people in Britain and elsewhere may be able to work themselves into a better life, Brian Friel’s play highlights the fact that the poor of Northern Ireland face real, external barriers to this ideal. Barriers in the play like the government’s unchecked control over the military and the judicial system suggest the overall failure of meliorism in the Northern Irish context.

Freedom demonstrates a similarly conflicted relationship with another Post-Christian theory, scientism. In his book, Gilbert argues that the technologies of the Post-Industrial age affected popular consciousness so deeply that science took on the preeminent role of shaping how people respond to the world (56). This new role included an epistemology and an ideology: scientism holds that science can access everything knowable and everything inaccessible to the scientific method is likely “irrelevant or even illusory.” Thus, the popular belief in science, with or without an adequate grasp of

the science itself, functions as “the nemesis of any metaphysical philosophy” (56). In *Freedom*, science’s role as the preliminary truth system comes into question twice consecutively: once in conversation about popular science and again in the government’s courtroom discussions.

Popular science enters the story arc of the main characters just before Act II, with Lily’s comment that, in outer space, people “don’t get old... the way we get old down here” (Friel 144). Her reference to Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity becomes clear with her subsequent mention of clocks and how she could end up younger than her children (Leman 6). Curiously, Alan D. Gilbert also references the theory of relativity in his discussion of scientism, musing that what “the less mechanistic, relativistic Einsteinian assumptions... might mean for human religiosity remains conjectural” (57). In Friel’s play, the reference to relativity serves to qualify the scientific investigation into the protester’s deaths presented in the courtroom scene directly preceding Lily’s comment.

The play’s courtroom scene demonstrates how people in power manipulate science to achieve their goals. In that scene, the court turns to less tangible scientific means after encountering photographic evidence that the protesters had no weapons in the aftermath of their deaths (Friel 142). The court calls on a doctor from the Army Forensic Department to explain how the lead deposits on the protesters show that the three had been armed, had fired on security forces, and therefore deserved to be cut down by the military. In a later scene, the court, confronted with the question of how the protesters’ weapons disappeared, decides to call in a “pathologist” (151), without filling in the gaps of how a pathologist could answer the court’s question. By appealing to science for truth, the text plays with the theory of scientism inside and outside of the text. Internally, scientism ensures the court’s final decision to condemn the protesters as terrorists. Externally, the court’s evidence feels more compelling to modern readers in secular society, even causing one student reading Friel to declare, “I was shocked to read that Michael really did shoot at the military!” (Anonymous). This narrative, where the protesters have sole blame for their demise, represents the storyline the government in *Freedom* would have us believe.

The text, however, encourages us to believe otherwise and demands a mediation between the science of the experts and the reality of the events portrayed in the play. Ignoring conflicts of interest and the possibility of evidence tampering, the relationship of the scientific evidence with the main

characters' story arc continues to be problematic. In exiting the parlor, the characters make no mention of weapons and proceed with their hands up. In their final thoughts, the characters speak of remorse and surprise at being shot. Both these details, along with the accidental nature of the protesters' entrance into the Mayor's parlor, discredit the court's argument that the protesters fired weapons when they walked outside. Although Friel's characters—like the media or the religious—frequently spread misinformation, Friel generally presents each scene as rooted in its own reality. Hence, we have the most reason to believe the main characters' story arc over the narrative suggested by the government's science.

These details, coupled with Gilbert's theories, show that science in *Freedom* defies scientism by defying the reality it claims to most accurately reflect. *Freedom* looks at science for what it is: an ideology, another interpretation of the world, or a "pattern imposed on reality," a phrase Tony Corbett used to describe Friel's view of time divisions (223). The repudiation of scientism in the text undermines the legitimacy of Post-Christian culture's ability to explain human experience. In undermining that culture's belief in science, the text undermines the established powers who wield this worldview, like the Northern Irish government.

Having addressed the impact of scientism in the text, I move on to the last hallmark of Post-Christian theory from Gilbert's repertoire: the secularization of death that has taken hold of British culture. Death typically rests at the center of religiosity because its mystery cannot be resolved and its presence serves as a reminder of human powerlessness (Gilbert 61). However, in recent years, death has been pushed out of public and private life by longer life spans, distance from extended family, and greater medical understanding (62). Gilbert laments the effects of death's secularization, writing, "...in the midst of modern life death has become a relative stranger – an intruder whose presence, when it cannot studiously be ignored, causes confusion and embarrassment as well as trauma." The effects of this secularization can be felt in Western culture at large and keenly in Friel's play.

Right in line with the modern avoidance of death, Friel's play hides the deaths of its characters. The play always operates before or after the violence but never in the midst of it. Even the "post-mortem" speeches each character gives at the beginning of Act II limit themselves to the final thoughts of the characters before their demise, thus continuing to hide the moment of death

while also providing little comfort in what death transitions to. The result of hiding death in a play revolving around death reinforces its mystery and gloom.

The main characters' post-mortem speeches also contribute to the mystery and gloom symptomatic of the Post-Christian secularization of death. In their final moments, Michael grapples with the "mistake" of dying in such a "foolish way," Lily felt a "tidal wave of regret" for not having lived, and Skinner dies "in defensive flippancy" (Friel 150). All of the attributes that Gilbert describes—confusion, embarrassment, and trauma—present themselves in these speeches. Any religious motifs or traces of acceptance remain absent, and Michael's earlier rhetoric that "violence done against peaceful protest helps your cause" has vanished (140). To Friel's characters, death approaches in the same manner it does to individuals in modern society—a stranger, areligious, and irredeemable.

My last choice of adjectives, "irredeemable", best explains why Friel does not question the secularization of death like he does the other Post-Christian theories. In the other two theories, Michael's meliorism and the court's scientism prop up the government. To believe the system rewards effort and defines reality is to stand by the status quo. On the other hand, the secularization of death shakes the status quo by making the occurrence of death less, not more, bearable. Without the constancy and religiosity of death which society held before secularization, the deaths of Michael, Skinner, and Lily feel incredibly tragic, even more so because of the character's own Post-Christian reactions. This tragedy results in nothing less than immense condemnation placed on the government for unjustly killing these individuals and then exonerating the military.

From the above analysis, we have witnessed Post-Christian theory's capacity for excavating Friel's political aims and the broader culture of his society. Part of the success of analyzing *The Freedom of the City* through this lens must be attributed to Friel's own awareness of secular trends in his society, as Friel remarked three years before *Freedom*, "I would like to write a play that would capture the peculiar spiritual, and indeed material, flux that this country is in at the moment" (qtd. in Richards 254). Viewing Friel's work in regards to the spiritual and material trends of Post-Christian theory reveals the dance Friel has with modern culture, sometimes leading, sometimes being led, taking an extra step here, and moving backwards there. Friel's dance with secular ideas shows a conflicted view of these theories in

order to create a consistent view of unjust government actions in Northern Ireland.

Beyond Friel, this project shows the dexterity of three of Gilbert's theories in addressing a Western play set in the recent past. The ideology of secular society still, in many ways, dominates our own society, so understanding it will prove instrumental not only for studying modern literature but also for fashioning a response. The three theories discussed here, as well as the dozens of other Post-Christian theories in existence, will continue to open discourses moving forward.

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Criterion

wonder woman's fight for autonomy

How Patty Jenkins Did What No Man Could

Hanann Morris

Perhaps the most recognized comic superheroine of all time, Wonder Woman's many adaptations have sparked controversy among readers, feminists, and scholars in a debate that continues seventy-five years after her creation. Originally created to empower women, Wonder Woman has fluctuated between a champion of social justice and a dehumanized sexual object. She was the second superheroine to have her own comic, the first to stay in print until current day, and the first to have her own major motion picture. Yet the majority of her adaptations have shaped her into an object of male sexual gratification and submission with one exception—the 2017 film *Wonder Woman*, directed by Patty Jenkins, the only film that gave Wonder Woman a voice.

Wonder Woman was born under possibly the most feminist of circumstances for 1940 America. The creator, William Marston, was known to have said, "In a thousand years women will rule this country." Marston was surrounded by feminist influence. His lover was Olive Byrne, niece to Margaret Sanger, the feminist who gave women contraception and Planned Parenthood. Marston was selected by All-Star (the predecessor to DC Comics) to solve the backlash the comic was facing over its "blood-curdling masculinity." Marston decided the best way to fend off critics would be to create a female

superhero. He wanted a heroine who would be, “a standard among children and young people of strong, free, courageous womanhood.” A heroine who would combat the idea that women were inferior to men and inspire them to greater self-confidence and achievement in male-dominated athletics. From all these dreams sprang Wonder Woman. In her first appearance she is a strong, manly looking woman, with large arms and the body type of Rosie the Riveter (figure 1). She wears a patriotic outfit, complete with a star-spangled skirt and carries The Lasso of Truth, which was no surprise, considering Marston was the inventor of the lie detector. She is an active character who likes to play baseball and starts her own fitness club. She is intelligent, she’s a scientist and she’s a leader, even running for president and winning.

Considering all this, Marston’s Wonder Woman seems the perfect example of female empowerment. And yet, not everything Marston did lined up perfectly with what he said. Marston shocked Americans when he claimed that all women enjoy submission, particularly in sexual ways. He believed man’s need for dominance was toxic, whereas woman’s ability to submit to loving authority would lead America into a peaceful utopia, much like Wonder Woman’s island of Themyscira.

While many Americans were not on board with his sexually submissive ideologies, Marston found a way to spread his beliefs in the form of entertainment. In comic after comic, Wonder Woman finds herself in submissive positions. She is bound, gagged, chained, lassoed, and manacled (figure 2). Her Lasso of Truth was actually originally created by Marston to force others into submission, rather than truth extraction. Marston often gave H.G. Peter, Wonder Woman’s illustrator, detailed instructions of exactly how Wonder Woman was to be chained. One of his instructions read, “Do some careful chaining here—Mars’s men are experts! Put a metal collar on Wonder Woman with a chain running off from the panel, as though she were chained in the line of prisoners. Have her hands clasped together at her breast with double bands on her wrists” (Jett).

Clearly, there is more going on in Marston’s description than a simple capture or escape plot device. Marston’s writings repelled many feminist readers, including Josette Frank, a leader of the Child Study Association. She did not appreciate what she called, “The sadistic bits showing women chained, tortured, etc.” And she was not alone in her opinions. Fans also reported disturbance with Wonder Woman’s chains. When Dorothy Roubicek, an editor of Wonder Woman, objected to Wonder Woman’s torture, Marston replied

to his superiors, "Of course I wouldn't expect Miss Roubicek to understand this. After all I have devoted my entire life to working out psychological principles. Miss Roubicek has been in comics only six months or so, hasn't she?" (Lepore). Roubicek may have only been in comics for six months, but she was still a woman, something Marston, for all his feminist qualifications, was not. Yet Marston did not listen to her, instead claiming he knew what women wanted better than they did themselves. Marston may have believed women were superior, but he believed their superiority came from their ability to nurture, to protect, and to act as moral forces (Buchanan). When Marston's Justice Society offers Wonder Woman a position on their team, it was a secretary position. Wonder Woman is of course thrilled to stay behind, while the other superheroes go off to fight the Nazis. Thus, Wonder Woman's feminist creator placed his superheroine on the sidelines, effectively making Wonder Woman unable to obtain the right to individual conscience and judgment, but instead giving her the role of upholding the characteristics that men believed best suited a "powerful" woman.

While Marston had his flaws, he still portrayed Wonder Woman as a smart, active woman, who could do many things stereotypically attributed to men. However, upon Marston's death in 1947, things went further downhill for Wonder Woman. Fredric Wertham, a prominent psychiatrist, stripped Wonder Woman of her active role by protesting against comic books to the U.S. Senate, claiming their violent depictions harmed children. Wertham acknowledged that many were calling Wonder Woman an advancement of femininity, but responded that there were no activities in Wonder Woman that depicted this advancement. To the Senate, he said, "[Women] in comics do not work. They are not homemakers. They do not bring up a family. Mother-love is entirely absent. Even when Wonder Woman adopts a girl there are lesbian overtones" (Lepore). His attack on women in comics led the Comics Magazine Association of America to adopt a new code in 1954. The code stated, "There can be nothing unconventional depicted in comics. The treatment of love-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage" (Chambliss). Thus, the Golden Age of comics transitioned into the Silver Age—with depictions of women in roles as wives and homemakers. Robert Kanigher, who replaced Marston, created a Wonder Woman whose primary concerns centered around her marriage to Steve Trevor, rather than helping those who could not help themselves. Wonder Woman went from her job as Justice Society secretary to a job as

editor of a Hopeless Hearts column, giving advice to heartbroken couples. Steve Trevor became a more dominating figure in her life, forcing Wonder Woman to marry him in one comic by using her magic lasso of submission, completely destroying Wonder Woman's freedom to choose for herself. This powerlessness continued when Mike Sekowsky came on board in 1968 and completely removed Wonder Woman's powers, getting rid of her iconic spangled outfit and giving her the role of fashion designer, so that she could live in America and marry Steve Trevor. Despite these many different creators, one thing remained the same—Diana still managed to be continually tied up and gagged in comic after comic.

Another attribute of Wonder Woman that remained constant throughout her adaptations was her power to control men with her body. While Wonder Woman's outfits have changed drastically through the years, their sex appeal has not. After Marston's death, Wonder Woman's outfit became more feminine, her boots replaced with ballet slippers and her hair pulled back more conservatively. As time passed, her skirt transitioned into a swimsuit, riding up higher and higher on her thigh. Her legs gradually lengthened, her waist shrunk, and her breasts enlarged, but her swimsuit remained the same size—extra small. Different versions of Wonder Woman show her in even more compromising attire. For example, in the late 1990s, she changed into an all-black biker girl bikini. In the 1967 TV pilot version of *Wonder Woman*, Diana dons a more modest outfit, but is still consumed by vanity, taking an entire minute of screen time to preen in front of a mirror. Throughout the comics, Wonder Woman often wears these sexualized outfits while standing, sitting, and jumping in positions that most women would never find comfortable but look good to the male viewer. Objectification of women in media is sometimes referred to as “the male gaze.” This term was developed by feminist film critic, Laura Mulvey, who described the male gaze as the “act of depicting the world and women in the visual arts and in literature from a masculine point of view, which present women as objects of male pleasure” (Eaton). The male gaze is well known in comics and Wonder Woman is no exception. The United Nations recognized this objectification when they appointed Wonder Woman as an honorary ambassador to challenge female stereotypes. A petition was started by concerned members of the U.N., who thought Wonder Woman's hyper-sexualized attire only contributed to the objectification of women. The petition read:

Although the original creators may have intended Wonder Woman to represent a strong and independent ‘warrior’ woman with a feminist message,

the reality is that the character's current iteration is that of a large breasted, white woman of impossible proportions, scantily clad in a shimmering, thigh-baring bodysuit, with an American flag motif and knee-high boots—the epitome of a pin-up girl. (Roberts)

Wonder Woman was removed soon after from her honorary position.

Despite good intentions to make Wonder Woman more of a role model for women, Wonder Woman has rarely had an actual female creator. While many men have tried and in several cases succeeded to make her a feminist icon, rarely has Wonder Woman had a female voice depict her. Of the forty-five writers on Lynda Carter's live action TV series *Wonder Woman*, only six were women. And out of the twenty-two directors, zero were female. Cathy Lee Crosby's Wonder Woman movie, which preceded Lynda Carter, also featured an all-male crew. Out of the thirteen cartoon films that feature Wonder Woman, Lauren Montgomery is the only female creator. In her seventy-five years at DC comics, Wonder Woman has had only four female writers—Mindy Newell, Trina Robbins, Jodi Picoult, and Gail Simone, with Simone being the longest female writer—a grand total of three years. Before the 2017 Wonder Woman film, Lauren Montgomery was the only female director. Under her direction, Wonder Woman is still ogled in her tiny outfit by Steve Trevor who later stumbles upon her naked bathing friends, showing that Montgomery was most likely appeasing a predominantly male audience. Unfortunately for her female fans, Wonder Woman's voice is more often than not a man's voice. And according to feminist leader, Elizabeth Stanton, "A woman's independence must come through herself" (Freedman). For Wonder Woman to be a truly independent role model for women, her voice needs to be a woman's voice.

That is harder said than done. In 2014, eighty-five percent of all films made in Hollywood had no female directors, eighty percent had no female writers, and ninety-two percent had no female cinematographers (Lang). With so few females on set, the male gaze is often a consequential outcome. For example, Joss Whedon, the famed feminist creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the writer for *The Avengers*, created a Wonder Woman script eleven years before Patty Jenkins, a script that fortunately never saw the light of day. Despite intentions to create a strong heroine in his script, Whedon has Diana walk onto the dance floor of a crowded bar and do a seductive dance to the pleasure of all male viewers. In describing the dance, Whedon

writes, "Diana moves her legs back and turns fluidly, a curve rippling up her body as she fold into a dance that is sensual, ethereal, and wicked sexy." Two male characters, Griffen and Ben, watch Diana, enraptured, saying, "It's like Christmas." After the dance is over, Diana is allowed into a private room where we meet the god Bacchus who says to Diana, "I like that you knew you needed to dance for me. For a girl who's never seen soul train, you know how to bend a bit." While reading the description of Diana's dancing, it is easy to picture her moving hips, but what about her face? In Whedon's script, Diana has been reduced to the epitome of the male gaze. Her body gives her access to Bacchus, who gives her validation. Had this script been used for the 2017 film, *Wonder Woman* would have been a reincarnation of Marvel's *Black Widow* and would have become an object, giving up her individual conscience and judgement in exchange for male objectification.

In philosophy, an object does not have a real existence independent of the subject who observes it. A subject, however, is a being who has a unique consciousness and unique personal experiences. Unfortunately, women in media are continually shown as objects, gaining freedom and independence only at the hands of men. Yes, men are objectified in media as well, but more often than not, these men are shown in full form with complete awareness of their presence, unlike women who are often shown with heads missing or from the back, in dehumanizing ways. According to journalist, Shannon Ridgway, objectified men often seem to be saying, "Come hither; look what I can give you," while objectified women seem to be saying, "This is yours for the taking" (Ridgway).

The *Wonder Woman* comics are full of images that objectify. George Perez, while credited as the man who returned *Wonder Woman's* original powers, still constantly surrounded her with men spending more time talking about her figure than listening to what she had to say. In John Byrne's edition, *Wonder Woman* is a smart, mature, intelligent woman, who for some uncharacteristic reason, thinks it is completely appropriate to seductively change clothes in front of Cassandra Sandsmark, a teenage girl who sits back and enjoys the show. A few pages later, the Flash runs around *Wonder Woman* so fast she cannot run away—at least not until he has planted a kiss on her surprised face. No consent—just a shocked look from *Wonder Woman*.

Why does this matter? Because the objectification of women in film can lead to the objectification of women in real life. Objectification of women in real life can lead to inappropriate comments and lack of consent. Lack of

consent from women can lead to sexual harassment charges. Sexual harassment can lead to attempted or completed rape. Studies have found that when men and women are exposed to sexually explicit media, “Both groups had less progressive views of gender roles” (Kimmel, Linders). Another study found that both men and women consumers of media that depicted women as objects were less likely to support women’s rights after viewing (Lai, Pawlikowski, Pekal, Schulte, Brand). Watching scene after scene of women in submissive roles makes the submission seem normal and sets the stage for “lopsided power dynamics in couple relationships and the gradual acceptance of verbal and physical aggression against women” (Stoner, Hughes).

We see this kind of aggression play out in modern society constantly. On October 5th, 2017, the New York Times published an exposé revealing decades of Harvey Weinstein’s acts of sexual assault on Hollywood actresses and subsequent cover ups. What followed became known as the “Weinstein effect,” a global trend of sexual harassment accusations made against predominantly famous figures. The hashtag #MeToo became a sudden haven for sexual assault victims to report their incidents in safety. Silent victims who had suffered psychological trauma for years, including anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, weight loss, nausea, lowered self-esteem, and sexual dysfunction finally had an outlet for their pain. And yet, many still remain in silence. According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) only 310 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police. Perhaps, if our media showed women as independent and empowered, we could prevent many sexual harassment cases rather than deal with the destructive aftermath.

But who can blame men? Boys will be boys. Especially when the media supports this commonly used idiom. Take Harrison Ford’s older movies. In *Blade Runner*, Harrison Ford slams the door on his love interest, shakes her, presses her up against a window, and orders her to tell him to kiss her. In *Indiana Jones*, Ford uses his whip to pull a fleeing woman back toward him and kisses her. In one of the most beloved films, Ford takes Princess Leia by the hand (she tells him to stop), he says she needs more scoundrels in her life (she begins to protest), he pushes her against the wall and kisses her. Now, of course, she falls in love with him. These images of the handsome hero who always gets the girl can negatively impact viewers into devaluing individual conscience. Research shows viewing film can change our perceptions, which “can alter beliefs and attitudes related to particular moral issues” (Tamborini, Weber, Eden, Bowman, Grizzard). Researchers Millburn, Mather,

and Conrad found that exposing men to sexually objectifying media clips made them less likely to express empathy toward a hypothetical rape victim. And in 2012, Rudman and Mescher found that men who viewed images of objectified women were more likely to endorse sexual violence against women. The United States sexual harassment laws are clear: Non-consensual sexual contact is harassment. However, consent in romance movies is often seen as unromantic and emasculating.

But, consent does not have to be a verbal “can I kiss you on the mouth?” dialogue. In the newest Wonder Woman movie, directed by Patty Jenkins, Wonder Woman and Steve put hands on each other’s faces, signaling their mutual consent and a kiss soon follows. Before this moment, Steve and Wonder Woman had several emotional and intellectual connections, unlike other movies such as *Rush* where the couple skip the “mind” connection and go straight to the physical. In this consensual scene, Jenkins reveals herself as a director who wants her female characters to be subjects, not objects.

Out of all the Wonder Woman installments, only one director has truly liberated Wonder Woman as an autonomous female role model. *Wonder Woman* 2017 shattered records, becoming the first female-led superhero film in more than a decade and the first superhero film to be directed by a woman. Wonder Woman was the first female superhero to get her own movie in either of the shared DC and Marvel universes, and Jenkins was the second female director to make a movie with a budget of more than \$100 million (Kathryn Bigelow being the first). Jenkins also now holds the record for the largest opening of all time for a female director, with Wonder Woman taking in an estimated \$100.5 million, and is the highest grossing film directed by a woman, taking in \$800 million. Across the world, women watched Wonder Woman take to the big screen, watching a powerful feminist symbol that wasn’t kinky or objectifying. On the mythical island, Jenkin’s Amazons are leaders rather than sexualized lovers of submission who are constantly bathing and wearing seductive clothing. Jenkins made sure to hire real-life wrestlers, crossfit champions, trainers, farmers, and Olympic athletes for her Amazons. When creating Wonder Woman herself, Jenkins said, “I followed the rules that I believe in: Wonder Woman doesn’t hurt people for fun. She doesn’t use violence unless she has to, and when she has to, she’s incredibly adept” (Cornish). Jenkins went on to explain that being tough did not mean Diana could not be loving, funny, and warm. Jenkins wanted a woman who was not dummied down version of a man, but an independent capable

woman who believes in justice as well as love. If you watch closely in the film, you will see Wonder Woman using the non-fatal handle of her sword to hit Germans and breaking guns rather than faces. Patty Jenkins showed her millions of viewers that her Wonder Woman could combine the good traits of the old Diana, a warm hearted, peace loving goddess with a warrior who actually went to the front lines, rather than staying home as the secretary.

While William Marston, George Perez, and Joss Whedon had good intentions, the problem is they are not women. Of course, men can be incredible champions of women's rights and creators of female icons. However, the most authentic depictions come from those who experience what it means to be a woman firsthand. Just as a story of racism written by a black man is more believable than a story of racism written by a white man, a story of what it means to be a strong woman is more convincing when written by a strong woman—and Patty Jenkins is a strong woman. Her previous film, *Monster*, won an Oscar for best actress. She is a woman who cares about politics, history, and her children, taking off several years of film making to be a full-time mom.

Perhaps Jenkins's greatest triumph takes place during the halfway point of the movie when Wonder Woman has to decide whether or not she will charge into No Man's Land. All around her are defeated men, unable to fight, telling Diana that she cannot save the women and children, that it is "impossible." Instead of listening to the voices that want to shape her, Diana sees that helping those who cannot help themselves is her purpose. She removes her heavy coat that has been hiding her body, but instead of the camera focusing on her sexualized body parts with a roaming male gaze, the camera focuses instead on her shield, her boots, her lasso, all of which resemble armor, rather than the popular bathing suit outfit. Finally, Diana emerges fully from the trenches, an independent subject rather than a sexualized object. She is not using her body to please a male character, she is using her body to save others on her terms. And unlike her secretary position in Marston's comics, she is on the front lines, leading the men to victory. And when Diana kisses Steve Trevor in Jenkin's film, it is not in the first few minutes of the movie, but waits until emotional and intellectual connection has been established. When the kiss arrives, each character places a hand on other's face, signaling consent. Quite a bit different than Byrne's Flash imprisoning Diana with speed until he gets an unexpected and unwanted kiss.

Of course, nothing is perfect. Joss Whedon was hired to write the script for the 2017 Justice League film and like his *Wonder Woman* script, Diana loses much of what makes her a unique, warm, self-governing leader. Whedon and director Zack Snyder returned Diana to the sexualized version, with outfits revealing Diana's cleavage and "male gaze" shots that highlight her buttocks and breasts. In *Justice League*, Wonder Woman reacts, rather than acts, letting her emotional attachment to Steve Trevor drive her actions, rather than acting for herself and defending those who cannot defend themselves. And just like in John Byrne's comic, the Flash uses his speed to land on top of Wonder Woman in a sexually suggestive position. Though he quickly jumps off, Diana does not seem upset, but smiles, effectively ruining her mature and powerful image and reducing her to the object she was in Byrne's comics.

Jenkins was able to capture the true spirit of Wonder Woman seventy-five years after her original creation (out of pure coincidence, Jenkin's last day of filming was on William Marston's birthday) (figure 5). Jenkins's Wonder Woman had a lot of chances to fail, but she didn't. Wonder Woman could have taken the Joss Whedon route and been another sexualized Black Widow; instead, Wonder Woman gave us what so many feminists had been hoping for, for so long—an independent heroine. Women and men have fallen in love with the ideals Wonder Woman possesses, ideals that are universal to gender. Her leadership, her bravery, her compassion are all; characteristics that inspire both genders alike. And you know what the best part of Jenkin's film was? Wonder Woman was never tied up! Instead, Jenkins created a heroine who was an independent subject. Perhaps this depiction will pave the way for more and more strong female characters, until it becomes normal to see women in non-objectified roles. And just like how smoking in film has been deemed no longer cool, perhaps sexual harassment will lose its appeal to the media, thus decreasing the likelihood of harassment taking place in real life.

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challenging a stereotype

*Female Nature in Rape of the Lock and
"Saturday. Small-Pox. Flavia."*

Elizabeth Smith

For England, the eighteenth century was a time of understanding and questioning gender and gender roles. Some scientific studies of the time considered male bodies to be constant and stable and female bodies to be less predictable (Harvey 194). Consequently, scholars believe that men were generally expected to act logically, while women tended to succumb to strong emotions and occasional mood swings (King 432). In tandem with these general notions were expectations concerning the roles of men and women: it appears that a traditional sign of a competent husband was his ability to create a stable financial situation for his family (Tosh 220), while a sign of a competent wife was domestic harmony and love within the family (Rogers 10). However, after the major political and economic changes of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—such as the Civil War, Interregnum, Restoration, and rise of the bourgeois class—the nation's identity was changing and, with it, some ideas concerning masculinity (Doody 61). For example, when Charles I represented England as king, he embraced polite behavior and the more feminine fashions and hairstyles of the French. When Oliver Cromwell came to lead the country, however, he advocated bluntness and the more masculine styles of English

countrymen (Doody 59). Margaret Doody further explains, “If the major political events that constitute the Civil War and the Interregnum involved complex senses of gender, gender roles, and displacements, it can be no wonder that the culture of the next two or three generations . . . was imbued with ideas of gender—and of gender as problematic” (61).

Unfortunately, before the eighteenth century, these ideas of “gender as problematic” were discussed in the literary conversations of a relatively small number of educated men (Thomas 120). But with the dramatic political changes mentioned earlier, pamphlets, journals, newspapers, and the like were created as a quick and economical way of spreading news and ideas (Backsheider 3). As these forms of media gained respectability, women had easier access to the circulating notions of gender and were able to publish their own ideas, thus joining in the literary discussion (Grant 111). With more voices and opinions circulating in literature—particularly poetry—the question of what appropriately defines gender and gender roles became open-ended, especially in regard to the nature of women (Backsheider 18). One assumption discussed in poetry was that women were prone to vanity and obsessions of their appearance (King 432). Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Alexander Pope were two prominent poets who voiced their views of this notion toward eighteenth-century Englishwomen. Although some critics have considered Pope to be a mocking misogynist, I suggest that both poets seek to reveal the flaws of their society’s view of female nature. Through the hyperbolic representation of vain women, Montagu’s “Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia.” blames society for constraining women to overvalue physical beauty, while Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* suggests that women have control over their situations regardless of their appearance.

In “Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia.” of Montagu’s *Six Town Eclogues*, Flavia’s obsession with her reflection (both of the past and of the present) reveals that she places her self-worth in her physical appearance. The poem begins with Flavia, upset and disgusted with her reflection: “A glass revers’d in her right hand she bore, / For now she shun’d the face she sought before” (lines 3–4). She proceeds to mourn her past beauty, which she has lost because of her illness. Flavia says, “Where’s my Complexion? where my radiant Bloom, / That promis’d happiness for Years to come?” Here, she claims that beauty was her main tool for obtaining a happy future, an underhanded reference to a happy marriage. Later Flavia adds, “Ah! faithless glass, my wonted bloom restore; / Alas! I rave, that bloom is now no more! / The

greatest good the GODS on men bestow, / Ev'n youth itself, to me is useless now" (lines 13–16). In these lines, Flavia ironically claims that beauty is the greatest aspect of youth. As she curses the image in the mirror, she realizes she will never regain her beauty, an endeavor she has pursued with various doctors. She concludes that her youth is purposeless because her appearance is an overwhelming barrier to the happy future she had once anticipated. Her intense complaints of her changed appearance show that Flavia places her self-worth in the degree of beauty she possesses.

Through her past physical beauty, Flavia has gained popularity and power over others. Before contracting smallpox, Flavia is a society belle. Backscheider points out, "The speaker of this poem has reaped every advantage of the beautiful, accomplished woman" (103). One of these advantages is that suitors from various social standings and occupations pursue Flavia's attention through gifts, love poems, favors, and witty conversations. As they seek Flavia's favor, the men present themselves in ways they assume will impress her, ways that are often unnatural for them. For instance, the Soldier attempts to write her a poem; the Beau tries to engage in witty conversation; and the squire awkwardly "[dares] to speak with spirit not his own" (line 38). Obviously, the men are infatuated with Flavia and are willing to let her preferences influence their behavior. She gains so much influence over others, that Montagu hyperbolizes Flavia's power to be like the monarchy's: "Monarchs and beauties rule with equal sway; / All strive to serve, and glory to obey" (lines 85–86). Before Flavia contracts smallpox, she had an "empire" of admirers; however, unlike monarchs, who gain power through birth in a royal family and maintain it through good leadership, Flavia has gained her influence only through her looks.

Because Flavia loses the privileges she has previously enjoyed, the poem reveals that any popularity or power gained through physical beauty will only last as long as the beauty can maintain itself. "Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia." is the last eclogue in a series. Isobel Grundy explains, "The last eclogue in a series (like Pope's 'Winter') traditionally laments a death: the death here is that of Flavia's looks" (188). Consequently, the main focus of Flavia's lament is not only the loss of her beauty but also the privileges associated with that beauty. The last lines of five consecutive stanzas have this basic form: "Beauty is fled, and ____ is now no more!" The five losses put into these lines are "presents," "lovers," "dress," "empire," and "spirit" (lines 27, 40, 54, 64, 77, 83). From these samples, we see what Flavia thinks

is important or valuable. "Presents" and "lovers" are linked to popularity, while "empire," as noted earlier, refers to her influence over those that admired her. "Dress" is what once enhanced her natural beauty, giving her "spirit" or high self-esteem. Since the privileges mentioned above have faded along with her beauty, there is an important lesson that Flavia learns from her illness: her popularity and influence over others are "no more" because they have all been based on Flavia's short-lived beauty.

The reactions of Flavia's acquaintances reveal that society, not female nature, is the source of her mindset toward appearance. Because Flavia is an unmarried young woman, her priority is most likely to marry an eligible man and to prepare for motherhood (Rogers 7). But when she loses her beauty, her former suitors stop paying attention to her: "Fir'd by one wish, all did alike adore; / Now beauty's fled, and lovers are no more!" (lines 39–40). Since she can no longer attract eligible men, she is failing in her pursuit to marry and raise a family. Besides the men in her life, Flavia's female friends are content with her illness, because they are gaining more of her former suitors' attention than before. Like those who mock former monarchs, her supposed friends "mock the idol of their former vow" by visiting Flavia only to gloat that they are courting men who previously favored Flavia (line 88). Because Flavia's "false friends" have abandoned her, she is already socially isolated before she makes the over-the-top decision never be seen again: "There let me live in some deserted place, / There hide in shades this lost inglorious face. / Ye, operas, circles, I no more must view! / My toilette, patches, all the world adieu!" (lines 93–96). Concerning these lines, Isobel Grundy suggests that Montagu "invites the reader, by ending on toilette and patches, to register the narrowness of this world" (188). I suggest that this narrowness implied in the poem is an unforgiving belief that beauty is the only valuable female trait in Flavia's society. Perhaps this is why Flavia desperately seeks the help of three well-known doctors to restore her beauty: she cannot perceive another way to earn the admiration, popularity, and happy future she had before her illness because society has left her with no alternatives. Thus, through the narrow-mindedness of the friends and suitors, "Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia" reveals that society is what has pushed eighteenth-century women to value beauty above all else, becoming apparently self-centered and superficial.

In Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*, Belinda also considers her beauty to be her most important and valuable trait. Pope describes her process of getting ready as if it were a sacred ritual:

And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
 Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.
 First, rob'd in white, the nymph intent adores
 With head uncover'd, the cosmetic pow'rs.
 A heav'nly Image in the glass appears,
 To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
 Th'inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
 Trembling, begins the sacred rites of Pride. (1.121–28)

Through the words “priestess,” “sacred rites,” “altar,” “bends,” and “rears,” Pope has raised Belinda's toilette to resemble a religion in which she worships her own image. In fact, as she applies these “cosmetic pow'rs,” Belinda's beauty is so enhanced that she becomes like a goddess. These “sacred rites” take a very long time to accomplish; it is only at the beginning of canto III that “the long labours of the Toilet cease” and Belinda is ready to be seen by potential suitors (3.24). This hyperbolic description of Belinda's preparation for Hampton Court parodies the traditional epic scene of a warrior arming himself for battle with his best armor (Brown 144). Like the ancient heroes, Belinda prepares herself for the figurative battle of courtship by arming herself with combs, pins, puffs, powders, and patches. The result: “Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms; / The fair each moment rises in her charms, / Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace, / And calls forth all the wonders of her face” (1.39–1.42). Clearly, Belinda spends much time, effort, and resources to enhance her appearance because she considers beauty to be a valuable tool in her pursuit of a husband.

With this valuable tool of beauty, Belinda gains so much influence that she can manipulate any man in her favor. As Valerie Rumbold points out, the power of sexual attraction is a central theme throughout *The Rape of the Lock* (162). This theme is most apparent at the beginning of canto II, where Pope describes Belinda's beauty as a powerful force over men. He writes, “Fair nymphs, and well-drest youths around her shone, / But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone. / On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore, / Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore” (2.5–8). In this passage, Belinda's physical appearance gains everyone's attention and transcends religion itself. Those “Jews” and “Infidels” who do not agree with her gladly

surrender their beliefs for a time, so they may remain in her presence for as long as possible. Later, she proves to be so beautiful and graceful that she compensates for any “female errors” she may have, such as her extreme mood swings or supposedly unstable body (2.17–18). Of all her physical attributes, Belinda’s two locks of hair give her the most beauty and, therefore, influence. These “shining ringlets” (2.22) are described as chains that have the potential to bring about “the destruction of mankind” (2.19): “Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains, / And mighty hearts are held in slender chains” (2.23–24). In essence, because of her beautiful yet deadly locks, Belinda’s suitors willingly subject themselves to her wishes. Isobel Grundy explains that Belinda is “shallow, self-centered, frivolous, yet so beautiful that men are [her] willing slaves” (185). Consequently, Belinda’s physical beauty—especially that of her locks—allows her to influence any suitor to act as she pleases.

While Belinda gains influence over her suitors, it appears that she is not in complete control herself; rather, her guardian sylphs greatly influence her actions and emotions. In Ariel’s address to his fellow sylphs, the reader discovers that invisible supernatural creatures take part in many aspects of Belinda’s world. Some guide the stars and planets; some counsel the government’s leaders; others, like Ariel, “tend to the fair” (2.91). He also claims that the sylphs, not Belinda’s maidservant, help Belinda the most in her daily toilette. Likewise, Ariel claims that the sylphs control the minds and hearts of women. He says, “They shift the moving Toyshop of their heart; . . . This erring mortals Levity may call, / Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all” (1.100–104). The most obvious instance of this is when Umbriel travels to the “cave of Spleen” (4.16), where a “wayward Queen” (4.57) gives him a vial of Belinda’s fears, sorrows, grief, and tears. While Umbriel is on his quest, Belinda is obviously upset but remains somewhat rational. When he returns, Umbriel breaks the vial, causing Belinda to throw a dramatic tantrum in Hampton Court. Because of their supernatural influence, it seems that the sylphs, like Umbriel, command Belinda’s actions.

But this is not always the case: In fact, the sylphs’ failure to control Belinda’s heart satirizes the notion that women cannot control their own emotions. In Belinda’s dream, Ariel warns her of what the future may bring.

I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
E’re to the main this morning Sun descend.
But heav’n reveals not what, or how, or where:

Warn'd by thy Sylph, oh pious Maid beware!
 This to disclose is all thy guardian can.
 Beware of all, but most beware of man! (1.109–114)

Here, Ariel is not sure what will happen, but he knows a man will cause the misfortune. Since Belinda is a popular, beautiful young woman, it is safe to assume that the man will be sexually interested in her. However vivid her dream may have been, Belinda immediately forgets the warning to “beware of man” when she sees a love letter, possibly from the baron himself, addressed to her: “Thy eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux; / Wounds, Charms, and Ardors, were no sooner read, / But all the Vision vanished from thy head” (1.118–120). Even though she later regrets not heeding the warning, Belinda—not the sylphs—decides to read the letter and be infatuated by whoever wrote it. Since *Rape of the Lock* is a mock-epic, or a “comic [satire] using the motifs of ancient epic to reflect ironically on modern life” (Rumbold 157), it is likely that the influence of the sylphs parodies the intervention of gods and goddesses in the ancient epics. By creating this ridiculous connection between deities and these often-unsuccessful sylphs, Pope seems to mock the common eighteenth-century notion that women “threaten always to slide back into more rudimentary states of being— . . . madness, self-absorption, triviality, and emotionalism” (King 431).

After the baron seemingly violates Belinda by cutting one of her locks, the poem suggests that women seek admiration through “good sense” rather than through physical beauty. When Belinda loses her lock, she claims that despite her sacrifices of “ease, pleasure, virtue, all,” her honor is tainted. Similarly, Sir Plume states that, like virginity after rape, the lock will never be restored now that it is lost. Belinda then proceeds to lament “[her] best, [her] fav'rite Curl” by wishing to have been born in “some lone isle or distant Northern land,” where her locks would ironically have no purpose without any suitors to see them (4.148, 4.154). Clearly, Belinda’s and Sir Plume’s laments are nonsensical, as they mourn something that will soon grow back. Soon afterward, Clarissa (who supplied the baron with the scissors) gives a meaningful and logical warning. Rumbold suggests that while Clarissa may be resentful of the fact that Belinda monopolizes the male attention, Clarissa “[sets] forth a realistic alternative for Belinda’s next move and for female life in general” (166). The following advice mirrors the subject I mention in the paragraph above, that women are in control of their own emotions.

But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey,
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
What then remains, but well our pow'r to use,
And keep good humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul. (5.25–34)

In this passage Clarissa recognizes that female beauty “strike[s] the sight” of men, gaining their attention and admiration. But she also recognizes that because beauty will not last forever, Belinda—like all women—will need to turn to other ways in order to maintain the admiration of men. Clarissa’s only suggestion to Belinda is to have “good humour,” or control of one’s emotions, instead succumbing to airs, flights, screams, and scolding, no matter what the circumstance. Apparently, she thinks that if a woman loses her beauty but continues to act irrationally, no man will want to marry that woman. By putting “good humour” to the test, she suggests that men’s affections will be more genuine because the woman has gained his “soul” through “merit.” Thus, Clarissa’s address urges Belinda and all eighteenth-century women to earn admiration by controlling their emotions rather than flaunting physical beauty.

Unfortunately, after Clarissa has given her suggestions, no one in Hampton Court seems to agree with her, especially Belinda. Instead of calming her emotions and maintaining her composure, Belinda literally declares war on the baron. While some critics interpret the fight to be a battle of the sexes (Rumbold 164), I suggest the fight to be a battle of differing notions of female identity: The baron’s side advocates the notion that “wits,” a supposedly masculine quality, is the most valuable trait a woman can have. Belinda’s side advocates the notion that beauty, a supposedly feminine quality, is a woman’s most valuable trait. At one point in the battle, the two notions are put on the scale of the gods: “Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air, / Weighs the Men’s wits against the Lady’s hair; / The doubtful beam long nods from side to side; / At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside” (5.71–74). Apparently, Belinda wins. This victory, however, seems to reflect an opposite view than that in “Saturday. The Small-Pox. Flavia.”

about how England's eighteenth-century society comes to support one notion about gender over another. In the speech, Clarissa shows Belinda how to prove through actions that women are more than vain assemblages of looks that are emotionally out of control. Unfortunately, Belinda chooses to act violently, inappropriately releasing her anger. By doing so, Belinda shows that she, as a woman, considers the battle for the lock to be justifiable, since she considers her beauty to be her most valuable trait. By gaining Jove's approval and winning the battle, she perpetuates inaccurate assumptions toward female nature, therefore giving the rest of society viable evidence to support the prevailing notions.

The Rape of the Lock and "Saturday. Small-Pox. Flavia." debate the question, why are vanity and self-absorption a stereotype for eighteenth-century women? The poems take this stereotype to the extreme, especially when revealing the extent that Flavia and Belinda value physical beauty. Both poems also agree that the general notion of women as superficial assemblages of looks is flawed and needs to be changed. However, the two suggest different ways by which this change should come about. In Montagu's poem, it seems that Flavia's opinion of herself has been completely constructed by the way her peers treat her before her illness and the way they reject her after she has recovered. In a sense, Flavia is forced to obsess over her physical appearance because that is all that her relationships with others, her suitors in particular, are based upon. Consequently, the poem critiques the way that the members of society view the role of physical appearance in relationships and suggests that they seek to value more lasting qualities in others. This top-down approach contrasts the suggestions in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. Unlike Flavia, Belinda has been empowered with the ability to choose between valuing beauty or "good sense." When she reverts back to the same belief as Flavia's—that the only value worth fighting for is beauty—she allows society to assume that women are vain and self-absorbed. With this point of view, Pope is not a mocking misogynist, but an advocate seeking to help women realize their ability to make or break society's assumptions about female nature.

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