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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. We as a staff are dedicated to bringing quality pieces of literary criticism from the undergraduate and graduate levels to our readers. *Criterion* functions entirely through the commitment of our volunteer editors. We take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude for the staff, and for the excellent work they have contributed to the development of this issue. Their enthusiasm, insight, and expertise make the publication process singularly delightful for us as an executive team.

We would also like to thank the university's English Department, its faculty and staff, and numerous student volunteers for ongoing support of the journal, providing funding and services we could not publish without. 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 gratitude for the cheerful support of our faculty advisor, Mike Taylor, who continually brings mature perspective to an undertaking that, among developing scholars, is forever a work in progress. We would also like to thank our student design team, which provided the design for our cover and publicity materials.

Lastly—and most importantly of all—we thank the writers whose thorough research and investigative thinking make possible a publication of this caliber. Many of them prompted by this semester's forum writer, BYU's Dennis Cutchins, their pieces range across topics from rap music to the Renaissance as they explore questions of adaptation and influence. 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 happily present our readers with the Winter 2019 issue of *Criterion*.

Hailey Kate Chatlin and McKay Hansen

"Unsteady Characters"

Theatrical Wordplay in Mansfield Park

Adam Brantley

For decades, theatricality has proven one of the most fruitful lenses through which to examine Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Evidence of this comes in the two recent academic books on the subject, both of which are titled *Jane Austen and the Theatre* and were somehow published independently in the same year (Byrne; Gay). Such synchronicity rarely occurs in academia; that it did is a testament to the richness of Austen's work and the importance of the theater to understanding it. While continuing to dispute its nuances, critics have reached at least two loose conclusions about *Mansfield Park's* intentions. First, thanks in large part to historical contextualizations like those by Penny Gay and Paula Byrne, long-standing myths of Austen's personal "antitheatricality" have been largely discredited. Second, critics now tend to agree that part of the purpose of *Mansfield Park* is to expose the "unavoidable theatricality of adult social life" (Gay 107), acknowledging that, for better or for worse, performance is an inextricable part of nearly all interactions in the novel (Litvak 5). This shared theatrical context has opened the way for a variety of more intricate interpretations, including recent scholarship revealing *Mansfield Park's* participation in contemporaneous debates about the emotional effect of the theater (Nachumi 233), "proper" female conduct as a catalyst for social change (Lott 275), and "character" as a form of stable identity (Urda 283). However, one aspect of theatricality in *Mansfield Park* that has not been fully

explored is the effect of the theatrical wordplay embedded in the novel's narrative. These puns and ironies, many of which have yet to be identified, reinforce notions of Austen as not only an astute sociologist, but also a clever and subtle satirist. Throughout *Mansfield Park*, Austen uses such wordplay to comically emphasize that even the most superficially "antitheatrical" characters—especially Fanny and Sir Thomas—are unavoidably steeped in theatrical behavior. This provides further evidence that Austen is not merely responding to the common, though contested, belief that the stage was inherently immoral, but ironizing the debate itself by showing the inevitability of acting in upper-class society. In so doing, Austen blurs the lines between performance and reality in exciting and often hilarious ways. *Mansfield Park* is already known among Austen's novels for its complexity, but I investigate layers of theatricality and compositional artistry deeper than those previously acknowledged.

PPuns and wordplay in *Mansfield Park* are not wholly unexplored territory. Much has been written of its double-entendres, particularly of Mary Crawford's decidedly irreverent "Rears and Vices" pun (Heydt-Stevenson 310). Others have noted "Austen's natural application of theatrical metaphors" to various scenes (Gay 119). The most famous of these theatrical puns comes from Fanny Price herself when she is asked to assume a minor role in the staging of *Lover's Vows*. Panicking, she protests, "Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act any thing if you were to give me the world. Indeed, I cannot act" (115). Scholars have noted that this declaration of Fanny's has a double meaning suggesting not only her lack of acting talent, but also her inability or refusal to "perform" socially in the same way as the Crawfords and the Bertram sisters (Gay 108). According to Jenny Davidson, "because Fanny cannot act . . . without looking like a hypocrite, she refrains from acting at all" (254). "Acting" here suggests both play-acting and executing an action. This pun therefore epitomizes Fanny's "unwillingness to act strategically in the short term" for her own long-term benefit (Davidson 247). Clearly, Fanny's theatrical language has broader, more ironic applications than are readily apparent. It is therefore not a stretch to assume that some apparently innocuous words and phrases may also have important dramatic applications, especially in a novel so deeply engaged with theater.

Indeed, many of these potentially theatrical words and phrases in *Mansfield Park* center on Fanny Price herself. Though Fanny is vocal about her disapproval of both *Lovers' Vows* and social performativity in general,

she is, to her dismay, unable to avoid participating in either. Generally, critics describe Fanny's role in the drama of *Mansfield Park* in one of two ways: she is either a perceptive spectator or an unwilling actor. In the first case, they focus on her ability to distinguish performance from reality, often pointing to her more-or-less correct suspicions about the moral character of Henry Crawford (Marshall 73; Nachumi 241; Urda 292). When characterizing her as an unwilling actor, they cite instances in which she is thrust suddenly and reluctantly into the spotlight, including the aforementioned scene in which "almost every eye was upon her," ironically pinning her at center stage even as she protests that she "cannot act." Emily Allen notes "a certain theatricality in her agitated response to being a spectacle," pointing out that similar scenes recur throughout the novel (201). Such displays, often deliberately orchestrated by Sir Thomas or others, force the helpless Fanny into the spotlight, where she is made to perform her femininity for others' benefit (Litvak 22). In some ways, Fanny is treated almost like an actor who has forgotten her lines; whereas Mary Crawford and the Bertram sisters are only too happy to assert themselves by flirting and fawning over their love interests, Fanny is shy and reticent. The other characters, concerned about her sociability and especially about her marriage prospects, honestly believe that they are doing Fanny a favor by drawing attention to her. Consequently, Fanny spends much of the novel doing her very best to escape awkward situations and to avoid the people that would put her into them. She is not always successful, as evidenced by the scene above. No matter how much she would prefer to stay in the wings, she often finds herself a reluctant actress.

However, while simply being watched does necessitate some level of performance, this is an incomplete analysis of Fanny's own intrinsic theatricality. For someone so vocally opposed to performing, she spends a significant portion of the novel doing just that in one way or another, often without outside compulsion. In his article on *Mansfield Park's* depiction of "true acting," or the performativity inherent even in honest expressions of feeling, David Marshall notes at least one instance of such theatricality in Fanny's rapturous outburst on the virtues of nature:

'Here's harmony!' said she, 'Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry can only attempt to describe. Here's what may tranquillize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the

sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene.' (89)

Fanny's speech is undeniably dramatic. But Marshall also points out that Fanny uses the word "scene" three separate times in referring to nature, "as if she were beholding a painting or a scene on stage" (75). Though Marshall does not fully explore their implications, these puns may suggest that Fanny understands her place in nature as a kind of theater in which she is a spectator. However, the context of her speech reveals even deeper dramatic significance. Readers tend to assume that, because Fanny is "antitheatrical," her expressions of emotion must always be genuine, with no ulterior motives. However, it is worth remembering that she is speaking here to Edmund, her secret and as-of-yet unrequited love interest who is, at that very moment, watching Fanny's romantic rival Mary Crawford "in an ecstasy of admiration of all her many virtues" (89). While the novel acknowledges that Fanny is indeed a girl of "very acute" feelings, this is clearly more than an innocent expression of emotion (11). Fanny is desperately attempting to draw back Edmund's attention to herself by performing her emotions for him, hoping that doing so will both distract him from Mary and remind him of her own desirable qualities (which, ironically, Edmund's instruction was instrumental in shaping). Fanny's repeated use of the word "scene" underscores not only her personal theatrical relationship with nature but the fact that she is staging her own scene for Edmund.

This is not the only instance of Fanny performing. In fact, the word "perform" appears repeatedly throughout the novel in reference to Fanny, and while some instances of it do not connect directly to her theatricality, its placement is almost always significant. For example, in the beginning of chapter 2, "the little girl *performed* her long journey [to Mansfield Park] in safety" (10, emphasis added). This sentence is admittedly unassuming at first. But it seems an improbable coincidence that, in a novel so overtly concerned with performativity, Austen would by accident choose this as the first very sentence to introduce her heroine. Elsewhere, we read that Fanny "quitted the room herself to perform the dreadful duty of appearing before her uncle" and later that "having such another observe her was a great increase of the trepidation with which she performed the very awful ceremony of walking back to the drawing-room" (139, 174). In both instances, the word "perform" describes not only Fanny's actions, but also her attitude—if not to other characters, then at least to the readers. Fanny's emotion is

certainly genuine, but even true feelings can be emphasized and exaggerated to convey a message. Here, Fanny “performs” her displeasure by making no effort, and seems to go out of her way, to communicate her dismay to others by the way she carries herself.

The inherent theatricality of Fanny’s behavior is further emphasized by the inclusion of the word “ceremony” in the quote above. This word is associated with the drama of ritual; formal ceremonies often include props, scenery, scripts, and actors of some kind or another. They are a type of theatrical themselves, a fact we are reminded of when the Crawfords and Bertrams flirt around Sotherton chapel’s altar, accentuating the drama of the scene with repeated mentions of the marriage “ceremony . . . going to be performed” (70). Of course, Austen’s omniscient narrator complicates these puns since it is difficult to know whether Fanny is actively “performing” her ceremonies or whether the narrator is offering winking commentary on her unintended behavior. Either way, they offer further evidence to support Marshall’s idea of “true acting” in *Mansfield Park*, which he describes as “something between a theatrical part and a real part.” By emphasizing that Fanny must perform in order to express her genuine emotions, Austen’s theatrical wordplay suggests that “acting [can] be true and . . . real feeling [can] be acted” (Marshall 76). In other words, when overstated or deliberately accentuated, even honest thoughts and feelings become a form of acting.

Despite many years of critics casting Fanny primarily as a spectator or an actor thrust unwillingly onto the stage, there is evidence to suggest that, in a novel full of “unsteady characters,” Fanny may actually be the best actor of the lot, despite her protests to the contrary (Austen 147). Critics have already noted that the most scandalous thing about *Lovers’ Vows* is that none of the actors are actually acting; the “vows” that Mary, Edmund, Maria, and Henry read from the script are honest expressions of forbidden feelings (Bevan 607; Byrne 200; Marshall 78). Put another way, what makes these chapters so memorable is that the reader, the actors, and of course Fanny all recognize that the play itself is merely a symbolic backdrop for the melodrama of reality. According to Kathleen Urda, this is part of the reason that Austen never allows us to see the play being performed in the novel; she wants to emphasize that, for all the talk of their acting skill, the Crawfords and even the Bertram sisters spend most of their time simply being their inherently theatrical selves, packaging actual desires in more-or-less superficial performances (284). If anything, their downfall is not that

they are theatrical, but that they are not talented enough actors to know when and how to perform prudently.

By contrast, Fanny acts her part so well that no one—arguably not even she—is aware of the depth of her feelings, particularly her feelings for Edmund. While Fanny is not usually “theatrical” in the same extravagant, histrionic way as the Crawfords (scene at the window notwithstanding), she is still a master of emotional concealment. This too is a form of acting, albeit a less flamboyant one. We learn early on that, even as a young girl, Fanny is good at concealing her true feelings; miserable and lonely, she sobs for a week after first arriving at Mansfield Park, but “no suspicion of it [was] conveyed by her quiet passive manner” until Edmund accidentally finds her crying on the attic stairs (12). Ironically, this is in some ways both the first and last moment in which we see Fanny being completely vulnerable, since it is here that she begins to fall in love with Edmund—an affection that she hides for the rest of the book, or at least until the narrator abruptly intercedes in the final chapter. Considering that most of *Mansfield Park’s* internal drama depends on Fanny’s secret feelings for Edmund, it is remarkable that no one seems to have even the slightest suspicion of them. This observation informs one meaning of a later pun by Henry Crawford. In chapter 24, he laments that “I do not quite know what to make of Miss Fanny. I do not understand her. . . What is her *character*?” (180, emphasis added). Henry’s use of the word “character” has theatrical implications—in short, he is baffled by the motivations behind Fanny’s acting. He cannot understand why she finds him so distasteful, but readers, benefitted by dramatic irony, know the truth: Fanny not only disapproves of Henry’s libertine impulses, but she is also secretly in love with Edmund. None of the other characters realize this. The takeaway is that Fanny does have a theatrical character, one which she has carefully cultivated over the years at Mansfield Park and is unknowable to her peers—which is exactly what she wants. At least in this regard, Fanny is the most accomplished actor of them all.

Austen puns on the word “character” elsewhere too, most notably to implicate Sir Thomas in the grand façade of Mansfield Park. Though Lionel Trilling influentially claimed that Sir Thomas was the most antitheatrical of all of Austen’s characters, even hanging Austen’s own supposed antitheatricity on his decision to shut down the staging of *Lover’s Vows*, critics have since debunked this notion. On the contrary, Joseph Litvak shows that Sir Thomas is a crucial participant in *Mansfield Park’s* most theatrical displays, often

functioning as the estate's director and stage-manager. For example, Litvak points out that, by ordering Fanny to bed in front of Henry, Sir Thomas deliberately exhibits her as an obedient young woman, previewing for Henry's benefit the submissive marital role Sir Thomas hopes she will soon take. The ball in Fanny's honor, which is "conceived and staged by her uncle," is another such theatrical event, reinforcing Sir Thomas's directorial role (Litvak 23). These and other similar scenes suggest that, as the paternal head of *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas himself is directly responsible for much of the drama and ritual that takes place there. He is not just Mansfield Park's master. He is also its master of ceremonies.

Sir Thomas's theatrics are not limited to his directing, though; he has, as it were, a speaking role. Austen's puns suggest that Sir Thomas not only carefully performs his own cultivated persona (like Fanny), but that he thinks of others in terms of characters and performance as well. The best example of his own theatricality is his response to Mr. Yates, who in an embarrassingly overperformed bit of "true acting" bows deeply and dramatically upon meeting him. In a beautiful example of free indirect discourse, the narrator reveals that, though Sir Thomas was "as far from pleased with the necessity of the acquaintance as with the manner of its commencement," he nevertheless "received Mr. Yates with all the appearance of cordiality which was due his own character" (143). It is difficult to overstate the irony of this sentence, especially given Sir Thomas's disapproval of Yates's slimy insincerity. According to Austen, Sir Thomas's immediate inclination upon seeing Yates's performance is to literally put on his own. The pun implies that Sir Thomas's superficial and therefore performative cordiality is a result of his active concern with "staying in character," or maintaining an image befitting his rank and reputation. This kind of theatricality is not the same "treacherous play" that Maria accuses Henry of earlier in the novel (107). Despite his lack of judgment and his authoritarian episodes, Sir Thomas ultimately has good intentions for his family. Still, his preoccupation with image is particularly ironic considering his vocal disapproval of staged theatricals. This irony is further heightened by an authorial interjection just before this passage. After Mr. Yates gives his exaggerated bow, the narrator begins to say that Yates's display would be the final dramatic performance ever staged at Mansfield Park. But, importantly, she interrupts herself before finishing the thought, clarifying that: "It would be the last—in *all probability* the last scene on that stage" (143, emphasis added). This

self-correction, though deceptively minor, is significant because it shows the narrator backtracking to allow for the possibility of more theatricality in the future. And indeed, Sir Thomas gives his own such performance immediately following Mr. Yates's display. Austen's careful placement of the word "character" to describe Sir Thomas's concealment of feelings—his "true acting"—reminds us that he is not only as guilty of performing as the young people, but that he is also the more skilled performer.

Similar "character" puns appear throughout the book, putting witty, subversive spins on passages that may otherwise be read as "antitheatrical." After dismantling the planned theatricals, Sir Thomas decides not to chastise the young people any further, reasoning that "they were young, and . . . of unsteady characters" (147). While this can be read straightforwardly as fatherly concern, it can also be understood as an ironic meta-observation about their acting ability, or lack thereof. After all, every participant in *Lover's Vows* either uses the play to disguise their true desires or is, like the irredeemably dull Mr. Rushworth, simply a poor thespian. In both cases, the young people's performances are insincere or unbelievable, making them "unsteady characters." Soon after this, Sir Thomas speaks approvingly of Mr. Rushworth's "decided preference of a quiet family-party to the bustle and confusion of acting," to which Mrs. Norris responds with yet another subtle but delightful pun. "He is not shining character," she says, "but he has a thousand good qualities" (149). Given what we read in volume 1, calling Mr. Rushworth "not a shining character" is a decided understatement. Austen repeatedly informs us that his acting ability is not only pitiful, but nonexistent. "There was," she writes, little chance of "Mr. Rushworth's ever attaining to the knowledge of his two-and-forty speeches. . . . As to his ever making anything *tolerable* of them, nobody had the smallest idea of that except his mother" (130). It is unlikely that Austen intended for Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris to appear as though they were making these "character" puns intentionally—the jokes are too subtle, too ironic for that. Instead, they seem to originate from Austen herself, to the point that one wonders whether she inserted them purely for her own enjoyment.

While it is true that unintentional theater puns are difficult to avoid when writing anything, Austen's theatrical wordplay is so contextually significant and comically pitch-perfect that it is even more difficult to ignore. Taken together, these puns indicate that Austen was more minutely concerned with theatricality than previously thought, making the question

of theatricality perhaps the most important theme of the novel. But they also have implications for our understanding of the way that Austen engaged with her own work, because they suggest a kind of meta-communication from Austen to her readers. With every theatrical pun, Austen essentially breaks the novel's fourth wall, bypassing both the narrator and characters' dialogue, to comment more directly to the reader on the unavoidable theatricality of Regency society. I suspect that further analysis of Austen's sentence-level prose, both in this and her other novels, would reveal more examples of such meta-communication, as well as deeper nuances in both her social commentary and her humor.

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The Ghosts We Think We Have

Postmemory in Dickens's *The Haunted House*

Rachael Buchanan

When one thinks of Charles Dickens, one is immediately reminded of the holiday spectral, due to a certain ever-popular novel. But *A Christmas Carol* is not the end-all of holiday tales within Dickens's canon. In fact, after the wild success of that famous holiday novel, Dickens began to write Christmas stories yearly and often collaboratively. These holiday tales became a staple of the season, attracting authors from far and wide. From names as famous as Elizabeth Gaskell to more obscure individuals like John Hardwood, Dickens hired writers for his Christmas works. Dickens created "frame" stories in which he would write the beginning and end of a piece, leaving its subsequent parts for his writers to finish.

All obviously Christmas-themed, these frame stories told varied narratives within an overarching narrative, presenting a plethora of colorful characters with unique manners of storytelling in a style that Melissa Gregory suggests in her article "Dickens's Collaborative Genres" is comparable to "Frankenstein's monster" (220). Gregory elaborates: "With their abrupt, lurching motion, Dickens's Christmas numbers manage to elude the total control of their authoritative editor . . . Dickens had to reanimate them every

year" (220). So, while his annual collaborative works served to keep alive the spirit of Christmas his readers had come to expect, Dickens's efforts to pen frame stories was an arduous process for him. The authors he hired often missed the mark he established for content and main themes. The result were stories that, rather than flow with an inherent consistency and overarching continuity, read like fragments of many stories glued together— all rough edges and vacillating unity.

Such is particularly true of one frame story published in the 1859 Christmas edition of Dickens's journal *All the Year Round*, a piece entitled *The Haunted House*. The story follows a man renting a supposedly "haunted" house. After driving his servants to hysterics over circumstantial evidence that seems to prove the house's ghostly nature, the man, John, dismisses them. He then invites a host of friends to spend some weeks together in the haunted house. At the end of their stay, the guests discuss any evidence of the supernatural they witnessed. Speaking to the structure of the narrative, Ruth F. Glancy explains, "The framework of 'The Haunted House' was purposefully autobiographical, the narrator a thinly disguised persona" of Dickens, with "the insistence that the framed tales [written by other authors] also be autobiographical" (64). However, the parts of the work penned by other writers "lacked . . . philosophical or thematic connection with the framework" (64). In other words, despite Dickens specifically requesting that his contributors' stories for *The Haunted House* draw from their own personal lives, none adhered to this request. At least, not in typical fashion; most of the stories within the frame of *The Haunted House* are not autobiographical, unless one views them through the lens of postmemory.

The presence of memory in Dickens's body of work is commonly discussed in academic circles, the past often analyzed as a distinct influence on the present for the characters in Dickens's work. For example, Robert E. Lougy states that "for Dickens the past, however ancient, makes its presence felt in the shapes and forms of our actions and social practices," going on to discuss how childhood memory influences adult experience in Dickens's *David Copperfield* (406). In this sense, in Dickens's works, the past is something inescapable, a part of the present reality and future of his characters that molds how they view what happens to them on a daily basis. They can no more ignore the past than they can ignore what is happening around them in the present, or what will happen to them as they look to the future. What has happened to them dictates what will happen to them, as

their pasts dictate their actions moving forward through their lives. Adding another angle on this topic, James E. Marlow asserts that, in Dickens, “To have memories of any kind is to be softened, for an awareness of the past dissolves the tyranny of the present” (23). In this, Marlow suggests that the characters in Dickens’s works are gentled by their pasts, memories putting into perspective that which they experience in the presence. The power of nostalgia is present here, asserting itself to the detriment of the “tyranny” of the current moment, which suffers at the hands of hindsight. These associations between the influence of a character’s personal past on their personal presents is common—a thread that stretches through much literary criticism on Dickens and memory.

No literature associated with Dickens, however, has ever been considered through the lens of postmemory. Postmemory was originally coined by Marianne Hirsch in the context of the children of Holocaust survivors, and the concept has impacted many literary contexts. Andreas Athanasiades looks at postmemory in memoir fiction, describing the concept as “[denoting] the traumatic experience of the first generation of immigrants that is transmitted to the second generation in such a powerful way that the latter perceive these memories as their own” (27). Diverging from this use of postmemory in literary analysis, Maria Rice Bellamy posits that postmemory can be “[physical], affecting the inheritors of traumatic memory in their bodies as well as their minds and emotions” in fiction, giving “body to an important form of trauma’s ghost” (45, 75).

In the context of *The Haunted House*, postmemory is best understood through Athanasiades’s definition—“memories from a past never actually experienced” by the individual reminiscing (27). With this definition established, postmemory applies in three particular chapters of *The Haunted House*: “The Ghost in the Clock Room” by Hesba Stretton, “The Ghost in the Picture Room” by Adelaide Anne Procter, and “The Ghost in the Garden Room” by Elizabeth Gaskell. All three deviate from Dickens’s longing for autobiography by presenting some form of a memory that the writers themselves never experienced. However, when we consider postmemory as memories an individual gleans from other individuals’ personal memories and stories, each of these chapters are arguably examples of biography. Not autobiography, per say, as none of the authors presented stories from their own lives. Yet, in the frame of postmemory, these stories can be viewed as (auto)biographical recollections of the characters themselves. Through this

lens, I argue that these three chapters fit into Dickens's desire for personal histories through three subspecies of postmemory: "familial" postmemory, "artistic" postmemory, and "traumatic" postmemory. Thus, when associated with postmemory, these three elements of the *The Haunted House* challenge Dickens's criticism of his authors' noncompliance.

Stretton's "The Ghost in the Clock Room," the first chapter, achieves biographical status through the use of familial postmemory. In defining this subspecies of postmemory, I return to Athanasiades's work on postmemory in memoir, in which he analyzes a memoirist who "digs deeply into family narratives so that he might fully understand himself" (26). Familial postmemory thus draws a connecting line between the individual and the family, and such a postmemorial connection between family members is evident from the start of Stretton's piece. The chapter concerns one John Herschel, cousin of Dickens's narrator, who, upon being asked if any ghost has haunted him during his stay, "turned rather red, and turned rather white, and said he could not deny his room had been haunted. The Spirit of a woman had pervaded it" (32). Here, Stretton establishes the presence of the past in Herschel's present—a feminine past. This brings up immediate questions: why is a man speaking of not just the memory of a woman but the "Spirit of a woman" pervading his room? The use of the word "spirit" creates a concrete sensation, the presence of an actual individual rather than the remembrance of one, and that in turn implies that a woman has been haunting Herschel. Any story to follow is guaranteed to belong to that woman, blotting out the possibility of Herschel's own biography in *The Haunted House*. Stretton continues to distance John Herschel from the ghost that has been haunting him; in response to questions concerning what the ghost said to him, John says "apologetically, that he could have wished his wife would have undertaken the answer, for she would have executed it much better than he" (33). The reader now suspects that the memory that will be expounded upon will not be Herschel's but his wife's. This is a notion confirmed when Herschel relents and begins "his" story, gravely intoning, "Suppose the spirit . . . to be my wife here, sitting among us" (32). One may argue that this woman's story may in fact be biographically tied to Stretton—until one recalls that Stretton herself never married. This reality clearly distances Stretton from John Herschel's wife. There is then no hope (or at least very little) of Dickens's longed-for (auto)biography cropping up in Stretton's section of *The Haunted House*—the memory does not even

originate with the fictitious John Herschel; he stands cued to start a tale that clearly belongs to his wife.

Then the memory itself begins, with a shocking first line: "I was an orphan from my infancy, with six elder half-sisters" (33). Now, the content of this opening itself is not wholly shocking; many stories, after all, begin with a child becoming an orphan. The truly mystifying element of this starting line is the use of "I." John Herschel is clearly speaking as the established narrator, yet he has declared he is going to tell the story of his wife. Who, then, is the "I"? I, John Herschel? Or I, Herschel's wife? An answer to this becomes clear when, a few sentences later, the "I" narrator explains how "Most people know a character such as I had grown—a mindless, flirting girl, whose acknowledged vocation was the hunting and catching of an eligible match" (33). The reader assumes that "I" is John Herschel's wife, though he is the one telling the story. He, too, is the "I." Postmemory has arrived on the scene; John tells the memory of his wife in the first person as if he were his wife, providing an example in the process of memory transferring from one family member to the other. This phenomenon occurs throughout Stretton's piece, as John Herschel/Herschel's wife says such things as "I remembered that my brown hair fell in curls round my face, and that my dark blue eyes were considered expressive, when I looked up to meet [John's] gaze" (38), and "[John] had taken me in his arms, and my head rested against his strongly throbbing heart" (45). These narrative details are quite evocative and feminine—one can almost feel how the narrator's hair falls "in curls" around her face, feel a pulse when she lays her head against John's "strongly throbbing heart." If there is a trace of the masculine here, it is buried under this woman's desire to be taken up in her lover's arms and her self-conscious remembrance of her beauty when she looks up into his face. The reader must actively recall that they are really being told this story through a man's voice, as John conveys his wife's words for his audience.

By blending Herschel and his wife's memories, the story is not merely biographical for the two characters involved, but strangely autobiographical for both of them. Even though the wife appears to be the narrator, the *husband* is the narrator, a phenomenon resulting in the complete melding of his and her memory. They have become one person, with moments of self-reflection throughout the narrative, such as when John Herschel/Herschel's wife states, "[John] knew nothing of the wiles of woman" (38). This self-reflection fits the familial postmemory Athanasiades describes in his article,

as the man tells a “family narrative” that allows him to “fully understand himself” through the eyes of his family (26). Through the memory of someone else, presented in a first-person narrative, John Herschel reflects on himself in a roundabout manner, all the while twisting what seemed to be a completely nonbiographical story into an autobiography, albeit a fictitious one. This phenomenon causes Stretton’s chapter in *The Haunted House* to fit into Dickens’s desired paradigm of autobiography.

In similar fashion, Procter’s “The Ghost in the Picture Room” obtains a sense of biography through artistic postmemory. Procter’s chapter demonstrates an interaction between the past and an artist who adopts and adapts that past. Jordan Tonsgard suggests that artists’ writing of the past “explore the active space of creation in the absence of personal experience to construct narrative images of postmemory” (268). Tonsgard further explains that through postmemory, artists “[embrace] the creative and imaginative nature of . . . inheriting the legacy of trauma . . . embracing the creative and imaginative necessities of approaching the past by drawing it, writing it, and sharing it” (277). Though Tonsgard specifically refers to graphic novelists, his point suggests that artists can inherit traumas and stories not their own by conveying those memories in a sharable form. This occurs in Procter’s chapter of *The Haunted House*, narrated by a woman named Belinda, who tells the story of an ancient nun’s trauma in poetic form. This artistic medium creates a form of postmemory between Belinda, the poet, and Angela, the ancient nun—a connection that gives Belinda claim to the nun’s life and history in a postmemorial manner, and which, in turn, makes Procter’s chapter of *The Haunted House* (auto)biographical.

The poem begins, “Belinda, with a modest self-possession quite her own, promptly answered [for a ghost story] . . . in a low, clear voice” (83). Here, Procter sets up a very confident, sure narrator—one in “self-possession” of the words she speaks in a “clear voice.” Belinda claims the story she is about to tell as her own; in that sense, Procter’s main character adheres to Dickens’s request, even if Procter herself does not. Belinda, as “the artist,” paints a picture for her audience: “A Portrait such as Rembrandt loved to paint— / The likeness of a Nun” (10). The poet explains how “[She] seemed to trace / A world of sorrow in the patient face, / In the thin hands folded across her breast” (12), lines that foreshadow trauma and set up forthcoming postmemory. The history of the artist and her subject blurs when Belinda “gazed and dreamed” at the portrait “Till an old legend that I once had heard

/ Came back to me" (15). Belinda has connected herself to a past that is not her own, but which is hers in the sense that she is its voice. She lays claim to the memory of someone else, presenting this past in a form that nods to Tonsgard's assertions of postmemory in artistic endeavors.

Belinda further connects herself to the legend through her trip to the actual setting of the legend, where "one who had dwelt . . . In that fair home . . . told / The convent's treasured legend, quaint and old" (37-42). With this assertion, Belinda tells of a nun who is given "charge of a young wounded knight" (127), an event that becomes a "fatal, coiling net" (173) that captures and draws the nun out into the world, and misery. Belinda describes how the nun "strove to dream, and strove in vain" (202), ending with her eventual return to the convent. Unlike Stretton's switch from third to first person point of view in John Herschel's narrative, Procter does not have Belinda tell the nun's tragic story in first person. The nun is called by her name, Angela, and thus Belinda does not project herself directly onto the other woman's history. However, Belinda still assumes the right to spin musings at the conclusion of Angela's history, asking,

Have we not all, amid life's petty strife, / Some pure ideal of a noble life
/ That once seemed possible?" (Procter 328-30) and concluding that "now
[we] live idle in a vague regret; / But still *our place is kept*, and it will wait,
/ Ready for us to fill it, soon or late. (334, italics in original).

This allegorical conclusion sets up Belinda as the mouthpiece of Angela the nun's story. As Belinda interprets and provides meaning from Angela's experiences, she claims ownership of a past that is not hers and thus establishes artistic postmemory. In this manner, Procter's seemingly non-biographical, mythological poem meets the (auto)biographical criteria Dickens set forward for *The Haunted House*.

In Gaskell's chapter of *The Haunted House*, "The Ghose in the Garden Room," a similar phenomenon occurs—traumatic postmemory. Petra Fachinger defines this concept when she "discusses three contemporary German Jewish novels by second-generation writers that describe the search of their middle-aged protagonists . . . for their parents' traumatic past" (49). This subspecies of postmemory comments on how trauma experienced by one person can affect another. Though Fachinger is specifically talking about parent-to-child trauma, Gaskell's chapter demonstrates this notion of trauma in a non-familial context. In the chapter, the narrator describes a

trauma inherited from an acquaintance, which, in telling his rapt audience, he claims as his own.

This form of traumatic postmemory is evident from the very beginning of Gaskell's portion of *The Haunted House*. The tale belongs to Mr. Underly, who starts by stating "'My bedroom . . . has been haunted by the Ghost of a Judge'" (Gaskell 138). Mr. Underly is not a judge himself; the reader realizes that the judge in question is in fact a friend of Underly who once told Underly a story. Quite an impressive story, it seems, as Underly declares "I never shall forget the description [the judge] gave me, and I never have forgotten it since I first heard it'" (138). This sets up Underly to tell a second-hand account, a direct violation of Dickens's (auto)biographical wishes. Underly rectifies this error by explaining how the judge "'returns to me in many intervals of quiet leisure, and his story haunts me'" (138). This "haunting" is evidence towards traumatic postmemory, the story Underly is prepared to tell being a major part of his own memory, a story that has come to him "in many intervals," during times of "quiet leisure." Underly is not simply remembering what the judge once told him—he is explaining a story he has often contemplated independently, a story that has invaded his personal life. This evident pervasiveness of the tale teases Underly's audience, who "one and all called for the story, that it might haunt [them] likewise" (139). Like crazed hyenas, Underly's audience claws after the trauma he has described to them, longing to be similarly "haunted." With this, traumatic postmemory becomes a collective rather than purely individual exercise; their wish to be "haunted" speaks to the nature of trauma—its power to consume, intrigue, and fascinate even in a secondhand fashion. Egged on by this collective desire for trauma, Underly weaves the narrative of a man and woman who served as witnesses at a trial presided over by Underly's judge. The couple marries late in life and raises their single son Benjamin alongside his cousin and adopted sister Bessy. Over the course of the dismal story, Benjamin shows that he is spoiled rotten, vainly flaunts his own good looks, milks his parents dry, and breaks Bessy's heart (139–215). Underly spins a tale of broken hearts, forsaken childhood promises, and familial betrayal. By the end of Underly's tale, little of the family's joy and happiness is left intact—the lives of Bessy and her aunt and uncle broken to pieces in the wake of Benjamin's ill deeds.

The peak of trauma in the story is a scene of robbery near the end of the tale, long after Benjamin has cast his family off in disdain. In this part of the

story, Bessy wakes up during the night to discover multiple men breaking into the house; she crawls out of the window and runs for help, beseeching neighbors with a cry of “There’s robbers in the house, and uncle and aunt’ll be murdered!” (192). Bessy and rescuers rush back to the house, and, while the menfolk run upstairs in pursuit of robbers, Bessy discovers another intruder. He “was an enemy, a robber, that was all she knew, and she sprang to the door of the closet, and in a trice had locked it on the outside” (195). Robbers detained, Bessy “[hears] her name softly, and urgently called . . . ‘Bessy, Bessy! for God’s sake, let me out!’” and realizes the villain is no other than her precious Benjamin (198). Thus, the elderly couple are called up to witness before Underly’s friend (the judge) against their own beloved son—the tale’s ultimate tragedy (208–15). These traumatizing events of twisted familial relationships, betrayal of trusts, and lost love leave a lasting impression on Underly. Though he hears this tale through the judge who stood witness to Benjamin’s parents’ sorrows, the details of the story of Benjamin’s wretchedness has become a story that Underly claims as his own, like Belinda with the ancient nun. Thus, through the lens of traumatic postmemory and in terms of Underly’s narrative, Gaskell’s portion of *The Haunted House* is (auto)biographical.

Charles Dickens’s Christmas frame stories tend towards the disjointed and the unconfigured more than the unified and the whole. Upon an initial look, the frame story *The Haunted House* is no exception to this rule, full of chapters that ignore Dickens’s request for autobiographical tales. When viewed through the lens of postmemory, however, these chapters align more with Dickens’s desires than one might initially imagine. Because they adopt memories through trauma, artistic connection, and familial relationships, these stories can be read as their protagonist’s autobiographies within *The Haunted House*. These tales thus achieve a sense of biography, showcasing the effects of memory on the present by emphasizing an individual’s ability to be affected by the memories of others, the stories of others’ lives, and the trauma experienced by people that one has, perhaps, never even met.

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Exploring Madness and Ableism in the Context of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

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Ableism and racism have an intertwined relationship in that both are used as oppressive forces. Colonizers use forms of oppression to Other people they want to exploit, and in relevance to this essay, they apply some form of disability to the oppressed people to rationalize why they are inferior. This carries forward in a troublesome way because characters of color in Postcolonial writing often accuse each other of madness, thereby utilizing a form of oppression against an already oppressed character. *Wide Sargasso Sea* provides a rife ground for contextualizing how colonizers use accusations of madness to exercise control, and this text can be used to extend how Postcolonial writers and scholars continue to use ableist language as they discuss the oppression of people of color.

Wide Sargasso Sea is Jean Rhys's attempt to rewrite Bertha Mason's story from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is Mr. Rochester's first wife, vilified because she is insane and Creole. Brontë does not provide much background for Bertha's character, and all description the reader has

is skewed from a British, male voice, as Mr. Rochester provides the account of their marriage. Mr. Rochester describes, “I found her nature wholly alien to mine; her tastes obnoxious to me; her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher” (Brontë 261). Mr. Rochester is only released to marry Jane after Bertha dies in a fire of her own making. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys seeks to flesh out Bertha, known in this story as Antoinette, by telling of the character’s childhood, her marriage to Rochester (though he is not named as such), and final moments from her perspective. Rhys remains true to many of the details Mr. Rochester provides, such as her “giant propensities” or her mother’s insanity (261). However, Rhys takes these details and teases them out to reason why Rochester might describe her this way or what causes her and her mother’s madness. By writing Bertha’s story, this character is no longer left as a unidimensional figure representative of racial stereotypes and British fears of Brontë’s time, described only by the voice of the oppressor.

Just as people who believe their race is superior to others are called racist, so people who believe that their able body is superior to impaired bodies are called ableist. As Fiona Kumari Campbell further explains the term, “[k]ey to a system of ableism are two elements: the concept of the normative (and the normal individual); and the enforcement of a divide between a ‘perfected’ or developed humanity and the aberrant, unthinkable, underdeveloped, and therefore not really human” person with a disability (13). Consequently, ableism refers to privileging able bodies over disabled bodies and ties in with racism because both terms serve to oppress so-called “different” bodies. To discuss, “norm,” and by extent “aberrant” or “different” bodies, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s term, normate, is useful. Garland-Thomson defines normate as “the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings . . . what emerges is a very narrowly defined profile that describes only a minority of actual people” (8). Since this construct is fabricated by the hegemony, an example of the ideal normate in western society is a physically fit, white male. Disability is another socially constructed idea, just like normate. The Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation put forward this definition: “it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (qtd. in Shakespeare 215). For example, paraplegia is the physical manifestation of impairment, whereas the lack of

access ramps in a society that privileges able bodies creates disadvantage and disability. Extending this concept of disability further, a person who may not have a physical or mental impairment can still be branded as disabled by a society or institution.

When dominant powers seek to exploit people of color, they often create disability by framing a particular race as inferior through their physical embodiment—that is, both in their physical manifestation and in the “pleasures, pain, suffering, sensorial and sensual engagements with the world” (Wilkerson, *Keywords for Disability Studies* 67). This idea becomes especially clear with the example of Samuel Cartwright, a medical professional who wrote in 1851 about supposed mental illnesses amongst black people, including “Drapetomania,” a disorder that caused slaves to run away. Slavery apologists skew the negative embodied experience of slaves and cast it in a disabled mold. Along the same vein, in an article published in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*, Cartwright explains the belief that due to a black person’s bodily disposition toward slothfulness, they need frequent exercise. According to Cartwright,

The black blood distributed to the brain chains the mind to ignorance, superstition and barbarism, and bolts the door against civilization, moral culture and religious truth. The compulsory power of the white man, by making the slothful negro take active exercise, puts into active play the lungs, through whose agency the vitalized blood is sent to the brain to give liberty to the mind, and to open the door to intellectual improvement. (qtd. in Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* 139)

Through medical language, Cartwright—and ostensibly other people of his time, as can be assumed by the acceptance of his work for publication—utilized the embodiment of black people to rationalize slavery. This belief of laziness echoes in *Wide Sargasso Sea* when British characters speak about characters of color. When Mr. Mason and Annette discuss leaving Coulibri because Annette is afraid that the black people of the area may be a threat now that her family is rich, Mr. Mason replies, “They’re too damn lazy to be dangerous” (Rhys 19). A similar exchange occurs between the husband and Antoinette when the husband voices his dislike of Christophine. The husband grumbles, “she looks so lazy. She dawdles about,” and Antoinette contradicts, “She seems slow, but every move she makes is right so it’s quick in the end” (Rhys 51). Though the characters may not apply laziness in

terms of embodiment and disability in the same sense that Cartwright does, one can still see how stereotypes may originate and disseminate in society. Cartwright combines skin color and pathology to Other people of color. Society endorses Cartwright's views, and therefore is critiqued in literature like *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

The Other applies not only to race, but to any way that one person distances him or herself from another. To paraphrase Sander Gilman's explanation of how stereotypes are formed in his book *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, when a person is first born, he or she cannot identify a difference between the outside world and his or her own identity, and over time a split occurs. With this split, children recognize that there is the self that they have control over, and the rest of the world that they do not. They deem the self as good, and any difference that occurs in the world as bad (Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* 17). There are two different ways that people stereotype; one way is what Gilman calls pathological stereotyping, which is similar to Othering, and the other is stereotyping that people use every day to "preserve our illusion of control over the self and the world . . . The former is consistently aggressive toward the real people and objects to which the stereotypical representations correspond; the latter is able to repress the aggression and deal with people as individuals" (*Difference and Pathology* 18). At its basis, stereotyping is a necessary part of human development. However, once people stray into pathological stereotyping, that is when identifying differences turns into racism. Furthermore, when a person is stereotyped as Other, multiple negative qualities apply to distance that Othered person as much as possible, which is why ableism transfers so seamlessly into racism.

Multiple forms of oppressive language coincide to Other Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. One way that Antoinette is Othered is by her label of Creole. Creole, as people use it today, has a different meaning than it did historically. As the word is used in the text, Creole refers to "those of English or European descent born in the Caribbean," and not necessarily a person of mixed race (Rhys 18). It is exactly this chasm between Europe and the Caribbean that causes both the white and the black characters of the story to distance Antoinette, as she is referred to both as "white nigger" and "white cockroach" (Rhys 61). The white Creole of the Caribbean were thought to inhabit a place below Europeans and above people of color. Even though Creoles like Antoinette were white, they were thought to be tainted by their

Caribbean environment. Because Antoinette is Creole, she is a prime target for the Rochester character to take advantage of her. Though the Rochester character marries Antoinette for her wealth to gain his father's favor, he resents her for this perceived taint in her blood. As he thinks to himself, "Creole of pure English descent she may be, but [her eyes] are not English or European either" (Rhys 39). Despite their common English descent, the husband still Others Antoinette and harnesses the forms of oppression already in place to manipulate her.

Additionally, the reader has a skewed view with the husband's perspective in the second part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* that implicates him in his mission to discredit Antoinette. He already feels out of place in Jamaica and envies how at ease Antoinette seems, as he observes, "The two women stood in the doorway of the hut, gesticulating, talking not English but the debased French patois they use in this island. The rain began to drip down the back of my neck adding to my feeling of discomfort and melancholy" (Rhys 39). This reference shows how the husband is excluded from this conversation because he does not speak the local language. Furthermore, his discomfort in the rain highlights Antoinette's previous carefree response "[n]o, the rain is stopping" to his warning that she will be soaked when she walks to her friend (Rhys 39). She connects with the people around her (even if it is through what he calls a "debased" language) and she is unaffected by the very weather that he finds so uncomfortable. To the husband, Antoinette appears to belong in the surrounding environment, reinforcing his idea of a Creole's tainted blood.

Therefore, the husband steps quickly into resenting Antoinette and projecting madness onto her. Though a claim of insanity as grounds for divorce was not available during the setting of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, isolating people with mental illnesses was common practice. Indeed, this time period is prefaced by what Michel Foucault terms "The Great Confinement" of the 17th century that is characterized by the widespread establishment of institutions and asylums. (This common confinement of mentally ill persons remains in place until Deinstitutionalization occurred in 1955). In the 19th century madness often localized around what was socially unacceptable, and therefore the mad person would be removed from society for the benefit of all. As Foucault claims, "confinement is explained, or at least justified by the desire to avoid scandal" (62). Depending on the action and its severity, a person who transgressed social norms would be deemed mad

and confined (either by the family in the home or in an asylum) to avoid scandal. Though the Rochester character cannot obtain a divorce by accusing Antoinette/Bertha of insanity, he can easily remove her from the public eye to move about in society as he wishes. In discrediting her, the husband Others Antoinette by manipulating her into seeming insanity, and this method is convincing because madness was typically gendered as female. According to Elaine Showalter, “madness is a female malady because it is experienced by more women than men. The statistical overrepresentation of women among the mentally ill has been well documented by historians and psychologists. . . . By the middle of the nineteenth century, records showed that women had become the majority of patients in public lunatic asylums” (3). Societal factors of gender and race, as well as how interrelated these ideas are with disability, make it easy for the husband to persuade people to believe that Antoinette is mad. However, because Jean Rhys provides Antoinette’s perspective in the first part of the text, the reader has a coherent voice to offset the fully “mad” Bertha in *Jane Eyre*.

In order to manipulate Antoinette to cause a scandal, the Rochester character raises her stress level, increasing the odds that she has an emotional breakdown. One way that the husband puts pressure on Antoinette is by being critical of her behavior. This is evidenced by the husband’s distaste for her interactions with Christophine, as shown by the exchange

“Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?” I’d say.

“Why not?”

“I wouldn’t hug and kiss them,” I’d say, “I couldn’t.” (Rhys 54)

Part of this exchange continues the racism as outlined earlier in this essay, but it also serves to distance Antoinette from other white people, including the husband. His hidden meaning is that Antoinette is too close to blackness, too comfortable with it, and is therefore too different from him. Another way that the husband raises Antoinette’s stress level is by calling her by something other than her name. Though this renaming connects Antoinette to *Jane Eyre*’s Bertha, it is also a manipulative technique. Antoinette opposes this treatment by saying, “Bertha is not my real name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name” (Rhys 88). The husband’s intent to reshape Antoinette into another person is reinforced by his continued renaming, as he does not stop calling Antoinette “Bertha.”

Finally, the husband reaches Antoinette's breaking point by openly sleeping with another woman. The husband narrates, "I pulled [Amelie] down beside me and we were both laughing . . . I had not one moment of remorse. Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition which divided us from my wife's bedroom" (Rhys 84). The husband's choice to sleep with a black woman conveys to Antoinette just how little she means to him. The Rochester character establishes early on what dislike he has for people of color; indeed, though he thinks Amelie is "gay" and "natural," after he sleeps with her, he thinks, "In the morning, of course, I felt differently. . . . Her skin was darker, her lips thicker than I had thought" (Rhys 84). Because of how clear the husband makes it that he dislikes people of color, his actions show Antoinette that he would rather sleep with someone he hates than her. Even without Amelie's race in question, this break in their relationship is enough to traumatize Antoinette. The husband's actions increase the tension that Antoinette feels, thereby also increasing her mental strain.

That the Rochester character intentionally pushes Antoinette to madness cannot be argued away, as both Christophine and the husband himself reinforce this concept. After the Rochester character sleeps with Amelie, Christophine confronts him about his actions. Christophine accuses, "You want her money but you don't want her. It is in your mind to pretend she is mad. I know it. The doctors say what you tell them to say" (Rhys 96). Christophine highlights the authority that white men have over other people, especially a marginalized character like Antoinette that exists in the plane between white and black. The husband does not directly admit to this scheming but implicates himself to the reader by narrating "It was like that, I thought. It was like that" after another one of Christophine's accusations, "I don't know all you did, but I know some. Everybody know that you marry her for her money and you take it all. And then you want to break her up, because you jealous of her" (Rhys 91). The argument that the Rochester character envies Antoinette is not a reader's assumption but comes straight from a character's conclusion. The husband further implicates himself to the reader by thinking in response to Christophine's accusation. With the husband's form of Othering, three factors bind together, and one cannot be discussed without the other. The husband oppresses Antoinette because she is a Creole woman, and because both race and womanhood are seen as close to madness, she gains this third label as well.

The observation that the husband does not pretend that Antoinette is mad, but rather triggers her, points to a conception of mental illness that is ahead of Rhys' time. Even now, psychiatrists do not have a conclusive explanation for mental illness, though until recently the manifestation of madness was generally accepted in somatic terms. The relics of the somatic foundation of madness carry on, as the chemical imbalance of the 21st century replaces the humoral imbalance of the Greeks (Harper 9; Gilman, "Madness" 115). However, even the idea of chemical imbalance is no longer widely accepted in medical circles; rather, mental illness is reimagined in a way much like how Rhys portrays it in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Psychiatrists characterize mental illness in along the same lines as the aforementioned social model of disability, in that "psychological disorders are conditioned by social pressures. . . . Relationship breakdowns and bereavement, for example, are common causes of mental distress. In cases of long term distress, childhood experiences of neglect or abuse, whether physical, verbal or sexual, are also very important" (Harper 11). This understanding of mental illness as caused by social pressures binds closer the ties of madness with race and gender. This is shown through an analysis of Antoinette as a Creole woman by exploring and dismantling the societal structures around her.

Even if the husband did not manipulate Antoinette to a mental breakdown, other factors in her life contribute negatively to her mental health. Zygmunt Bauman outlines social factors that affect mental health as, "the combined experience of *insecurity* (of possession, entitlements and livelihood), of *uncertainty* (as to their continuation and future stability) and of *unsafety* (of one's body, one's self and their extensions: possessions, neighbourhood [sic], community)" (qtd. in Harper 13, italics in original). All of these factors apply to Antoinette through the course of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The beginnings of these factors appear in Antoinette's childhood, and seem to also contribute to her mother's mental breakdown. Annette repeatedly asks Mr. Mason to leave Coulibri; Antoinette narrates, "This began when they had been married for over a year. They always said the same things and I seldom listened to the argument now. I knew that we were hated" (Rhys 19). Annette feels insecure, uncertain, and unsafe because she can feel the judgement of the local characters of color about her new marriage. Though she may have felt uncertain before her marriage because her family was poor, now that she has money again, she feels the resentment of others, therefore compounding uncertainty with insecurity and unsafety. These feelings

are all justified when the local characters of color set Coulibri on fire. Mr. Mason may not have meant to drive Annette to madness as the husband does later, but the same mental break occurs, as “she began to scream abuse at Mr. Mason, calling him a fool, a cruel stupid fool. ‘I told you,’ she said, ‘I told you what would happen again and again.’ Her voice broke, but she still screamed. ‘You would not listen, you sneered at me, you grinning hypocrite, you ought not to live either” (Rhys 24). Though Antoinette does not experience emotional turmoil as her mother does here, this traumatic childhood experience prefaces and mirrors her later experiences after she marries the Rochester character.

Antoinette’s sensations of insecurity, uncertainty, and unsafety localize around her economic status, just as her mother’s do, except that the situation is flipped. Rather than feeling these ways because she gains money in her marriage, she feels insecure, uncertain, and unsafe because she no longer controls her own money. Antoinette tells Christophine, “[h]e would never give me any money to go away and he would be furious if I asked him. There would be a scandal if I left him and he hates scandal. Even if I got away (and how?) he would force me back” (Rhys 68). Her insecurity and uncertainty manifests in her economic situation and her unsafety ties to how the Rochester character may treat her if she tries to control her own funds.

The important takeaway for this discussion of how madness is forced onto Antoinette is how mental illness and other forms of disability are used to oppress people of color. Ato Quayson skillfully connects disability with colonialism by claiming,

Attitudes to disabilities in the West also evolved in response to interactions with other races. The colonial encounter and the series of migrations that it triggered in its wake served to displace the discourse of disability onto a discourse of otherness that was correlated to racial difference. . . . Disease provided a particularly supple set of metaphors to modulate some of the social anxieties that emerged in the colonial period around interracial encounters. (10–11)

Rhys deconstructs the application of disability to Othered people in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by expanding on Bertha’s story from *Jane Eyre*. In her chapter “‘Fighting Mad’: Between Sides and Stories in *Wide Sargasso Sea*” Kelly Baker Josephs recognizes Rhys’ force in rewriting Bertha, “Of her ending, Rhys writes: ‘I want it in a way triumphant!’ Bertha must be recuperated as

more than a unidimensional lunatic figure, a plot device necessary merely for the maturation of *Jane Eyre*" (89). Though Josephs focuses strictly on the role of madness in Caribbean writing during and after decolonization, her observation here is a crucial argument in Disability Studies. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue, "disability pervades literary narrative, first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device. We term this perpetual discursive dependency upon disability *narrative prosthesis*" (205, italics in original). Bertha's role in *Jane Eyre* represents the first in this category, as her image as a mad Creole woman simply serves to distance her from British society. To a certain extent, Antoinette's role in *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents the second point.

As much as Rhys wrote a much more complex version of Bertha, madness remains representative of the effects of colonialism and male power in the story. At least, that is what scholarship on *Wide Sargasso Sea* seems to imply, as there has not been a sustained analysis of the text from both a Postcolonial and a Disability Studies lens together. Josephs' argument comes close, but even she writes in the introduction of *Disturbers of the Peace: Representations of Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, "My object in the following chapters is to answer these questions by drawing connections between the writers' representations—and repetitions—of madness and the issues inherent in decolonization . . . I find the repeated representations of madness at the juncture of creative expression and political and social commentary" (2). Here, Josephs, like many other Postcolonial scholars, addresses only a single aspect of madness in the context of Postcolonialism and does not address the oppressive nature of using disability to speak of societal problems outside of disability itself. The reason a single-lensed approach to madness in Postcolonial texts is so troubling is based on the same premise as this essay: colonizing powers use disability to oppress people they wish to exploit. Therefore, if Postcolonial writers and scholars also use ableist language, then they are partaking in the same form of oppression that colonizing forces once used as well.

The latter part of this argument is not to say that *Wide Sargasso Sea* provides a negative representation of madness and disability like *Jane Eyre* does. Rather, *Wide Sargasso Sea* shows that a nuanced application of both Postcolonialism and Disability Studies can be approached, but that scholarship has yet to apply both theories together thoughtfully. This discussion of *Wide Sargasso Sea* also serves to open up a conversation about

how Postcolonial scholarship and writing tends to use ableist language. Tanya Titchkosky addresses this issue in her insightful article, “Life with Dead Metaphors: Impairment Rhetoric in Social Justice Praxis.” Titchkosky speaks to Frantz Fanon’s metaphor of amputation as a sustained example, but also mentions other terms like “*color blind, deaf to the call of justice, suffering from historical amnesia; blind to structural oppression, limping under the weight of inequality; an amputated self, simply crazy, subject to colonial aphasia, agnosia, even alexia; nothing but a deformed autonomy made to fit a crippled economy—devastatingly disabled*” (270, italics in original). Disability may have a strong metaphorical force when speaking about social justice or other related topics, but using this type of language tends to undercut an argument about colonialism when scholars realize that that these metaphors partake in another form of oppression.

Racism is an oppressive force in and of itself. In justifying racism, applications of dominant force like colonization also use ableism to further Other and distance people of color. Colonial forces may use the embodiment of the native or other person they racialize to justify exploiting him or her, but as is shown in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, accusations of madness also tie into this oppressive force. Rhys already moved scholarship forward in addressing ableism and racism by rewriting a Creole woman’s story to expose these oppressive forces in motion. More Postcolonial scholars and writers should follow this example by addressing ableism and racism together, so that they do not implicate themselves as part of dominant oppressive forces that they seek to deconstruct.

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Unwanted Advances in Medicine

An Analysis of the Effects of Invasive Medical Procedures on Patients Through Literary and Nonfiction Works

Grace Engelman

From a young age, medical patients are poked and prodded, examined and inspected. At the least invasive level, doctors take blood pressures, hold stethoscopes to hearts, and gently press throats for evidence of swollen glands. On the most invasive level, doctors rip apart skin, muscles, and tissues to fix the organs and bones hiding beneath. All of these procedures allow doctors the unparalleled opportunity to explore the parts of a patient's body and life that are often kept hidden and can be summarized as a doctor's invasion of a patient's personal space and privacy. This invasion is often unavoidable; a doctor must be able to carry out these procedures in order to treat and heal the patient. However, it is difficult to reconcile the necessity of invasive procedures with the resulting emotional harm. Scenes from pieces of literature, including Margaret Edson's play *Wit* and Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration*, as well as descriptions of invasive procedures in nonfiction pieces such as William Carlos Williams's "The Use of Force," describe the suffering of patients as a result of invasion. These invasions create a power dynamic between the doctor and the patient that

results in the diminishing of the patient's personhood, causing the patient to suffer. In this relationship, the doctor has the responsibility to mitigate the most suffering possible by remaining mindful of the discomfort and pain resulting from invasive procedures. The patient, on the other hand, has the responsibility to accept that some degree of invasion may be necessary in order for healing to occur. Reading literature that portrays medical invasion can help the patient achieve this goal by validating the patient's experience of the medical world.

There are many types of medical invasions. The physical invasion of a person's body may take the form of surgery or injections. The body is invaded in a literal sense; foreign objects and hands push past the skin, a person's physical barrier. The less drastic act of diagnosis forces a doctor to analyze each part of a patient's body, disregarding her privacy. Some invasions have an uncomfortable sexual undertone; patients may feel especially uneasy when procedures require them to remove their clothing or require the doctor to penetrate their orifices with various tools. Other types of invasive medical procedures are not physical at all, but rather mental. A doctor can invade a person's mind through psychiatry and gain access to his most personal thoughts and emotions. Each type of invasion involves a physically or emotionally painful intrusion into a person's body or mind.

The most conspicuous form of medical invasion is a doctor's intrusion into a person's physical space. In Margareta Ekström's short story "Death's Midwives," the protagonist, a mother awaiting her death in a hospital bed, experiences some of these invasive procedures. She describes the nurse who "shaved her pubic hair" and gave her an "enema and blood tests" (Ekström 76). This series of procedures demonstrates various forms of invasion; the shaving of pubic hair requires the nurse to directly interact with the patient's genitals, the enema involves the insertion of a foreign object into the body, and the blood test requires the penetration of her skin. Each procedure is invasive alone, but when executed consecutively they have the effect of perforating almost every section of her body.

In Margaret Edson's play *Wit*, the protagonist, Vivian Bearing, experiences similarly invasive procedures. Bearing, a former professor dying from cancer, states in one of her monologues that, "having a former student give me a pelvic exam was thoroughly degrading" (Edson 28). This statement captures the invasive nature of medical examinations; the doctor must literally insert his hand into this patient's body. Also, the teacher-student

dynamic between Bearing and her doctor exacerbates her discomfort. As a professor, she held a position of power over her students. Now, her former student's examination of one of the most intimate, hidden parts of her body shifts the authority to him, motivating Bearing to refer to the experience as "degrading." This student-teacher dynamic adds an element of unease to the scenario, which draws attention to the discomfort of invasive medical practices.

Another less obvious but equally distressing aspect of the physical invasion of a patient's privacy is diagnosis. A necessary part of medicine, diagnosis allows doctors to discern illnesses. And yet, the act of looking someone up and down—of studying another body with one's eyes—is inherently intrusive and uncomfortable. In choosing theater as the format for *Wit*, Edson captures this idea. While watching the play, the audience is forced to diagnose the protagonist at the same time as her doctors. The scenes are voyeuristic; audience members watch every aspect of Bearing's cancer unfold: the vomiting, the physical weakness, the last moments of her life. Each symptom is displayed on stage for all to see. This mass-diagnosis in each scene by the audience is the ultimate invasion of Bearing's privacy.

Foucault establishes some of the problems with diagnosis in his book *The Birth of the Clinic*. In his analysis of the medical system, he recount's C. L. Dumas's description of the "medical gaze," or a doctor's classification and judgment of a person based solely on physical assessment. This medical gaze relates to invasion of privacy because, as Foucault writes, doctors can "distinguish at first glance" many details of a patient's life, which makes the doctor a "master of [his] patients" (qtd. in Foucault 88). In analyzing each piece of a person's body, the doctor gains a certain level of control and authority over that person. Foucault describes this authority by comparing the doctor to a "kind father who watches over the destiny of his children" (88). In using the word "father," Foucault frames the doctor as a patronizing figure. The description of watching over a patient's destiny holds religious connotations as well; Foucault describes the doctor as an omnipotent god. This comparison provides superficial reassurance; the "kind father" appears to be a positive, unthreatening figure. And yet, the rest of the sentence describes a patronizing doctor with unlimited power over his patients. Diagnosis, and its invasion of a patient's privacy, grants the doctor the authority and dominance that Foucault describes.

Some physically invasive procedures have a sexual undertone that makes them more traumatic for the patient. Specifically, procedures that require a patient to strip or be penetrated by a doctor's tools may be sexual in nature, even if the doctor does not act on a sexual motivation. The acts of stripping and penetration are often reserved for sexual encounters, causing them to seem foreign and distressing in a clinical environment. Penetration is a more drastic and invasive type of procedure, but stripping has a similar disconcerting sexual undertone that can make a patient feel violated.

Many medical procedures involve the use of penetrative tools. In scenes from Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration* and William Carlos Williams's essay "Use of Force," doctors use tools that penetrate the mouths of their patients. In Barker's novel, Dr. Rivers, a psychiatrist working to heal soldiers suffering from the effects of trauma during WWI, dreams that he shoves an electrode into his patient's mouth. He imagines that "he slip[s] the tongue depressor in and trie[s] to apply the electrode," which does not "fit" (Barker 236). Then, Dr. Rivers "trie[s] to force it" even as "the man struggle[s] and buck[s] beneath him" (Barker 236). In this passage, the electrode has to be "forced" in as the patient suffers and tries to resist, suggesting sexual violence in the form of oral rape. Many medical procedures involve placing tools in a patient's mouth, but the abusive nature of this one elevates the act to a type of rape rather than a medical procedure. The doctor, in a position of power, uses his dominance to subdue and then penetrate the patient.

Similarly, in "Use of Force," William Carlos Williams describes an experience with a young patient in which he forces a tool down her throat. The sick girl refuses to open her mouth and allow him to examine her. Eventually, Williams loses patience and, "in a final unreasoning assault," he "force[s] the heavy silver spoon back of her teeth and down her throat till she gag[s]" (Williams 60). This passage resembles Barker's oral rape scene. The patient gags and struggles, and Williams even describes the act as an "unreasoning assault," addressing its violent, belligerent nature, as well as the lack of empathy and consideration that inspired it. This description is more troubling than Barker's scene because it recounts a real event rather than a dream. As nonfiction, it demonstrates the disturbing penetrative feature of this medical procedure in a more realistic, haunting manner.

The act of stripping in a medical context can be similarly uncomfortable and invasive. A medical examination, specifically of reproductive organs, can intrude upon the most intimate and hidden parts of a patient's body. The

connection between stripping in a medical context and invasion of sexual privacy appears in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Oedipus is not a medical doctor, but he adopts the role of healer when the citizens of Thebes suffer from the plague. He feels responsible for the health and wellbeing of his subjects and attempts to find a "cure" (Sophocles 162). Jocasta, Oedipus's wife, hangs herself after realizing that she is also his mother. Upon seeing his dead mother, Oedipus "rips off her brooches" and lifts "her robes," using the pins to stab his eyes (Sophocles 237). This act of ripping out the pins of his mother's clothing has a sexual theme; Oedipus disrobes and strips his mother. Though Oedipus does not expose his mother in a medical context, his role as a healer in this tragedy indirectly connects this representation of sexual violence to medicine.

This scene from *Oedipus the King* can be used to analyze the sexual connotation of another disrobing scene in Richard Selzer's *Letters to a Young Doctor*. In this nonfiction piece, an esteemed surgeon named Dr. Franciscus travels to Honduras to treat underprivileged people. In his description of one of these patients, a girl named Imelda, Selzer writes that "her breasts made only the smallest imprint in the cloth, her hips none at all" (26). By describing Imelda's breasts and hips, Selzer immediately sets up the story's sexual undertone. The narrator also highlights Imelda's prepubescent age, emphasizing her innocence and vulnerability. During the medical procedure, Imelda holds a rag in front of her face so as to hide from Dr. Franciscus. When he operates on Imelda, he pulls the rag away from her face "with a hard jerk" so that she is vulnerable and defenseless (26). Like Oedipus, Dr. Franciscus rips an item of clothing off another person's body. Yet, because Imelda has been framed as an innocent girl and as Dr. Franciscus' patient, the violation is more evident. The act of disrobing and the phrase "hard jerk," have sexual implications; the scene is physical and intimate. In pairing the act of ripping the cloth away with a description of Imelda's breasts and hips, Selzer highlights the sexual undertone of Dr. Franciscus' behavior.

It cannot be ignored that many of these scenes involving sexual invasion sustain clear gender dynamics. Williams, Oedipus, and Dr. Franciscus all invade the personal space of females. Williams and Dr. Franciscus, in particular, violate the boundaries of much younger girls. These scenes exaggerate the stereotypes of the dominating male doctor and the vulnerable female patient, and they further highlight the sexual undertones of these medical practices. The gendered nature of medicine is inseparable from a

discussion of sexual invasion and personal privacy; it adds to the doctor's power and the patient's vulnerability.

In addition to invasions of privacy relating to physicality, which include diagnosis and procedures with sexual undertones, some aspects of medicine, particularly psychiatry, are invasive psychologically. By nature, psychiatry involves sharing and exposing one's personal thoughts and emotions with another person. A psychiatrist invades the depths of patients' minds by learning about their pasts, relationships, fears, and hopes. In his article, "The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine," Eric Cassel describes the multiple facets of a human's life that disease and treatment can harm or alter. One of these facets is what Cassel refers to as a "secret life," which consists of "fears, desires, love affairs, hopes, and fantasies" (643). With this line, Cassel intended to argue that disease robs a person of her "secret life," but treatment of disease, specifically through psychiatry, can do the same. In other types of medicine, patients may suffer from the physical invasion of their bodies, but they are often able to retain their mental privacy. With psychiatry, however, patients may lose control over the "secret life" that Cassel refers to; psychiatrists have full access to their private thoughts and emotions.

This type of invasion often has positive effects; patients suffering from trauma or other types of mental conditions need the opportunity to share their experiences and feelings with another person in order to heal. For example, in *Regeneration*, Dr. Rivers helps patients suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to heal by asking them to recount their traumatic experiences. Although this therapy may be effective and ultimately beneficial, it also requires doctors to enter their patients' personal lives, hearing stories that even the patients' family members may not have known. As Dr. Rivers explains, this process frightens many patients, particularly because they feel "they're putting themselves completely in the therapist's power" (Barker 101). In fact, according to Dr. Rivers, sharing personal stories with therapists requires an emotional "breakdown" that leaves the patient vulnerable (Barker 48). As with physical invasions of privacy, patients experiencing this type of invasive therapy may be fearful because the doctor gains power and the patient becomes vulnerable.

This power dynamic between doctor and patient arises with many physically and mentally invasive procedures. In his short story, "The Country Doctor," Franz Kafka emphasizes the unmatched power of the physician in these scenarios by writing that the "doctor is supposed to be omnipotent

with his merciful surgeon's hand" (164). Kafka's statement implies the godly power that a doctor gains when he wields a scalpel or cuts open a body; not only does he control the fate of the patient's health and wellbeing, but, in an almost superhuman act, he peers inside the patient's body and views organs and bones that have never been exposed before. The vulnerable patient is at the doctor's mercy.

Sometimes, an obsession with control motivates a doctor to take a dominating role during invasive procedures. As psychiatrist Christine Montross suggests in her *Literature and Medicine Lecture*, the power gained from invading a body can sometimes be motivated by an "ego thrill," or the enjoyment of controlling a patient. This motivation could be subconscious or purposeful, but its manifestation in medicine is a dangerous power play. For example, Williams writes about becoming carried away with his dominance while interacting with the young girl that refuses to open her mouth. He describes a point at which he "got beyond reason" and "could have torn the child apart in [his] own fury and enjoyed it" (59). He adds, "it was a pleasure to attack her" (59). This doctor clearly displays the "ego thrill" that Montross describes. He takes "pleasure" in his patient's pain and struggle. He also acknowledges that this thrill is "beyond reason," suggesting that he cannot control his need for control. The language in this passage, especially the word "attack," is suggestive of battle and warfare. The patient and doctor are pitted against each other as enemies rather than as collaborators or allies, emphasizing their struggle for power.

Though Williams reaches a point where he cannot control his need to overpower his patient, he also acknowledges that part of his motivation in acting aggressively is a genuine desire to prevent disease. He writes that he "had to have a throat culture for her own protection," and that he had "seen at least two children lying dead in bed of neglect in such cases" (58). Williams does not want to see the child die, and he is concerned with her health and her future. And yet, this compassionate motivation quickly becomes an obsession capable of causing extreme suffering. Williams's story highlights the dangerous and uncontrollable effects of the ego thrill.

As part of this emerging power dynamic, while the doctor gains power, the patient may experience a loss of control and autonomy. Many of the scenes from literary descriptions of invasive procedures depict patients as feeling defeated or controlled. For example, in *Death of Ivan Ilych*, Leo Tolstoy writes that Ilych, a man slowly dying of disease, "submits" to the

doctor and his examinations (138). In surrendering his body to the doctor, Ilych no longer maintains the same degree of ownership over his body. Similarly, in “Use of Force,” Williams commands the father of his struggling patient to restrain her: “Put her in front of you on your lap, I ordered, and hold both her wrists” (58). In this passage, the patient is literally overpowered during an invasive procedure. She has physically lost control of her body. By submitting and being constrained, these two characters experience a complete loss of autonomy.

This submission and loss of control leads to a deeper problem with the invasive nature of medicine. A person’s identity is tethered to her body and mind. After losing autonomy, a patient may no longer feel as though she retains the same identity. Cassel argues that a main aspect of suffering is “feel[ing] out of control” (641). He writes that “suffering is experienced by persons, not merely by bodies, and has its source in challenges that threaten the intactness of the person as a complex social and psychological entity” (247). In other words, the loss of control threatens the patient’s integrity, independence, and personhood. Cassel differentiates between “body” and “person” to demonstrate that suffering can alter one’s personhood and personality as well as one’s physical body. The experience of pain during a medical procedure would not be enough to cause this shift in psychology—it is the idea of another person controlling one’s body that can alter one’s identity and wellbeing in such a dramatic way.

Due to this shift in psychology, literature that describes patients in these invasive situations tends to depict them as objects or animals rather than as humans. When they no longer control their bodies, they lose a piece of their identities. For example, Barker describes a patient undergoing invasive and violent forms of therapy as a “creature” that “hardly resembled a man” and “crawled through the door” (223). The words “creature” and “crawling” suggest an animal in place of a person—a patient invaded to the point of losing his identity as a human. Similarly, in *Wit*, Bearing proclaims, “What we have come to think of as me is, in fact, just the specimen jar, just the dust jacket, just the white piece of paper that bears the little black marks” (Edson 43). Bearing feels as though she is a tool for science rather than a human. At the mercy of her doctors, Bearing loses her personhood and transforms into a body for them to study and invade with their tools and treatments. This experience forces her to relinquish control of her body, which causes suffering in the form of this altered identity.

This type of suffering is common for patients, given that a harmful power dynamic between doctors and patients is widespread and common. What would it take to lessen the harmful effects of this power dynamic? Doctors and patients can both contribute to mitigating the resulting harm. To attempt to reverse the patient's loss of personhood, a doctor must remain aware of her own power and alleviate the suffering of the patient as much as possible. The patient, meanwhile, must strive to be cooperative and become comfortable with accepting the practitioner's treatments, a process which may be greatly aided by the support of literature.

Montross explains, a doctor can begin to accomplish this goal simply by acknowledging the discomfort associated with invasive procedures so that the patient is validated in feeling uneasy. Doctors can also mitigate suffering by remaining mindful of their motivations so as to prevent the effects of the ego thrill and to refrain from adopting a dominating role in the doctor-patient relationship. Montross uses surgeons as an example; as surgeons advance in their careers, "surgery becomes less and less of a big deal." Surgeons grow numb to the fact that they invade other people's bodies. The interaction with the blood, guts, and insides of a patient is eventually normalized. To act with more empathy when operating, a surgeon must acknowledge that for the patient, the idea of opening up a body is alarming.

Just as doctors have the responsibility to try to mitigate as much suffering as possible, patients have the responsibility to try to collaborate with the doctor and allow for invasive procedures that can improve health. This is not to say that patients should completely relinquish control of their bodies. However, patients may need to submit to and trust their doctors to the extent that the doctor can heal them. Cassel writes that "the relief of suffering and the cure of disease must be seen as twin obligations of a medical profession" (639). In other words, doctors must try to cure illnesses while also maintaining the personhood and identity of the patient. These dual obligations, however, can be seen as obligations of the patient as well, to a certain degree. The patient can aid in the cure of his disease by consenting to invasions of the body and mind. The patient can also aid in the "relief of suffering," especially psychological suffering, by caring for his own mental health after undergoing these invasive procedures. In order to accomplish this goal, the patient should read.

Literature can provide comfort, recognition, and solace in response to the psychological trauma of invasive procedures. Pieces of literature such

as *Death of Ivan Ilych*, *Regeneration*, and *Wit* validate patients' feelings of discomfort. These works frame invasive medical procedures as difficult and upsetting, even if necessary. Patients can read these pieces and understand that they are not alone in facing their pain. By acknowledging the problems with invasive medicine, literature gives voice to patients feeling vulnerable or violated. In reading, these patients can restore the sense of personhood that they may have lost during an invasive procedure. Literature allows them to carve out a space that is their own—a space that represents their emotions and their humanity and the aspects of themselves, such as their personalities and secret lives, that medicine may have ignored or taken away. In his book, *A Scream Goes Through the House*, Arnold Weinstein concludes by proposing that “literature matters” because “art is that other place that can become ours” (394). Reading about the experiences of Ilych, Dr. River's patients, and *Bearing*, patients can relate to the experiences of characters in literature and carve out a space that validates their emotions.

Reading literature also allows for an unusual shift in power dynamics. As the patient reads, she enters the private world of the characters. She learns about Ilych's darkest regrets and fears as he nears the last moments of his life. She watches a brilliant, domineering professor surrender control of her body to cancer in *Wit*—retching and staggering on stage. She enters the mind of Dr. Rivers, gaining access to his disturbing dream and understanding the workings of his subconscious. While reading, the patient sees these characters at their most vulnerable, and this entrance into their private lives is yet another form of invasion: the patient investigates and encroaches on a character's emotions, dreams, fears, and stream of consciousness. In doing so, a patient who reads gains power. Now she is the one in control—the one wielding the power to invade. In allowing for this role reversal, literature can empower patients to reclaim the control and authority that the invasive medical world may have stolen from them.

We all depend on medical professionals. We need them for life-saving procedures, mental health care, and help caring for our loved ones. This dependency grants doctors great power and privilege. They must deal with the knowledge that their patients' lives depend on them. It is difficult to handle this power with care, and some doctors become carried away with their dominant positions in our lives and in society. The resulting power dynamic is entrenched in our medical system, and it threatens patients' autonomy and wellbeing. Pieces of literature bring to light the ways in

which the medical world leaves patients feeling violated and powerless. This acknowledgement of patients' suffering is a key step in drawing our attention to an aspect of our medical system that must change. Allowing us to understand the perspective of patients, literature can bring awareness, compassion, and solace.

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No-Man's . . . or Women's-Land

*Ecological Power over Human Identity in
The Things They Carried*

Sam Jacob

Elements of Vietnam's ecology depicted in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, such as human interactions with nonhuman plant and animal life and excremental decomposition, erase the effects of gender and racial identities. Traditional perceptions of wartime ecologies hold these environments among the most heavily decimated, damaged, and disfigured on earth, powerless against the full force of militarized humanity. Yet the opposite seems to occur in O'Brien's Vietnam. Mary Anne's excursions into the jungle trigger her transformation from a purely feminine civilian "with the complexion like strawberry ice cream" into a predatory and androgynously-gendered member of Vietnam's ecosystem (89). Rather than remaining a naïve and powerless female adolescent, the environment integrates Mary Anne as "a part of the land . . . wearing her culottes, pink sweater, and a necklace of human tongues" (110). Excrement has a similarly complicating effect upon racial identities for characters like Kiowa, the only character in the novel identified primarily through his ethnicity as a Native American. Kiowa sinks to his death in a shit field whose "filth seemed to erase identities, transforming the men into identical copies of a single soldier" (156).

Observing how a land burdened by the destruction of a human war dominates these human forms of identity raises interesting questions regarding the level of control that humans have over their own identity.

Critical discourse investigating landscapes and the environment in *The Things They Carried* primarily employs anthropocentric analyses, construing these spaces as mere symbolic topographies of terror and exile. For example, Tina Chen characterizes Vietnam as an “imaginative landscape . . . a fictive geography” that perpetuates soldiers’ psychological sense of exile from home (81). Chen attributes the landscape’s nonphysical influence upon the alienation of a soldier as the source for the rupturing of reality within O’Brien’s storytelling, a common conceptual destination of many of *The Things They Carried*’s critics. Other scholars have feminized the land, placing personified assignments of gender upon the nonhuman landscape. Brian Jarvis interprets the novel’s environment as a “gynecological geography” wherein the “vampyress” earth is engaged in combat with the soldiers (291-292). Brian Mangrum, though also feminizing the land, contradicts Jarvis by casting the land as a victim against the misogyny of “soldiers [who] find pleasure in feminizing . . . [and] violating the feminine” landscape. Race has also been symbolically adjoined to the land as a critique of the racial melancholy that permeated the Vietnam war. Both Jarvis and Jen Dunningway describe Kiowa’s racial presence in the novel as “haunted” or “haunting,” referencing Native American dances and rituals of worship towards the land (Jarvis 294; Dunningway 116). They ultimately assert that race’s minimal and spectral presence reiterates the melancholy of non-white racial identity. However, these analyses of racial and gender identity collectively ignore ecology’s literal and biological influence upon human identity.

Though all of these critics are concerned with the interplay between the land and social constructs like gender and race, I avoid purely human-centric interpretations of wartime landscapes in order to interrogate the nature and mutability of these constructs within an actual ecology rather than within a figurative or imagined landscape. I accomplish this by relying on more current theories of ecocriticism such as ecological agency and multispecies theory. I argue that the power to shape human identity is held by the more-than-human ecology of war rather than by humans alone. Traditionally disadvantaged social constructs, such as non-white race and femininity, as well as traditionally advantageous social labels of white and male, disappear within a war landscape not through symbolic or figurative

means but through biological processes. These processes include excremental decomposition and interactions with nonhuman lifeforms like animals and plants. The erasure of these human *social* identities enables the creation of new, *ecological* identities that provide the freedom which the purely human forms restricted. The ecological revision of these human forms of identity within *The Things They Carried* ultimately environmentalizes one of the novel's primary concepts, the nature of a soldier, transforming a soldier from a human representative of a military to an ambiguously-human lifeform within war's unexpectedly harmonious and interdependent ecosystem.

O'Brien first re-renders the conventional perception of a wartime environment from a space dominated by human interactions and interests to an inclusive and harmonious ecology. This ecology is a conglomerate of humans, plants, animals, and nonliving substances such as excrement and mud. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley have observed that too often social and political factors which help inform and construct identity are errantly defined and re-defined "without some engagement with the more-than-human-world" (25). Their proposition of inherently connected biological, political, and social ecologies could be considered unrealistic or unachievable within wartime ecologies, spaces that are often overrun by human militarization. Yet O'Brien himself indicates the connectivity of human and nonhuman life amidst the destruction of war, observing that even "after a firefight, there is always the immense pleasure of aliveness . . . The grass, the soil—everything. All around you things are purely living, and you among them" (77). The collective "pleasure of aliveness" shared between human, plant, and nonliving ecological entities forms what Jane Bennet terms an "agency of assemblage," or a distribution of power and influence among human and nonhuman forces (21). This inclusivity of wartime environments strongly contradicts conventional views of the detrimental ecological impacts of war. Despite being motivated by purely human interests, war elicits greater activity from other nonhuman ecological agents, resulting in the merging of human and nonhuman entities. This interpretation of O'Brien's ecology in *The Things They Carried* shows us that warfare can no longer be viewed in an exclusively human framework; rather, as Donna Bennet says, "Species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters" (4). More-than-human members of war's ecology inevitably enact their own influence upon the human endeavors of war.

In these inclusive wartime environments, the power to shape human identity lies in ecological agents and processes rather than in exclusively human constructions. Previously powerful forms of human identity, such as race or gender, are minimized by the nonhuman ecology. This is because the interdependency between human and nonhuman entities does not guarantee the maintenance of these exclusively human-identities. Bennett points out that many of these social constructs are built upon “historical norms and repetitions,” and that nonhuman action and influences weaken these constructs’ “susceptibility to human . . . control” (26). Bennett’s idea especially applies in a wartime ecology. In any ecology, biological conformity, or a lifeform’s instinct to adapt in order to achieve homeostasis, changes according to the dominant ecological agent, which generally tends to be humans. Human biological conformity, as neurological biologists T.J. Morgan and K. Laland explain, is “characterized by an extreme dependence on culturally transmitted information” (1). However, war’s ecology separates the human inhabitants of the environment from those norms and repetitions on which they normally depend. Humanity’s resultantly weak control over their own identity affirms ecofeminist Ynestra King’s assertion that “there is no natural hierarchy; human hierarchy is projected onto nature and then used to justify social domination” (qtd. in Gaard and Murphey 3). The supposed naturalness of humanity’s control over their own identities is lost within an inclusive war ecology. Thus, a wartime environment’s control the formation of human identity is confirmed both in theoretical discourse and through biological science. By understanding wartime landscapes as spaces composed of the assembled agencies of all human and nonhuman forces, O’Brien exposes forms of human identity, such as race and gender, to manipulation and erasure by nonhuman ecological agents.

O’Brien androgenizes gender identities through influence of nonhuman lifeforms and animals, granting multispecies relationalities greater power over gender than social standards. Within this new habitat of inclusive agency between human and nonhuman lifeforms, ecological relationalities replace humanity’s transient gender roles, male and female. For Mary Anne, this transforms her from an unadulterated-by-war adolescent into a top-of-the-food-chain predator. Mary Anne’s metamorphosis has been generally viewed by scholars as a simple transition from feminine to masculine. However, the impact of this transformation upon the conceptual understanding of gender is more debated amongst literary critics. Lorrie Smith decries Mary Anne’s

portrayal as a “more masculine . . . hence monstrous and unnatural” character, indicting this as evidence of the text’s misogynist subconsciousness (32). Chris Vanderwees counters Smith, claiming that Mary Anne’s change indicates the “uncertainty and ambiguity contained in . . . gender” (276). Building off of Vanderwees’ observation, I attribute this androgenized construction of gender to Mary Anne’s interactions with multiple animal or nonhuman species within the ecology of Vietnam. Mary Anne becomes neither more feminine, nor more masculine, but joins “the zoo, as “one more animal” in the jungles of Vietnam (102). Interestingly, this zoo includes the Green Berets, who adopt Mary Anne into their “den,” casting both Mary Anne, a formerly quintessential female, and the Green Berets, the most masculine of soldiers, as genderless animals (105). In this way, the gender identities of both Mary Anne and the Green Beret soldiers give way to an animalistic identity. This identity is based upon what multispecies theorist Thom Van Dooren calls “biocultural attachments,” or collective eco-identities based upon “dynamics of predator and prey, parasite and host, . . . symbiotic partner, or indifferent neighbor” rather than societal expectations for male-female identity or behavior (6, 3). A literal example of this sort of predator-prey interrelationship is the rotting leopard head which the soldiers have placed in their hut. This formerly dominant animal is described as carrying “the stink of the kill” (105). Though the novel does not offer explanation as to the source of the leopard head or its use within the hut, the head does seem to represent this group’s position at the top of Vietnam’s food chain. In this way, the environment is able to dismantle human constructions of gender identity and reorient human hierarchy based on ecological relationalities.

These new animalistic and ecological forms of identity provide freedom from historically and culturally limited gender roles. Women who participated in the Vietnam war generally did so as nurses or humanitarian volunteers. Often, these responsibilities were offered to women who came from oppressed circumstances. Lynda Van Devanter, a former nurse in Vietnam, explained how most of the nurses she worked with were “idealistic ‘good girls’ who grew up in Catholic homes . . . and had never been more than fifty miles away from their parents” (qtd. in Mythers 79). This certainly epitomizes Mary Anne as she arrives in her initial “somewhat lost” and naïve state (89). The opportunity to work as a nurse in the war appeared to offer many women freedom from these homely constraints. Many of the nursing advertisements, like one in the 1970 August issue of *Glamour*

magazine, attempted to present women in soldierly ways. For example, the advertisement features a woman dressed in the green soldier uniform, holding a lamp in the middle of a dark army tent (Vuic 136). This appealed to many women's desires to escape the limited roles afforded to them at home, such as former nurse, Pamela White. She explains how her choice to go to Vietnam was not driven by a feeling of victimization, but rather to have her womanhood "demythed" (qtd. in Mythers 82). However, society's misogynist view of women was also reinforced by these advertisements. While the photo represented a new soldierly woman, the ad itself reads, "You're needed, too, for your women's touch . . . your reassuring smile in the middle of a long night" (qtd. in Vuic 136). Rather than referencing actual nursing practices, the ad simply transplants the traditional homemaker and caretaker role of women into the jungles of the war. Women were persuaded to come to Vietnam in a contradictory fashion, ultimately leaving them to struggle against the same gender restrictions they hoped to escape in war. These cultural and historic complexities make Mary Anne's departure from her gender identity all the more significant. Her activities with the Green Berets and alone in the jungles provide a way for her to fully participate in the war. O'Brien describes how Mary Anne's new animal identity empowered her "to penetrate deeper into the mystery of herself," those elements of her innermost soul which the previous constraints of her gender had obscured (109). Though unsettling to those operating within the human-only realm, this animal identity enables an inclusive and empowering ecological existence. Through the integration of nonhuman species into war, more dominant ecological schemas of identity facilitate greater freedom than former gender constructs.

Race's control over human identity is also subverted by ecology, this time through the ecological process of excremental decomposition. This nullification of racial identity in Vietnam occurs despite the highly racialized context of this text's time period. Along with the Civil Rights movement, race was intertwined into many other major political and social movements, including the environmental preservation movement of the 1960s. A fascinating example of this is an environmental awareness poster produced by the Keep America Beautiful organization in 1965, featuring a Native American chieftain with the caption, "Pollution. It's a crying shame." Clearly playing off of stereotypes of Native Americans' religious connections to the land, these posters utilized race to fight against rising levels of pollution. Despite the racial context of this text's historical period, issues of racial

identity appear to, as Jen Dunnaway says, be “erased from O’Brien’s vision of the war” (115). However, the implications of this absence are disputed. Dunnaway effectively counters Lorrie Smith’s assertion that O’Brien’s silence concerning non-white race is an indication of his subconscious racism and instead claims that O’Brien’s ‘silent’ or minimal descriptions of race are purposefully pronounced in order to provide a spectral and “haunting” critique of the era’s overt “white-centrality” (116, 124). She asserts that race’s intentional absence is “a potent, even radical organizer of meaning” (113). However, the ecological process by which race is removed from O’Brien’s text counters Dunnaway’s assertion that racial identity operates or holds meaning within war. Kiowa, the novel’s sole racialized character, endures a graphic and disturbing death during a bombing in a shit field. In the scenes describing Kiowa’s death, the verbs ‘swallow’ and ‘suck’ appear several times with the field and the soldiers as the antecedent subjects. The “filth . . . mud, and water” are constantly “sucking things down, swallowing things,” and the soldiers themselves “tasted the shit” in their mouths and eyes, inadvertently ingesting the excrement (162, 143). Though these verbs appear to personify the nonliving matter, the filth’s swallowing and sucking of soldiers also indicate the actual ecological process of decomposition—the taking in and breaking down of dead or dying biotic matter. As Kiowa’s carcass is later pulled from the field, he is caked with a “bluish green mud,” obscuring his past identity as the non-white-skinned Native American (167). This biological process contradicts the aforementioned stereotypes regarding Native American attachments to the land employed in the environmental movements of the era. Even when ecology is culturally attached with race, ecology removes these attachments. The other soldiers, though escaping death, do not escape the excrement, which also “seemed to erase [their] identities” (156). Ultimately, racial constructions of human identity vanish within this wartime environment not in a purely narrative or symbolic fashion, but before our very eyes through excremental decomposition.

These natural processes and the resultant eco-identities reinvent the concept of a soldier as an ecological, even nonhuman, organism. The diminished power of social constructions of race and gender create space for ecology to control the central soldierly identity. Whether considering the animalized and androgynous Green Berets, or the excrement-colored soldiers of Kiowa’s unit, these ecological processes disambiguate O’Brien’s description of these soldiers as “identical copies of a single soldier . . .

interchangeable units of command" (156). This sameness of the soldiers is more than just a figurative descriptor of social or psychological conformity but is an indicator of literal biological conformity. In order for soldiers, both women and men, to soldier well in war, they give up an exclusively human existence and interact with the ecology around them. The assembled agencies of all the members of war's ecosystem—plants, animals, mud, filth, etc.—exercise what Jane Bennet terms "thing-power" or biologically "resistant force" against the human constructs, interests, and systems operating within war's environment (26). And in the ecology of *The Things They Carried*, the ecological agents and processes outnumber and outmatch the various social constructs that inform and shape human identity, thus subjecting O'Brien's human conception of 'soldier' to more-than-human alteration. Ultimately, ecological processes operating in O'Brien's text transform our conceptual understanding of soldiers from individually uniformed agents of a national military to uniformly identical lifeforms amidst all members of a richer, vibrant, and inclusive wartime environment. A soldier's identity is no longer solely determined within human constructs of gender or race—it is collectively recreated within the inclusive ecology of war.

The resultant power which wartime ecologies exert over human identity demand that we begin to reconsider the more-than-human battles and conflicts of war. As Handley and DeLoughrey have said, we must recognize that "biotic and political ecologies are materially and imaginatively intertwined" (13). O'Brien's text shows ecology to be more than just a lifeless victim of war's destruction. Nature is not merely the space upon which war is fought—it holds a vibrant power of its own. Amid the anthropocentric arenas of combat, plants, animals, and abiotic matter enact their power upon the co-inhabitant human species. War, those current and those to come, must continue to be understood as a more-than-human conflict. We must also accept that human identity is not fully controlled by humanity. Rather, it is constantly changed and amended by nonhuman ecological forces. The understanding granted through this eco-critical view of war and human identity opens doors for greater integration of nonhuman interests, lifeforms, and agencies into the realms of sociality, politics, and literature.

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“Not Throwing Away My Shot”

Bastards in Shakespeare and Hamilton

Ryan Meservey

When perusing the online Shakespeare Insults Dictionary, you will find the word “bastard” in colorful variety. Entries like “bastard warriors!” to “bastardly rogue!” to “bastards and else!” suggest a common use: the word “bastard” in Shakespeare’s time alludes not only to social status but also to a general persona (Novy 124). This use in regards to personality has certainly persisted into the present, popping up angrily in movies and on the Internet. Urban Dictionary, the Internet’s de-facto pop culture dictionary, defines the term as “someone who disregards other people in pursuit of their own self-interest,” and someone who is “narcissistic and unknowingly frustrating” (Entry 3, Entry 5). These definitions attest to the typical American experience with this word. Today, “bastard” is primarily used to describe self-centered people and less often used to describe children born out of wedlock.

This dissociation seems to have been less strong in Shakespeare’s day, as evidenced by another use of the word in his plays. When capitalized, this word expresses an official title and character type for Shakespeare’s characters, affecting everything from the characters’ own actions, intentions, and interactions, as well as the manner in which the audience views them (Neill 275). Modern plays tend to avoid this type of “Bastard” character;

yet, it seems the character has made a resurgence through the Broadway hit *Hamilton* released in 2015.

In this paper, I analyze both bastards and Bastards, investigating the Bastard characters that took to the stage in Shakespeare and returned to the stage in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*. In Shakespeare, these characters provide a springboard for understanding old and new connotations. Looking at *King Lear's* Edmund, as well as *Much Ado's* Don John and *The Tempest's* Caliban, we can understand the special villainy attributed to bastards in Shakespeare's day. In contrast, Miranda's lead character in *Hamilton* reveals a modern shift toward sympathy for bastards. Despite Hamilton's similarities with Shakespeare's characters, his bastardy comes across as heroic rather than villainous. Comparing Shakespeare and *Hamilton* exposes not only a shift in values, but also a pathway to more sympathetic readings of Shakespeare's Bastards. In this paper, I will examine this shift, comparing the older Bastards with the new. The comparison reveals a split between the powerful and the powerless, with the former valuing conformity and the latter valuing ambition. Ultimately, I will examine perspective's transformative power in the final stage of my paper through a modern Shakespearean monologue that emphasizes the possibilities of reimagining Shakespeare's most villainous Bastard.

Bastards in Shakespeare and Elizabethan England

To best understand how Elizabethan audiences viewed Shakespeare's Bastards, they must be placed in their proper historical context. English bastards have a long history of discrimination in legal and moral codes. Just a few years prior to Shakespeare's penning of *King Lear*, the number of children born out of wedlock peaked, leading to religious and societal backlash against these "illegitimate" or "natural" children (Novy 125). Religious leaders feared the moral disorder caused by their growing numbers, and so they intensified their efforts to stigmatize bastards in the culture. Clerics made critical remarks such as: "Bastards inherit the wickedness from their parents" and "if a bastard be good, that cometh to him by chance, a special grace . . . but if he be evil that cometh to him by nature." Attitudes toward bastards stressed the natural element of their births. Because bastards were conceived "in nature" (outside of marriage), they were marked by nature as inherently flawed (Neill 276).

To justify the belief in bastard's flawed nature, religious leaders put forward two arguments. First, many believed procreation outside of marriage made bastards not merely "children of sinners" but "children of sin itself" (Neill 276). Second, religious leaders relied on scriptural descriptions about the oneness of marriage, as Renaissance scholar Michael Neill noted, "Bastards are un-whole because they are offspring not of 'one flesh' but of two bodies: there is an inherent and sinister doubleness about their begetting" (278). This religious dogma tended to reinforce social attitudes that already cast affairs and love-children in a sinister light. These cultural attitudes combined to give bastards a decidedly negative image in the eyes of the public, which image then curtailed a bastard's ability to move upwards within society and improve their reputation.

The public campaign against bastards created a collage of belittling character attributes that often played out on the stage. Michael Neill summarizes the character of the Bastard saying, "In drama bastards are typically presented as a special class of transgressive male" (275). This type of character contains a certain amount of disruptive energy attributed to the Bastard's birth within the heat of passion and against religious codes. His origin marks the Bastard as energetic and defiant toward the characters around him, often leading him to sexual liaisons or ambitious plotting against other characters. These attributes typically villainize Bastards, creating an presumption of maleficence whenever Bastards entered the stage.

Villainy, scheming, and disruptive energy all play out in Shakespeare's Bastard characters. In *King Lear* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Bastard characters operate as villains: they fiercely oppose the protagonists, frequently manipulate others, and make attempts to increase their social standing or lower the social standing of others. In *King Lear*, Edmund the Bastard frames his legitimate brother for conspiracy, betrays his father for power, and initiates sexual relations with two of the play's most powerful females. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don John proves nearly as insidious when he attacks the honor of the play's heroine and encourages infighting to damage the honor of the other characters because it "better fits [his] blood to be disdained of all" (1.3 354-355). Both these characters typify Bastard villainy in Shakespeare through their energy and ambition.

Edmund and Don John also typify the association of bastards with nature in Elizabethan times. Both of these characters' Act I monologues emphasize their allegiance to nature, albeit in different ways. Edmund begins his

monologue worshipping nature, “Thou, Nature, art my goddess” (*King Lear* 1.2 334). He then uses his own conception “in the lusty stealth of nature” as evidence for his “fierce quality” (345). In these lines, Edmund embraces the wild aspects of nature connected to bastardy; for him, these qualities justify his claim to his brother’s land and his father’s power. Don John relates to nature differently in his monologue, namely by emphasizing naturality and authenticity. He states:

I cannot hide what I am:
I must be sad when I have cause and smile
At no man’s jests, eat when I have stomach and wait
for no man’s leisure. (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.3 340–3)

Don John’s monologue lists several activities to make a point: regardless of the action, he will stay true to his nature and the natural order, thereby connecting himself to nature. Thus, in both Bastard villains, Shakespeare establishes a connection to nature.

In addition to the attributes already discussed—villainy, energy, ambition, and nature—Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* introduces a racial component to bastardy not yet discussed. One of the play’s side-characters Caliban is arguably one of Shakespeare’s Bastard characters. Not only does Caliban exhibit many of the attributes held by Edmund and Don John, but he is also ridiculed as a “demi-devil . . . a bastard one” because of his island birth to an evil witch (*The Tempest* 5.1 272). Many productions play into the text’s inherent tension between islander and colonist by using racial overtones, as in Julie Taymor’s 2011 film. These racial overtones also derive from the Elizabethan use of the word “bastard” to characterize entire populations as “dirty,” debased, and illegitimate (Neill 279). Disturbingly, these views are largely unquestioned in *The Tempest*, which ends with Caliban’s disgrace and the colonizer’s triumph.

Caliban, Edmund, and Don John serve as caricatures of the Bastard character in theatre and a window into the Elizabethan public’s attitudes toward bastards. With few exceptions, bastards in public or on stage rarely received positive portrayals. Due to the heavy negativity directed at bastards, one may be surprised by the defiantly positive portrayal of a Bastard in modern English theatre. Our analysis turns toward contemporary theatre, or more specifically, the status of Alexander Hamilton and his characterization in the play *Hamilton*.

Hamilton: A Bastard Character?

“How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore // and a Scotsman . . . // grow up to be a hero and a scholar?” (*Hamilton* 1.1 1–5). From the opening lines of *Hamilton* to the end, the audience is reminded again and again of Hamilton’s status as a bastard (the opening refrain repeats at the beginning and end of each act). The other characters seem aware of Hamilton’s bastard status, and the play hints that his status was a matter of private and public insult; for instance, a character referred to him as a “creole bastard” to another character (*Hamilton* 2.11 11). Nonetheless, these signs alone do not make Hamilton a Bastard character. In Shakespeare, the Bastard character not only stood out due to his birth but also due to the character attributes previously established. How does Hamilton compare in this regard?

In ambition and “disruptive energy,” Hamilton certainly fits the bill. Like Edmund and Don John, Hamilton fights to change his social standing and in so doing changes the destinies of countless other characters. From the beginning, the play promises us “there’s a million things [he] hasn’t done, but just you wait” and “the world will never be the same” (*Hamilton* 1.1 26–27, 67). The play makes good on these terms. By the play’s end, Hamilton has immigrated to America, gained a national following, fought in the Revolutionary War, married up, wrote fifty-one pamphlets, had an affair, established a national bank, prevented his rival from attaining the presidency, and died in a gun duel. If the events of the play do not stress Hamilton’s ambition and energy enough, the existence of two songs trumpeting Hamilton’s ambition should be persuasive enough (“My Shot” and “Non-Stop”). The play begins and ends on the energy of its title protagonist.

In line with Bastard portrayals like that of Edmund, Hamilton also emphasizes its protagonist’s sexual energy. In a mixture of fact and fiction, the play establishes a love-triangle between Hamilton, his wife, and her sister in order to emphasize Hamilton’s allure. This allure remains a theme throughout the play, showing up in the courting sequences of Act I and in Hamilton’s affair in Act II. Curiously, Hamilton’s affair begins with his first and only invocation of his bastard status, singing weakly, “You never seen a bastard orphan // more in need of a break” (*Hamilton* 2.4 7–8). Apparently, he uses his own status as a bastard to justify his actions. Hamilton’s sexual prowess echoes that of Edmund’s with a consequential difference. Whereas Edmund’s actions add to his notoriety as a villain, Hamilton’s sexual

prowess earns him mostly praise. Even with Hamilton's affair, the negative consequences of his promiscuity fade into the background by the play's end, evidenced by his wife's impassioned eulogy to him in the final scene without mention of his infidelity. Unlike *King Lear*, *Hamilton* frames its Bastard character's sexual energy in a predominantly positive light.

Hamilton resembles Shakespeare's Bastard characters in another key respect through his connection to nature. Miranda's casting call clearly enunciates Hamilton's commitment to nature, stating "[Hamilton] speaks his mind, no matter the cost" (Herrera 26). In this attribute, we can hear an echo of Don John who implored "let me be that I am and // seek not to alter me" (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.3 362–3). While Don John seeks to be true to his inner desires, Hamilton seeks to be true to his thoughts—though this trueness to nature does not exclude his manipulation of other characters on stage. Both these characteristics come to fruition in Act II Scene V ("Room Where It Happens"); in this scene, Hamilton states his desire to change the US capital honestly but also uses his wits to manipulate his political opponents. The result is a scene that commends Hamilton's forthcoming nature and his manipulative power.

Miranda's play addresses one more idea connected with bastardy: the idea that non-white races represent a type of bastard. By design, *Hamilton* casts a variety of races to play historically white persons. As Brian Herrera points out, Miranda wrote *Hamilton's* main character and most of its other characters as explicitly "Non-white" in his casting call descriptions (26). Similar to the portrayal of Caliban in dozens of productions, Hamilton uses race to emphasize the outsider status of its protagonist. However, unlike most productions of *The Tempest*, which make Caliban the lone symbol of a racial other through his decrepitness, deformity, or racial difference, *Hamilton* escapes this ostracization by portraying Alexander Hamilton as one race among many. Miranda's casting decision, apparent in the original Broadway performance, conditions the audience to enjoy the contributions of each character as well as their unique presence as Latinos/Latinas, Caribbean immigrants, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Black Americans. The result is a celebration of diversity at its finest.

In celebrating non-white and non-British characters, *Hamilton* celebrates the same attributes that were stigmatized in Shakespeare's plays. In terms of ambition, disruption, natural connection, sexual energy, and racial difference, Hamilton fits the mold of the Bastard character; yet, he receives

little or none of the shame and all of the praise. Ambition and manipulation mark Shakespeare's Edmund and Don John as evil deviants while the same attributes mark Hamilton as a role-model, one whom the other characters cannot help but sing for at the play's beginning and eulogize at the play's end. The stark contrast between the treatment of Bastard characteristics in these plays hints at a world of value difference from Shakespeare to Miranda that calls for deeper analysis and understanding.

Perspective Differences and the Values of the Powerless

Although we tend to believe in the universality of values and virtues, the above analysis suggests huge value differences based on perspective. Shakespeare's plays appealed to the broader public of Elizabethan England, and so they often embodied the perspectives prevalent in that society (Novy 125). Due to the increasing stigmatization of bastards in Shakespeare's day, he may have felt consciously or unconsciously bound to abide by the negative coloring of their character, portraying them as villains or as inherently flawed people by nature. On the other hand, *Hamilton* has been championed as a "story of immigrants," told by immigrants and performed by groups that have been historically marginalized in the United States (Herrera 25). Because *Hamilton* comes from people who have historically lacked power, it makes sense that characteristics like ambition, disruption, and manipulation would be praised rather than disdained. Without the means of power, these attributes give people a pathway to social advancement. From the perspective of the powerless, Bastard attributes can become the best virtues.

Shakespeare demonstrates the moral differences caused by perspective throughout his plays. For example, in *Henry V* a disguised King Henry argues with his soldiers over the competing values of obedience and personal accountability. The two disagree largely because of their perspectives—the soldiers emphasize obedience because they do not want to feel the guilt of war crimes, and the king emphasizes personal accountability because he does not want to own the sins of his army (*Henry V* 1.4 127–185). However, this difference in position does not reveal perspective's power nearly as much as the comparison between Bastard characters. In comparing *Hamilton* with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, we see that the perspective of the storyteller is powerful enough to flip values

and vices on their heads, leading to an embrace of values formerly cast as vices. The comparison of Bastard characters reveals a revolution far more intriguing than the prioritizing of values that occurs in Henry V.

Conclusion

This revolution in understanding perspective opens up new possibilities for re-interpreting the Bastards in Shakespeare. Perspective's importance leads to questions like: How would Caliban's story change if it were told from an indigenous perspective? How might we understand Don John through the lens of children who grew up in foster care? How would Edmund's "evil" monologue change if reiterated by an immigrant?

Questions like these provide new fodder for sympathizing with Shakespeare's characters, a sympathy shown in Riz Ahmed's recent performance of Edmund's monologue. Redemptive interpretations like these can uncover our biases against certain values and help us to understand the experiences of people whose perspectives differ from our own. By opposing the typical associations with Bastard characters in theatre, *Hamilton* succeeds in creating greater empathy for those considered "illegitimate" or those born in a variety of disempowered positions. By rejecting Elizabethan tropes, *Hamilton* casts light on a new way to understand Edmund, Don John, Caliban, and other stigmatized persons in Shakespeare's plays.

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Food and Boundaries in Jessica Hagedorn's *The Gangster of Love*

Yuxin Zheng

In her article “Deciphering a Meal,” anthropologist Mary Douglas proposes that food can be viewed as a series of codes like language and encodes social messages that indicate “different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries” (61). Featuring food as a theme, Jessica Hagedorn’s *The Gangster of Love* (1996), a novel that weaves together the immigration story of the Rivera family and the coming-of-age story of the daughter Rocky Rivera, exemplifies Douglas’ theory. Throughout the novel, food is associated with geographical, ethnic, cultural, and even spiritual boundaries, symbolizing complex identities and social positions of Hagedorn’s characters, their inclusion in and exclusion from social groups, and their interconnections with each other. Examining the construction and deconstruction of boundaries through food in *The Gangster of Love* not only helps elucidate the connection between food and Hagedorn’s characterization, but also sheds light on how participants of transnational movements struggle to establish their identities, to find a sense of belonging, and to cope with geographic displacement.

With their distinctive cultural backgrounds, ethnic foods are used by various characters in Hagedorn's novel to construct boundaries, distinguish between different identities, and negotiate with their own identity positions. As a first-generation Filipino immigrant, Milagros Rivera single-handedly brings up two children in the United States and supports her household with her Filipino food business, Lumpia Express. Since her Filipino identity can be easily confused into other Asian ethnicities in America, Milagros establishes herself as unequivocally Filipino by specifically emphasizing the difference between "Filipino" and "Chinese" and constructing a clear boundary between Lumpia, an iconic Filipino food, and eggrolls, its Chinese counterpart. When her friend Rick Foss confuses eggrolls with lumpia, Milagros is offended and responds, "'Excuse me, RickFoss. Egg rolls are Chinese. Lumpias are Filipino'" (Hagedorn 19). Highlighting the Filipino identity of lumpia in her response, Milagros implies that "lumpia" is not just a name for "anything wrapped in flour wrappers or wrappers made from egg," but encodes important messages of culture and ethnicity (Chan-Yap 300). For Milagros, lumpia has a unique identity of its own and is exclusively Filipino, regardless of its resemblance of Chinese egg rolls or its actual Chinese origin. While lumpia originated from the Hokkien region in Southern China, Milagros disregards such historical background and claims lumpia as only Filipino (Chan-Yap 300). As Frederik Barth argues, ethnic groups maintain their identities through "a structuring of interaction which allows the persistence of cultural difference"; in order for an ethnic group to be perceived as a distinct entity, it requires "the maintenance of boundaries between groups" (qtd. in Kalcik 45). In Milagros' case, despite that lumpia originated from Chinese cooking and is not essentially different from an eggroll in its shape and taste, the constructed boundary between Filipino lumpia and Chinese egg roll is crucial for Milagros to assert her own Filipino identity. When she explicitly points out the difference between lumpias and egg rolls, Milagros is effectively stating her difference from Chinese people, thus reinforcing and protecting her ethnic identity within the Filipino side of the boundary that she constructs between the two ethnicities through food.

In contrast, Rocky Rivera, Milagros' daughter, steps out of the boundary that defines her as Filipino and steps into American culture; her cultural identity is also suggested through her relationship with Filipino food and American food. Early on in the novel, Rocky shows that she is unable to make Filipino food and participate in the production of lumpia in her mother's

Filipino kitchen. Describing how her mother and brother are able to roll up the delicate lumpias with sophisticated skills, Rocky portrays herself as “slow and clumsy” with her hands (Hagedorn 20). Because of her inability to make lumpias, her mother sends her to shop for ingredients in Chinatown and to deliver lumpias around by taxi (20). With lumpia being a typical Filipino food symbolic of Filipino culture, Rocky’s clumsiness and failure in making lumpias symbolize her inability to learn and maintain her Filipino heritage. As a result of her failure to inherit the lumpia culture, Rocky is driven out of Milagros’ kitchen, a space that sustains Filipino culture through lumpia production. Therefore, as Rocky ventures to Chinatown and delivers lumpias around, she symbolically leaves a Filipino cultural space and enters into different multicultural spaces in the broader American society. Crossing the physical boundary between an exclusive kitchen and a welcoming outside world, Rocky demonstrates that she is more capable of participating in a multicultural American society than in a well-defined Filipino culture.

Rocky’s alienation from her Filipino background and her affinity to American culture are further illustrated later in the novel through Rocky’s rejection of Filipino food and affinity towards American food. Rejecting her mother’s and Aunt Fely’s cooking several times, Rocky marks her position as an outsider of Filipino culture and sometimes Asian culture as a whole. After Rocky gives birth, Milagros visits her in New York. Given their different lifestyles, Rocky does not quite welcome her mother and dreads the next fortnight of “butting heads with [Milagros]” (194). Living under the same roof, they have different ideas of food. Milagros insists on buying ingredients from Chinatown to cook “virgin chicken, Chinese-style” for her, whereas Rocky rejects her mother’s proposal nonchalantly, “It’s not necessary. The grocery store has everything” (194). In this conversation, a boundary comes in place between Chinatown, which symbolizes Asian and Filipino culture, and the grocery store, which stands for American culture. Rocky rejects Chinatown and her mother’s Asian cooking either as her personal food preference, or as a way to rebel against her mother and the traditional Asian culture that she insists on. Either way, her rejection of Milagros’ cooking, indifference towards Chinatown, and suggestion for Milagros to shop at the grocery store indicate her limited connection with Filipino and Asian culture and her identification with American culture.

After childbirth and the initial months of child-rearing, Rocky is clearly tired after her baby has finally quieted down. As the narrator portrays

Rocky's inner thoughts, "two weeks of butting heads with Milagros lie ahead of Rocky. She leans back and shuts her eyes, listening to her restless mother rummaging through the kitchen cupboard" (194). Rocky and Milagros have a warring relationship when it comes to food and cooking. Rocky is tired of her mother constantly taking care of her and insisting on doing so with Chinese food. In response, Rocky repels Chinese food either as her own personal food preference, or as a way to rebel against her mother and the traditional Asian culture that she stands for. Rocky still rejects Filipino food after Milagros passes away. When Aunt Fely brings her sinigang and rice to comfort her, Rocky does not eat the food (261). She gives another indifferent response to Aunt Fely, who proposes that they should go grocery shopping in Chinatown, saying that "I'd rather eat out" (261). Here, Sinigang again symbolizes Filipino culture because it is a quintessential representation of Filipino home-cooking and culinary history as a soup usually made with "souring ingredients from the Philippine landscape" and a "native cuisine" that "amazingly, hardly changed in nature or spirit, after colonization and other foreign influences" (Fernandez, "Culture Ingested" 228). While Aunt Fely heats and reheats the food for Rocky, Rocky's reluctance to eat suggests that she does not take comfort in Filipino cooking because it represents a culture that she does not identify with. Preferring to eat out, Rocky once again establishes her position as an outsider of Filipino culture and finds her place in the American culture outside of the boundary of her Filipino household. Ultimately, her choice to eat out rather than eat home food symbolizes her identification with American culture and her American identity.

While Milagros and Rocky assert their cultural and personal identities through food, Marlon Rivera uses food to examine another person's identity and to test if an outsider can be potentially included in Filipino culture or has to be strictly excluded. When Rocky and her then boyfriend Elvis Chang visit him in Los Angeles, Marlon chooses to cook for them his signature dish, adobo. After announcing his cooking plan, Marlon specifically turns to Elvis and asks him if he has tried adobo yet (Hagedorn 84). Asking if Elvis has tried the iconic Filipino dish, Marlon is in fact testing if "his niece's lover, boyfriend, whatever" is familiar with Filipino cooking and if he has participated in Filipino culture through food (85). Marlon's question suggests a boundary between an outsider status and an insider status in relation to Filipino culture; he has to judge which side Elvis is positioned to determine if he is fit to be Rocky's partner. When Elvis says, "Rocky's

mom made it once,” Marlon can rest assured that Elvis does not completely belong to the outsider side because he has had previous experience with Filipino food, but he keeps up with his test and says, “Well, I’m sure it was good, but I’m the better cook. You haven’t had the real thing until you’ve tried my adobo” (84). Differentiating “good” adobo from “the real thing,” Marlon further delineates the boundary between an insider and outsider. He indicates that Elvis is still largely a stranger of adobo culture and has not had a real experience with Filipino cooking, implying that he cannot be viewed as an insider yet.

Although Marlon views Elvis mostly as an outsider who has limited Filipino cultural experience, he treats him as a potential insider. Opening up the boundary, Marlon tries to induct Elvis into Filipino culture by sharing with him the adobo recipe, even including the key ingredient, “Plain white vinegar, nothing fancy, that’s the key. Use lots of it . . . and garlic—the more, the better” (Hagedorn 85). With adobo, another quintessential Filipino dish, symbolizing Filipino culture, Marlon’s gesture of sharing recipe suggests that he is willing to help Elvis become an insider. Despite his welcoming gesture, Marlon is still bound by the boundary and not fully able to treat Elvis as an intimate insider. In their subsequent short dialogue, the tension over the boundary is even more manifest when Marlon asks Elvis, ““You got anything against pork?”” (Hagedorn 85). Marlon has to specifically ask Elvis if he can eat pork and does not assume that Elvis does. Marlon’s question shows that he is a considerate host, but it also implies that Elvis is an unfamiliar guest and potentially a total outsider who does not eat pork. Presenting another boundary over pork-eating, Marlon’s question exemplifies Susan Kalcik’s observation that “the use or avoidance of certain foods becomes identified with a group and symbolic of it. Such symbolic foodways may strengthen the group’s internal ties or indicate out-group status” (47). Using pork to distinguish if Elvis can be accepted in the Filipino group or has to remain out-group, Marlon again demonstrates how food can construct boundaries that decide “inclusion within or exclusion from a group” (Douglas qtd. in Kalcik 48). Such an understanding of food not only illuminates the motive behind Marlon’s question, but also shows how food is used by an immigrant to establish the cultural identity of his ethnic group.

Filled with tension over the boundaries, the episode continues. In response to Marlon, Elvis says, ““Nah, . . . I’m Chinese”” (Hagedorn 85). Although his response seems short and casual, it encodes several layers of

messages. While “Nah” indicates that he can eat pork and participate in Marlon’s adobo meal, the “I’m Chinese” that immediately follows reiterates his otherness: with his distinct ethnicity, he would occupy an outsider position in relation to Filipino culture. Even though he is able to surpass the boundary constructed over pork consumption, Elvis can never go across the wider gap between different ethnicities and fully enter the Filipino group. At this point, Marlon responds to Elvis ambiguously with a smile and says, “Ahh . . . Of course. How could I forget?” (85). Marlon’s smile and words are filled with ambiguity and tension. With his incomplete question, Marlon could mean “How could I forget that you eat pork?” or “How could I forget that you are Chinese?” or both at the same time. Different interpretations of this short rhetorical question can lead to contradicting meanings. Marlon could be welcoming Elvis, who eats pork, into the Filipino culture, or excluding him because of his Chinese ethnicity, or embracing and rejecting him at the same time. Hagedorn provides no resolution to such ambiguity. She does not clearly indicate what Marlon actually means or where Elvis is exactly positioned in relation to Marlon’s boundary.

In fact, Hagedorn does not even clearly position Rocky when she concludes the adobo episode. At the end, Marlon “winked at his niece, got up from where he was sitting, and sauntered off into the kitchen,” whereas Elvis and Rocky “watched [Marlon] cook” (Hagedorn 85). Both spectating Marlon cooking, neither Elvis nor Rocky seems to be a total insider or a complete outsider of Marlon’s Filipino kitchen that symbolizes Filipino culture like Milagros’ lumpia kitchen. While Elvis is an insider of the pork-eating practice, his Chinese ethnicity casts him as an outsider of Filipino culture. Since Rocky exhibits herself as more American than Filipino, she becomes simultaneously an insider and outsider of Filipino culture in her uncle’s eyes. Throughout this episode, whereas the boundary is clearly in existence and distinguishes insiders from outsiders, each individual’s position in relation to the boundary is highly ambiguous, which symbolizes the fluidity and ambiguity of individual identities in a multicultural American society with constant transnational movements. Through this symbolic meaning of food, Hagedorn hints at how transnational movement affects the ways in which immigrants identify themselves and other people around them.

When characters construct and cross boundaries through food, food items also traverse boundaries and obtain new meanings across geographical, cultural, and even spiritual borders across life and death in

Hagedorn's novel. The foods that Aunt Fely eats during the Imelda Marcos trial, "Spam sandwiches and cans of Diet Coke," are examples (Hagedorn 219). Both two food items are globalized across geographical borders and popular in both the Philippines and America, but encode different social messages in each country. Their meanings become complicated in the hands of Aunt Fely, a Filipino immigrant in the United States presently watching a Filipino public figure on trial. Originating in America in 1937 as moderately-priced preserved meat, Spam went across the Pacific with the US military and became popular in the Philippines during World War II and the Cold War (Matejowsky 26). Perceived as "a poor person's food" and stereotyped as "the culinary domain of America's children and less affluent" in the United States, Spam is a symbol of American wealth and modernity in the Philippines (Matejowsky 28). Transcending social classes, Spam is popular among the wealthy, the middle class, and the working class in the Philippines; nevertheless, it is more often viewed as a staple food for the affluent and moderately affluent people rather than the poor (Matejowsky 28). With its contrasting connotations across the border, Spam gives different meanings to Aunt Fely in the Philippines and in America.

In the Philippines, Aunt Fely would be more likely perceived as an affluent woman if she were to eat Spam; across the ocean, she becomes more easily associated with poverty. Interestingly, the shifting connotations of Spam coincide with her immigration and symbolize the shift in her social status after she immigrates to the United States. In the Philippines, she comes from a decent family, has good family connections, and works as a professional nurse. However, in the United States, she becomes primarily viewed as a foreigner, an immigrant, and an ethnic minority. In this sense, Spam becomes a symbol of her downgraded social status. To complicate the situation even more, Hagedorn makes Aunt Fely eat a Spam sandwich at the trial of Imelda Marcos and witness a powerful figure in the Philippines being brought down from power on the other side of the ocean. Although Aunt Fely's and Imelda's stories are completely different, their paralleling loss of social status in America is symbolized through Spam, a food that faces a similar situation across the borders. Through their stories, Hagedorn again demonstrates the complexity of food and its close connection with transnational movements.

Along with her Spam sandwich, Aunt Fely also has cans of Diet Coke. In the novel, Diet Coke is consumed not only by Aunt Fely, but also by Elvis's

mother and brother at a dinner where Elvis records, "Mom and Dwayne were nursing Diet Cokes" (Hagedorn 112). Invented as a headache remedy by John Pemberton in 1886, Coke has traveled across the globe and become an American symbol (McBride 80). At first glance, Hagedorn seems to use Coke to symbolize the Americanization of Aunt Fely, Ruby Chang, and Dwayne Chang. Uniformly consuming Diet Coke, the three characters seem to have adopted American foodways and adapted themselves to American culture. While this interpretation of Coke is plausible, the Coke symbolism is much more complex. For one, Coke is also a symbol for immigrants across geographical and cultural boundaries. With globalization, Coke has been altered in many different ways to adapt to other food cultures across the globe. As Coke usually features characteristics of the local culture that it is exported into, people may even forget its American origin. According to Anne McBride, in rural Argentina, some people "believe that the word 'Coca-Cola' is Spanish and that Coke is an Argentine product" (80). After its transnational movement, Coke absorbs traits from new cultures and obtains a blurred identity. As such, it can be a loose parallel for immigrants and people who have transnational backgrounds in the United States, such as Aunt Fely, Ruby Chang, and Dwyane Chang who hold American citizenships while still being Filipino and Chinese. They demonstrate characteristics from both American and Asian cultures and may sometimes be recognized as non-Americans despite their American nationality. As a global food across geographical borders, Coke can symbolize immigrants and demonstrate how boundaries of their nationalities and ethnicities become blurred with their transnational movements.

Besides the blurriness of its nationality and cultural identity, Coke itself crosses the boundaries that distinguishes between different types of drinks, further illustrating the complex identity positions of immigrants and ethnic minorities. As Pasi Falk observes, Coke "synthesizes types of drink which, from a historical perspective, are even directly opposed: from water to wine and from beer to coffee, to say nothing of milk" (49). Crossing boundaries that define and categorize drinks, Coke resembles sweetened mineral water in its carbonated nature, parallels coffee with its caffeine content and brown color, and substitutes alcohol as a companion for meals (Falk 49). Coke surpasses boundaries. It does not exclusively belong to one category, but can be everything simultaneously. Likewise, immigrants have synthesized identities. Having lived in both the Philippines and the United States, Aunt

Fely is Filipino and American at the same time. Besides her identity as an immigrant, she is a staff at the hospital, a wife, an aunt, and a woman. Similarly, as a Chinese-American young man, Dwyane Chang is fully Chinese and fully American simultaneously. Just like Coke surpasses boundaries, Hagedorn's characters cross many boundaries, hold synthesized identities, and become their unique selves, rather than being limited by boundaries that define them with a singular identity. Finally, Coke also crosses the boundary between generations because it is reminiscent of different traditional beverages and is simultaneously a symbol of modernity (Falk 53). In Hagedorn's novel, Aunt Fely, Ruby Chang, and Dwyane Chang consume Coke and represent different generations. Despite their difference in age, they share similarly synthesized identities. Although they may struggle to integrate their cultural heritage with American nationality, these characters continue to root and thrive in American society, like Coke thriving across boundaries. While Coke itself is not a perfect symbol for immigrants, the way Hagedorn juxtaposes it with immigrants serve to highlight their complex and synthesized identities and illustrate the way that they succeed in a foreign space.

Besides symbolizing synthesized identities of immigrants across generations, there is even more to this drink in Hagedorn's novel. Rather than a regular Coke, Hagedorn specifies the drink as Diet Coke; on top of the idea that Coke crosses boundaries and becomes a symbol for immigrants, she asks the readers to pay special attention to the concept of dieting across cultures and its implications. Earlier in the novel, in response to Rocky's complaints about her weight, Dr. Sandy employs the idea of dieting to differentiate what is and is not American in her long rant, showing that boundaries can even be constructed through a practice that is as personal as dieting. Dr. Sandy says,

Americans are shortsighted and puritanical. Diets don't work because they are all about denial. . . . what you need is a tapeworm. In South America and Southeast Asia, parasites are a fact of life. You must be suffering from cultural amnesia, Rocky. You're from the Philippines and should already know this. (Hagedorn 139)

In her long rant, Dr. Sandy explicitly categorizes dieting as an American idea, through which she constructs a boundary between what is and is not American: being concerned about weight and going on diets is American while "eat[ing] whatever you want" and relying on tapeworm is not American (Hagedorn 139). Under Dr. Sandy's problematic correlation between dieting

and identity, Rocky is criticized for being dissatisfied about her weight because it would categorize her as American when she is not supposed to be American given her Filipino heritage. According to Dr. Sandy, cultural amnesia is the only reason why Rocky would be concerned about weight because it is an illness that makes Rocky forget that she is Filipino and not American. Falsely associating dieting with ethnic and cultural identities, Dr. Sandy not only presents an absurd stereotype that South American and Southeast Asian people are primitive and rely on parasites to be healthy, but also shows a disregard for Rocky's American identity and arbitrarily defines her as only Filipino. Discrediting and ridiculing Dr. Sandy's rhetoric, Hagedorn deliberately makes multiple immigrant characters drink Diet Coke rather than regular Coke, which symbolizes their participation in American diet culture even if they are not necessarily concerned about their weight. The symbolism implies that anyone can participate in the dieting culture; thus, the boundary between being and not being American cannot be constructed over dieting. As such, Hagedorn takes down one more boundary that treats immigrants as outsiders of American society when she has them participate in the same food culture with the "Americans" defined by Dr. Sandy and deconstructs the idea that only Americans can consume diet foods.

Besides Spam and Diet Coke that traverse boundaries, the restaurants and food businesses opened and run by immigrants are demonstrations of food crossing physical and cultural boundaries with people's transnational movements into the United States. As the "proprietors of the Lucky Phoenix Noodle Palace in Oakland," Edison and Ruby Chang bring Chinese food into the boundaries of American society, as many other Chinese immigrants have done throughout history. Since the start of Chinese immigration into the United States, food has been traversing geographical and social boundaries together with the immigrants. During the Gold Rush in the mid-eighteenth century, early Chinese immigrants started to open restaurants in California and initiated the history of Chinese restaurants in America (Liu 1). Along with history, the first Chinese restaurant, Canton Restaurant, has evolved into many authentic Chinese restaurants run by immigrants nowadays as well as Panda Express, an Americanized Chinese food chain (Liu). In history and in Hagedorn's novel, the immigration of food is always synchronized with the immigration of people. Besides the Changs, Milagros Rivera is also the owner of a food business, Lumpia Express. She brings Filipino food into America as she migrates across the ocean. Characterizing Elvis' parents and

Milagros as restaurant owners serving Chinese and Filipino food across borders, Hagedorn reminds her readers of the intertwined history between immigration and Asian food businesses, uses restaurant owner as a position to symbolize her characters' identities as immigrants, and reflects the prevalence of transnational movements.

After ethnic foods have been transported across geographical boundaries and accepted into America, they continue to cross cultural boundaries within the multiethnic and multicultural American society. As immigrants cater to American consumers, the new food items that they create surpass boundaries that define food traditions and demonstrate how immigrants explore new possibilities with their cultural heritage. Taking lumpia across the border into America and supporting her household with Lumpia Express, Milagros makes new variations on the traditional food in order to expand her business in the multicultural American society. As Rocky records, Milagros "concocted" innovations such as "Mexi-Lumpia (stuffed with avocado and jalapeño chili, salsa on the side) and New Wave Lumpia (bite-size, vegetarian)" (Hagedorn 19). Fusing Lumpia, a Filipino food, with Mexican food, Milagros caters to the considerable Mexican and Hispanic population in California. In the process, lumpia crosses the traditional boundary that confines it within Filipino culture, demonstrating how immigrants create new possibilities with food and navigate in a multicultural society. Creating New Wave Lumpia, Milagros adapts to rising food trends that emphasize healthy and sustainable eating in American society, including vegetarianism and eating smaller portions.

The adaptation illustrates how lumpia crosses the boundary that defined it as a traditional cultural food and finds its place in the evolving modern food culture. Together, the fusion between Filipino and Mexican food and the modern adaptation of lumpia illustrate how Milagros crosses traditional boundaries that define how she makes food. Crossing such boundaries, she creates new possibilities with food, gives new energy to food traditions, and adapts traditional Filipino food into modern American society. The adaptation process symbolizes the flexibility of immigrants who navigate boundaries and thrive in a foreign society, preserving traditions while creating new variations with their cultures. As indicated by Hagedorn through her portrayal of her characters and their relationship with food, transnational movement brings about exciting innovations of food and possibilities of culture mixing. At the same time, she reminds readers of

the potential loss of authenticity of an ethnic food when it is blended into American culture, thereby projecting her concern for immigrants who might lose their traditionally defined identity as they cross the borders.

In addition to presenting how people construct and cross boundaries through food and how foods traverse boundaries with people, Hagedorn shows how food can also bridge the gap between boundaries and bring people together across borders. Throughout the novel, while food largely serves to mark Rocky's American identity, it ultimately brings back her memories of the Philippines, her homeland. After her mother's death, Rocky goes back to Manila for the first time since her immigration to America. Despite the initial sense of being a stranger, Rocky starts to recollect her memories of the Philippines when she observes the street. Looking out of the car window, she observes, "here's what's sold on the street: mentholated cough drops, sampaguita leis, painfully sweet peanut brittle. Rice cakes wrapped in banana leaves, still steaming" (Hagedorn 293). Although she has lived in America for many years, Rocky can still pinpoint the food sold on Manila streets. Her ability to instantly recognize and accurately name the food items on the street suggests that she has retained a clear memory of food, which enables her to connect with her homeland. On the other hand, Rocky's familiarity with street food suggests that street food in Manila has remained mostly the same after many years. As Rocky has an immediate sense of familiarity upon her return in the Philippines, it suggests that her food memory and a part of Filipino food culture have both resisted the passage of time and remained unchanged. For Rocky, the unchanged memory and food culture send her a message that even though she has crossed geographic and cultural boundaries into America, she can still feel familiar with her homeland if she maintains her food memory; even if time passes by, her homeland still welcomes her with its unchanging food and culture and accepts her in the same way that it embraced her in her childhood. In this sense, food becomes a thread that sews together Rocky's American present and her Filipino past, suggesting that food can be the a medium for immigrants to connect with their homeland and bridge the gap between many different boundaries that they have crossed.

In Manila, Rocky feels strange and awkward in Luz's house; it is Manang Emy's kitchen that offers her a real sense of familiarity and home, inviting her back into the Filipino side of her identity. Set in the kitchen, the interactions between Rocky and Manang Emy is carried out through food and cooking.

Venturing into the kitchen, Rocky observes Manang Emy prepare for lunch with other servants (Hagedorn 300). At first, Rocky describes herself as “an intruder,” which again exhibits the boundary between where she belongs and does not belong (300). Rocky feels that she does not belong to the kitchen, just like how she did not fit into the Milagros’ lumpia kitchen. However, whereas Milagros rejects her from the kitchen and sends her out on errands, Manang Emy accepts her and allows her to observe the servants “cleaning rice and chopping vegetable” (300). After greeting Rocky, Manang Emy remains unbothered by Rocky’s presence and “went right back to whatever she was doing . . . Chopping meat with her cleaver, barking orders at the other servants in the kitchen” (300). Previously, Milagros’ rejection of Rocky from the lumpia kitchen symbolizes Rocky’s exclusion from Filipino culture and her position as an outsider. Now, Rocky is able to spectate Manang Emy making food, rebuild a connection with Filipino cooking, and potentially reestablish the cultural bond with her homeland. Accepting Rocky into the Kitchen, Manang Emy is symbolically welcoming Rocky back home and back into the Filipino culture by offering her a comfortable space to stay in and a sense of belonging. In this scene, the steadiness and peacefulness of home is carried by food, which shows that food can bridge the gap between the boundaries of acceptance and rejection, offering a sense of belonging to individuals after their disorienting transnational movements.

The scene between Rocky and Manang Emy closes with Manang Emy “lift[ing] one of the cauldron lids to check on the rice” and then “turning down the flame on the stove” in order not to overcook the rice (Hagedorn 305). The scene ends with rice, one of the most important food symbols for Filipino culture and identity. As Doreen Fernandez observes, rice is “a food of symbolic as well as central value to the Filipinos” (“Historias” 289). As a native staple food, rice is ubiquitous throughout Filipino history. Comparing rice to mana in the Bible, Spanish friar Juan J. Delgado of the Society of Jesus in the eighteenth century writes in his account that “although Christ said that man cannot live by bread alone, the Indios can live by rice alone” (qtd. in Fernandez “Historias” 289). For the Filipinos, rice is essential for their living and also serves to connect people on a spiritual level as a bridge between life and after-life. In Hagedorn’s novel, rice even connects Milagros and her estranged husband in the Philippines across geographical boundaries as well as the boundary between life and death. One night, Milagros dreams that her husband desperately asks for food and that she goes into the kitchen

and cooks rice for him; the next morning, she concludes, “the dream was a sign. He’s going to die, very soon” (Hagedorn 209). As Milagros interprets her husband’s request for food as a sign for his proximity to death, her action to cook rice means that rice would accompany and comfort the dying man during the final bit of his life journey. Connecting an estranged couple across the ocean and accompanying the old man in his transitional phase between life and death, rice transcends geographical and spiritual boundaries between people and between different phases of life. With the significance as “a physical, economic, symbolic, perhaps mythic entity” in the Philippines, rice is also able to encode Manang Emy’s sincere pleasure to see Rocky back home in the Philippines and symbolize her invitation for Rocky to return to the Filipino side of her identity (Fernandez, “Histórias, Crônicas” 294).

Despite such invitation, Rocky’s position in relation to the boundary between an insider and outsider of Filipino culture remains ambiguous. Throughout the scene where Manang Emy cooks in the kitchen, Rocky remains an observer who is only “mesmerized” by Manang Emy’s cooking but never tries to be a direct participant in the food making process (Hagedorn 303). In the same way that she watches Marlon cooking adobo, Rocky observes Manang Emy “scraping the insides of the fish, getting ready to stuff it with onions, tomato, garlic, baby shrimp” (Hagedorn 303). Although Rocky seems to have great familiarity with the ingredients and cooking process, she is still an observer rather than a participant. As opposed to her ambiguous relationship with Filipino cooking, she directly participates in American cooking when she makes roast chicken and tossed green salad (Hagedorn 238). While she is accepted in Manang Emy’s kitchen and feels familiar with the food, it is not certain if she would take an active step to be a participant and cross back into Filipino culture. Hagedorn does not give readers a clear answer. However, till the end of the novel, Rocky does seem to be more comfortable with her American identity. Her choice of and identification with an American identity offers a possible solution for other people who are also faced with multiple boundaries that try to pull them in and define their identities. As Hagedorn suggests through Rocky and her relationship with food, it is not wrong for people with transnational backgrounds to choose and stick to their American side of identity, even if their homeland may offer loving and sincere invitations to draw them back.

Throughout *The Gangster of Love*, Hagedorn portrays different characters constructing and crossing geographical, ethnic, cultural, and

even spiritual boundaries as they produce and consume food. With lumpia, Milagros constructs the boundary between Filipino and Chinese ethnicities to maintain her Filipino identity, but crosses the boundary of traditional food to thrive in a multicultural America. With adobo, Marlon creates a similar boundary that defines who is and is not Filipino, partially includes Elvis, and partially identifies him as an outsider. Constantly faced with the tension between being American and being Filipino, Rocky manifests her American identity through her preferences for American dishes and cooking. Many other food items and foodways, such as Spam, Diet Coke, and restaurants, serve to identify immigrants and suggest their social status before and after their immigration. As Roland Barthes argues, food “sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies . . . all food serves as a sign among the members of a given society” (21). Throughout the novel, food is more than a carrier of nutrition, but serves as important symbols for identity, transnational movements, and social status. Using food to construct boundaries in *The Gangster of Love*, Hagedorn not only manifests the identity traits of her characters in a concrete and vivid way, but also give meanings to their experience and social positions through food, reflecting the cultural and social significance of food. Through the relationship between characters and food, Hagedorn shows readers not only the prevalence of transnational movement and its potential cost and gains, but also the subtle strategies and anxiety of immigrants who try to establish their identities in a foreign land.

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A Carnival with Restraint

Deconstruction of National Identity in Cloud Nine

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In 1974, Caryl Churchill began collaboration with London's Royal Court Theatre, the influence of which persists beyond the end of her residency one year later (Aston and Diamond, xi–xii). The residency transformed the primary medium of Churchill's plays from radio broadcasting to theatrical performance. Royal Court's continuing association with a playwright whose works are laden with avant-garde techniques and feminist agenda endorses the intricate possibility of imbibing experimental drama into mainstream theatre. The first milestone of this long-time collaboration is *Cloud Nine*. Debuted at the Royal Court in 1979, and later transferred to Off-Broadway, it marked the first time that Churchill received wide-scale audience and critical attention on both sides of the Atlantic.

As a commission of a 1978 workshop "about sexual politics" (Churchill 245), *Cloud Nine* dramatizes issues of gender and racial identities with cross-racial and cross-gender dressing, which earns it the reputation of a "radical critique of patriarchy" (Diamond 227). The subversion of the fixed roles designated by patriarchal norms is presented in extremely visual terms against the Victorian African setting of Act I. Yet the almost complete elimination of this technique in the contemporary London of the second act,

along with the playwright's "essential" guide to how cross-dressing shall be conducted, entails criticism on the "consigning of certain other identities . . . to further subjection and invisibility" (Amoko 45) and on showing only "desire in terms that reinforce heterosexuality" (Harding 260). Varying observations about the production's gender and racial representation imply that these issues, apart from being the context of *Cloud Nine*, are themselves in need of contextualization. This essay adopts a historical approach to the portrayal of the British national identity in this play, the understanding of which is crucial to how Churchill conceives her characters and weaves them into the wider spectrum. I propose that *Cloud Nine* deconstructs the myth of national identity in a carnivalesque yet consciously restrained manner. While the satire of the "colonial and sexual oppression" (Churchill 245) during the formation and development of the national identity is palpably expressed in both acts, I detect, from in particular the second act, a sense of restraint in the celebration of this carnival status. Bearing in mind the call for a "carnavalesque theatre" from Churchill's contemporary David Edgar, I read the restraint as, apart from a signal for the return to the national identity the playwright challenges, a tactic invitation to the connection between theatricality and reality on the reader/audience's part, which is vital for the agenda of this genre of theatre.

In the first act of *Cloud Nine*, patriotism occupies the central stage briefly before sexism or racism takes over, and it is no less intractable than the latter two. Scene one opens with the entire cast—a family of seven living in Africa under British rule in the Victorian era, singing in praise of England's grandeur. Standing out between their outward identity as citizens of Great Britain and their inward recognition with the English ethnical identity is the intricacy of defining a "British" national identity. In her seminal work *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Linda Colley contends that the years between the Acts of Union and Queen Victoria's ascent to the throne witnessed the formation of an overarching British identity that bonded the Britons with, among others, the idea of an empire against the country's religious and military rivals on the European continent (5–7). In this light, the major expansion of the British Empire in the Victorian era could further consolidate the British national identity. Given the overwhelming dominance of England in its representation at that time, in the current setting of Churchill's play, a picture of the British national identity can be

largely drawn from the language, manners, behaviour, etc. of this family of English origin.

Considering also that the play delineates two periods in the history of one nation, the historical aspect of its national identity, be it about inheritance or evolution, cannot go unnoticed. It seems appropriate then, to invite Anthony D. Smith's definition of a nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, *common myths* and *historical memories*, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (14, italics mine). In the first place, this definition involves fundamental elements that are related to the genesis of colonial and sexual oppression in Churchill's narrative. More importantly, Smith accentuates the past's presence in any national identity by mentioning "historical" twice, suggesting that even though national identity evolves with time, it always contains the territorial, mythological, and cultural memories from its earlier stages. The Victorian era, with its long stretch across most of the nineteenth century, has left considerable imprints on the national identity of Great Britain. Thus the Victorian setting of the first act cannot circumvent two myths, one being the colonial expansion crucial for the making of an empire, the other the prevalence of what is now recognized as the Victorian morality.

As Spivak puts it, to read any nineteenth century British literature one has to bear in mind the "imperialism, understood as England's social mission," because it "was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" (243). While globally speaking colonization functioned as the main form of imperialism, within the domestic sphere the ideology seeped into the moral codes, regulating every member's behaviour and etiquette. As a typical family drama about the nineteenth century, the first act is haunted by the Victorian ghosts hidden behind an imperialist and sexist national identity. The opening stage direction, constituted by four concise phrases—"Low bright sun. Verandah. Flagpole with union jack. The Family" (251), taxonomizes the essence of Victorian Britishness. The "low bright sun" shines on "the Empire on which the sun never set," bringing back the memory when the country's colonial power was at its pinnacle. Verandah, as part of a popular style of colonial building in the mid-nineteenth century, impregnates the colonist's attempt to "adapt to the local environment and yet still try to remind the occupants of 'Britain' and of 'British values'" (Luscombe). The union jack flag is self-evidently a manifestation of Britain's territorial ownership over its African colony. Last but certainly not the least, the capitalized "Family"

expands the sheer physical embodiment seen in the previous three objects. It symbolizes, to appropriate Plato's terms, a universal form that unites all puzzle pieces of an ideal nuclear family in Victorian Britain. The union of the husband and wife consolidates the family tradition, which, with the heterosexual marriage, promises the continuation of prosperity with the births of a son and a daughter. Senile guidance is assigned to the mother-in-law, while the addition of the servant and governess furnishes the economic sufficiency of the Queen's upper-middle class representatives abroad. The reading of the first few lines evokes associations indicative of the play's theme and subjects as revolving around the establishment of a national identity at that particular time.

Each character is to the Family what each fragment of the identity that they represent to the holistic Identity of the British people, but there is some character that is more "representable" than others. In Act I this character is the colonist and husband, Clive. As the descendent of the patriarch archetype, Clive embodies the twin Victorian values of Empire and Family, and according to the confession of his explorer friend and admirer Harry, "the empire is one big family" (Churchill 266). By stringing together all other characters under the protection of the same roof, Clive demands their dependency or servitude in return. In the first scene, Clive's rhyming couplets speak through the lines of his family, friends and servants, formulating the audience/reader's preconception of the women, children, and African natives before they have the chance to speak. In Clive's descriptions of his wife—a delicate and sensitive little dove, his servant—"you can hardly notice that the fellow's black," and his son—who will be taught to "grow up to be a man", he writes a narrative for those who constitute the Empire with the white male patriarchs and colonists. In *his* discourse, women, children, and colonized natives are conditioned around the patriarchal centre. These marginalized groups become the othered object in juxtaposition with the male-written, male-toned myth of national identity. As a result, the codes of conduct of the marginalized groups are under strict regulation of the patriarch, to the extent that these people have internalized the values that are designed to execute their oppression. Under Clive's influence, his wife Betty repetitively exhorts herself and is told by others that she is not strong enough. When she and Ellen are playing balls, they are greeted by the men's "murmurs of *surprise* and congratulations" (Churchill 265, italics mine), and she stops immediately when her son

Edward demands her to stop—her character and action all abide by her husband's instruction and the social convention.

The internalization of gender roles is born out of the importance of duty in Victorian morality. Since most women of the Victorian era have no share in the public sphere, the private space of family becomes the only performing ground of their duties. Acting in accordance with proper femininity is one of the few, if not the only, means to fulfil such duties. Harold Perkin, when attributing the rise of modern English society partly to Victorian legacies, observes that the Victorian prototype of the "perfect lady" is the "completely leisured, completely ornamental, completely helpless and dependent middle-class wife or daughter" (129). The achievement of the feminine ideal is perhaps even more desirable in families installed overseas because feeling "the sentiments and shared institutional values" as well as building "family and community connections" are ways to mitigate the sense of diaspora and be spiritually closer to the homeland (Poore 6). Admitting that "this whole continent is my enemy" (Churchill 277), Clive expects that British boots are better than those in Africa, while Betty considers a good visitor as one "from home" (Churchill 252). For them, the desire to indulge in "materialized" homeliness, along with the practise of gendered social codes from home, is indispensable for the fostering of a patriotic sense of superiority.

Beautified as a citizen's dutiful services to the Queen, the inherent oppressive quality of imperial Britishness is revealed in the play as a parasite, for it thrives in the name of family yet distorts the very nature of family. Parental authority becomes a justification for unjustifiable inequalities. The advice from Betty's mother Maud, who constantly regulates her daughter that she should follow her parents and grandparents and remain a dutiful, sacrificing, patient wife under any circumstance, bears certain resemblance to Queen Victoria's letters to her newlywed daughter, in which she concludes that "the poor woman is bodily and morally the husband's slave" (254). While Maud's words are more of an inculcating guidance, Clive's authority emanates a threatening note when he tells Edward that "you should always respect and love me not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I respected and loved my own father, because he was my father" (Churchill 276). According to this Victorian parent, Edward needs to love Clive not because Edward cares for him *like* a father, but for the mere reason that Clive *is* his father. Duty is hailed for its historical longevity in the national tradition, not for its innate value and content. The supposed parent-child love is deformed to suit social

requirements, and one's desire and preference is suppressed both externally and internally.

In deciding who shall be included as the nation's rightful citizen, it is the likes of Clive—the white heterosexual male, who make rules and then lead the game. The “others,” on the other hand, carry enormous risks, because their duty to the patriarchal centre is tenuously subject to the arbitrary manipulation of the patriarch. Their active or passive centrifugal tendency will possibly result in a complete loss of the national identity. Betty has to deny the affection she harbours for Harry because she shoulders the responsibility of a faithful British wife, yet when Clive is aware of her minor trespassing, he not only vilifies her, but also threatens to banish her from the native British land with the claim that “if I shot you every British man and woman would applaud me” (Churchill 277). Likewise, at the discovery of Harry's homosexuality, Clive also denounces it as “a betrayal of the Queen” (Churchill 283). Unlike Betty, her widowed neighbour Mrs. Saunders enjoys more freedom as a “stateless” woman, for without a husband, she is much less bounded by need to conform to gender roles in order to perform her national duty. There is no one to forcefully forbid her from riding outside or having an affair. The comparison between Betty and Mrs. Saunders at this early stage of the play conveys Churchill's notion that if one must exchange individuality and freewill for a national identity, then perhaps living without this identity is not necessarily worse than living with it. Although in her relationship with Clive, Mrs. Saunders is not exempt from being the victim of unfair rules, embodied in her is the play's urge to denounce an oppressive national identity.

It is evident that as a text, the first act of *Cloud Nine* integrally preserves the Victorian gender and social stereotypes which are the fundamental ingredients of a “good” British citizen. While traditional realist theatre also deals with these issues, it is the incorporation of cross-dressing that announces Churchill's breaking away from previous approaches that adopt such techniques for practical or mere comical effects. Her stage direction for the first act requires Betty, Joshua and Edward to be played by actors opposite to the characters' sex or race. Comic in its nature, it is befitting to critically approach cross-dressing with Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival and the carnivalesque. Bakhtin's inquiry into the carnivalization of literature finds its origin in ritualistic events which, as he observes, become carnival in its interruption and suspension of the usual order of life. In place of the order,

the carnival festivals invite a new order that rejects, reinvents, subverts, and destructs the old one, the process of which is reproduced in literary works partially in the forms of “ambivalent images” and “parody” (Bakhtin 126, 127). Cross-dressing initiates what Bakhtin defines as a collection of metaphors “saturated with a specific *carnival sense of the world*” (107), so that the related events in the act serve as the site of carnival satire by ridiculing the stern image of the British national identity, making it the subject of performative parody—as the humour and farce is to be seen rather than be read—instead of an inviolable authority.

With cross-dressing, Churchill’s stage becomes what Bakhtin would call “the reverse side of the world,” the playground of “life turned inside out” (122). Apart from its “violation of the usual and the generally accepted” (Bakhtin 126), cross-dressing reveals Betty, Edward, and Joshua as constructed “characters” instead of actual individuals living in the “reality” on stage. Betty is played by a male actor because she is the product of male supremacy. Meanwhile, although Churchill notes that “Betty does not value herself as a woman” (245), her intense internalization of the Victorian femininity under the male gaze suggests quite the opposite. As a character, Betty values herself very much as a woman, while the deliberately unshielded maleness of her performer, when it is thrust into a corset in a farcical manner, interrogates the narrow set of signs that defines womanliness. Similarly, Edward is portrayed by an adult woman as a jocosely tribute to the association between children and women, and between homosexuality and femininity. A white actor takes the role of Joshua in order to externalize his mental whitewashing, after he has renounced any attachment to his tribe and parents with the declaration that “my skin is black but oh my soul is white” (Churchill 251). In addition, the racial and gender subversion in *Cloud Nine* alters the Bakhtinian concept in that it is a reversal of the reversed. In the carnival festival cited by Bakhtin as an archetype, a slave who is crowned king anticipates the climax of the celebration, and such “profanation” is carnival because it involves a lower party that is “playing with the symbols of higher authority” (125). In *Cloud Nine*, however, it is the “king” (the white male) that plays the “slave” (the black and the woman); it is the higher authority that is forced to play with the lower symbols, denoting that the gendered and racial hierarchy is perched on changeable rules.

When its fundamental hierarchies are placed under scrutiny, the national identity is destabilized. When Clive addresses the male Betty, the white Joshua, and the adult and female Edward, the problematic nature of his commands, which in usual circumstances might be accepted without any second thought, is revealed and his authority discredited. The formidable embodiment of the national identity stoops to vulnerability with the exposure of his contradictoriness and pretension. Ostensibly Clive displays a dominant and rational self, holding a dubious view of women by condemning their dark side that “threatens what is best in us” (Churchill 282)—the best being the male camaraderie between him and Harry. Ironically, though, he surrenders to the dark side with an insatiable and uncontrollable lust for the sexual favour of Mrs. Saunders, a woman “dark like this continent” (Churchill 263). Act I contains a scene where Clive performs oral sex to Mrs. Saunders, but his orgasm arrives prematurely when he rushes to perform his patriarchal duty at a Christmas picnic, where he has to resort to Champaign stains to excuse the messy residue of unfinished sex. This moment of ruthless hilarity is criticized by Harding as an appropriation of what should be reserved for a more controversial, cross-racial gay sex scene between Harry and Joshua, but the exposure of Clive’s sexual impotency should not be invalidated as solely a means to “desexualize” (262) homosexual characters. Rather, “desexualizing” Clive is another option to directly overthrow the established, ascendant position of male heterosexuality in constituting the national identity. This otherwise tabooed joke attests to the carnival status of the ongoing theatrical spectacle.

The exposure of Clive’s sexual failure also prompts an investigation of the double standard with regard to sexuality. In the binary opposition of the oppressor and the oppressed, and almost all dichotomies, the peripheral existence of the secondary term is indispensable for the functioning and maintenance of the primary one, because the privilege of the “centre” will be annulled by the absence or disorder of the margins. It is not surprising, therefore, that Clive’s constant compliments of his mistress’s “amazing spirit” (Churchill 259, 260, 286) cannot conceal the paradoxical threat he feels by the overthrowing dark feminine power, and for fear of seeing that in his wife, he prohibits any disloyalty on her part. After discovering his friend Harry is gay, Clive is eager to marry Harry to his widowed mistress. Mrs. Saunder’s refusal leads to Harry’s match with Ellen, a lesbian governess who not long ago has professed her love to Betty. The patriarch’s attempt to put everyone

back into “normal” categories, together with the privileged sexual freedom he exclusively enjoys, reiterates the inequality between the citizens, and with it, the hypocrisy of a non-inclusive national identity that justifies hierarchy as a means to sustain order, which in return reinforces this hierarchy. The use of cross-dressing, which visually contradicts Clive’s initial, stereotype-saturated description of other characters, questions his position at the top of that hierarchy and allows the carnival breach of order seeps through the cracks of the identity’s formidable facade.

Carnival subversion culminates in the metaphorical collapse of Clive that concludes Act I. Joshua raises the gun at Clive, possibly to revenge for the murder of his parents by Clive’s troops. Edward is the only witness to Joshua’s action, but he acquiesces to it by covering his ears and doing nothing more. This scene acts out both the Oedipus complex of killing the father and Bakhtin’s idea of “decrowning the king” (124), and as Churchill does not reveal whether Clive is killed, the audience’s focus remains on the process of the killing. Therefore, when the Victorian era take the curtain call, it finishes on the climax of a carnival celebration of “the shift itself, the very process of replaceability” (Bakhtin 125), leaving the suspense to the next act, where the contemporary setting, provides contemporary devices to deconstruct the national identity.

The above analysis of Act I illustrates how the Victorian and colonial setting complicates the representation of gender and race within the drastically expanded national border. Equally important is the 1979 London in the second act, where the concept of national identity expands in pluralistic ideology despite the postcolonial shrinking of Britain’s territorial area when after World War II, multiple colonies succeeded in claiming independence. Regional cultural differences and military disputes within Britain also arise as a relatively evident concern with the Northern Irish connection of the character Lin and her family. Departing from the previous act where Englishness and Britishness are somewhat interchangeable, this act witnesses the multiplication of the “constituents” of the British national identity, while paradoxically, with the rising prominence of ethical identities in different regions, the term itself, as observed by Colley, is perhaps insufficient to contain and reflect all the sub-identities (373–375). These condensations and expansions, being synchronic with the composition of the play, are what the playwright brings into further

scrutiny, but simultaneously, she is inevitably influenced and occasionally encumbered by the ramifications of the transition.

Compared with the previous act, Act II radiates a more palpable optimism for some solid historical reasons. The late Victorian years witnessed the women's suffrage movement becoming a national cause, which eventually gained vote for all women above the age of 21 in 1928. In 1967, the abolishment of buggery laws decriminalized homosexual conducts. Hence Churchill's re-arrangement in the stage direction, which now dictates every role except Cathy be played by an actor of that role's own sex, is an acknowledgement of the improved conditions for the women's and LGBT rights, showing that in 1979, more people can live according to their own will and be the rightful citizens without the renouncement of certain rights in exchange for a recognized national identity. The comic tendency also relies heavily on carnivalization, and this time its target is some overarching motifs such as space and time. Their proximity to issues of territory, history, and literature denotes that their participation in the playwright's carnival review of the British national identity is of significant implications.

Space is transformed from a gendered one to now a public arena similar to Bakhtin's "carnival square" (128). The moralist philosophers of the Victorian era have conspired to create the myth of "separate spheres" (Marsh), which allocates conventional women as "the Angels in the house." Back in *Cloud Nine's* Victorian Africa, the gendered roles that define the national identity for men and women are characterized by spatial segregation. African bushes and jungles are alienated into a taboo area of considerable risks so that the British people can "imagine themselves as safe" (Freedgood 131). Women are not allowed to transgress into these regions—hence comes Betty's comparison of her extramarital affinity toward Harry with "going out into the jungle" (Churchill 261). The outside belongs to the white male colonists, and their exploration is considered an act of great valour of national service, with the potential to defeat, assimilate, and even "civilise" the native people lying in ambush in the jungle. When the local rebels are being flogged by Clive and Harry, the blinds of the house are drawn to prevent women from witnessing the bloody, inhumane punishment. Contrary to the confinement of women to the interior of the house, the entirety of Act II takes place in a park, where the idea of carnival reaches out to "the whole people" (Bakhtin 128). The most carnival event in the play would happen later in the same park. The description of its setting, composed of a similar set of crisp phrases

like the opening of Act I, draws a sharp contrast to the Victorian and colonial rigidity seen previously. It reads: "*The park. Summer night. Victoria, Lin and Edward drunk*" (Churchill 307).

The setting prefigures an important device to carnivalize the space—the carnival fire that can "simultaneously destroy and renew the world" (Bakhtin 126). Under the influence of alcohol, Edward, Victoria, and Lin try to conjure up an ancient "Goddess of many names" who creates life "before Christ" (Churchill 308). As is known that the goddess initiates creation, she hints back to the great goddess in Joshua's African creation story in the first act (Churchill 279-80). Joshua's immediate denial of the verisimilitude of his story and his acknowledgement of the truthfulness of the Christian one concur with the notion that "the rise of Victorianism...is usually attributed to...the Evangelicals," or the promulgation of Christianity in the British colonies at large (Perkin 231), and thus, Christianity helps both to connect the overseas citizens/colonists of the British Empire and to extend the religious side of identity assimilation to the colonized. As Victoria calls the goddess by the name of "Innin, Inanna, Nana, Nut, Anat, Anahita, Istar, Isis" (Churchill 308), the goddess turns out to be Astarte, whom "the heathen idol worshippers of the Bible" pray to (Stone 9), so her temples are very likely to have been burnt by Christians.

In this light, this fire rings bell to the scene in Act I where Clive and Harry set fire to the houses of non-Christian natives to whom Joshua belongs, yet the dynamics of the two scenes are different. The African natives of the nineteenth century, with their pagan religion, is consumed by the imperial fire, but for the three characters in the late 1970s, although they are outcasts of the Empire's heterosexual-oriented ideology and therefore "pagans" in a non-religious sense, their recalling of the burning of the goddess's pagan temples against the backdrop of a public "carnival square" on a hot dark night evokes the image of the fire as liberating and reviving, especially given that by this time, both Edward and Victoria have grown out of the confinements of parental expectations and accepted their bisexuality. Edward is played by a male actor, and Victoria is no longer a dummy as she is in Act I. The transition signals the death of the previous performed self and hopefully the birth of a new spontaneous self. With the following sex orgy and the visit of Lin's dead brother as a ghost, the carnivalesque combines with the grotesque. The blasphemous dallying with the country's dominant religion, accompanied by orgasm and sexual freedom, sends the characters literally on "cloud nine."

The carnival space temporarily invades into the rational territory of the country with the life force of chaotic parody.

The simultaneity of death and life in the act of becoming draws attention to the defamiliarization of time. Originally, the historical time is “riddled with issues of power and hegemony”—even the calendar, the apparatus of time which people have taken for granted, is established by and honoured in the name of a pope (West-Pavlov 8). Time is valuable to the national identity in terms of the cultural heritage and ancestral authority it houses. As one enters into the carnival space, however, the starting point and destination of one’s life, which supposedly is separated by decades of years, is accommodated in delicate harmony, and even braided together into a moebius strip. The historical time is brought upon an infinite trail without an “end,” always returning to the original locus. There is then a transition in time, to quote Matthew Arnold, from “a having and a resting” to “a growing and a becoming” (62); its believed objectivity is veiled by a Bahtkin touch of “joyful relativity” (132). The “time difference” between the 100 years between the acts and the mere 25 years added to the characters timely works as the reminder of time’s subjectivity. Churchill explains the choice of compressed timeline by recalling that during the workshop, the entire company felt that their sex and marriage education was conventional, “almost Victorian” (246). The temporal dislocation between two acts shows that the predominance of memory that looms large behind the present, as is the case with the old national identity that extends far beyond the Empire’s historical reality. Colonialism has its resurgence when Lin mentions that her soldier brother is killed in a dispute with Northern Irish troops. Similarly, although Clive is physically absent from Act II, his patriarchal influence still hangs “in the air” around his wife and children. For them, growing and becoming means to break the shackles of the past identity yet also to be injured by it. In the carnival celebration of the “death” of the old identity, one remains conscious and acutely aware of the pain from time’s arrow.

The quandary of the characters who are confronted by the reinterpreted time narrative discloses a restraint in Churchill’s carnivalization of national identity. Peculiarly stood out is her ambivalent attitude towards how children should be brought up in the new female experience she unequivocally advocates. Victoria’s rejection of domination falters when Tommy requires the continuous care and attention of the mother. Lin’s refusal to cultivate submissive femininity in Cathy induces a child of unsettling verbal and

physical violence. Churchill requires that Cathy shall be played by a man, yet the role's impression on the audience absentmindedly underlines the playwright's subjection to stereotypes, and thus undermines her rationale that "the size and presence of a man" befits "the emotional force of young children" (Churchill 246). It seems that due to the rule of moderation that has contributed to the popular characterization of Englishness, the playwright inadvertently identifies with the national identity on which multiple theatrical devices are employed to deconstruct.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the restraint in unresolved situations, in the slight sense of indecisiveness and frustration forge the link between theatricality and reality. Churchill's own experience juggling child rearing and playwriting in the early 1970s mirrors those "working mother" characters in *Cloud Nine*, recorded as a feeling of guilt when she had to hire babysitters to make room for writing time. She raises the perpetually perplexing question "are plays more important than raising kids?" (Keyssar 79-80), a theme she continued to explore, and left an also somewhat ambivalent, not completely "subversive" answer in her next major work *Top Girls* (1982). Toward the dénouement of *Cloud Nine*, characters from Act I return to the stage to address the "new woman" Betty, and their words are unsurprisingly more Victorian than modern. Particularly noticeable is Clive's lament that "I used to be proud to be British" (Churchill 320). To some extent, Clive and his mention of the communal concept of a nation function as a social commentator. Together with the revisits of other characters from the previous act, he recontextualizes the second act to highlight that the social environment tends to move forward ideologically at a slower pace, and in return exerts scrutinizing impact on individuals that develops ahead of it. Further, although characters in the second act do "change a little for the better" (Churchill 246), the subtle timing of 1979, which is caught between the two waves of feminism, suggests that at that moment, the evolvement of a more inclusive national identity, particularly the gender-related portion, is a tendency without a concrete direction, and that *Cloud Nine* inevitably carries an element of tentative experimentation whose quality of innovation fades with the procession of time. This possibly explains why the criticism of under- and/or misrepresentation of gender and race took nearly two decades to arrive at the late 1990s.

The four decades that stride between the composition of *Cloud Nine* and the present urges the contact of the ingrained theatricality of a play

with a reality which, provided that the play text is “frozen,” has now gone ahead of it. Understanding this necessity is crucial if *Cloud Nine* intends to avoid the verdict that it is “only for the 1980s.” To realize this implies that Churchill’s restraint in the carnival deconstruction be considered as less the misgiving of the magnitude of effectiveness of the carnival deconstruction, but more of a contemplation, or a proposal to contemplate, on the dilemma faced by progressive movements when they encounter opposing forces in a realist setting. More importantly, the awareness on the play’s own historicity can buttress the aim of carnivalesque theatre, as David Edgar professes, to combine Brechtian alienation with Bakhtinian sensuality (31) as an attempt to free the carnival out of its limited timeframe and evoke the audience’s critical thinking. Further, it also works to negotiate between the estrangement that paves way for the sociological function of the theatre (Brecht 254–55) and the same awareness of distinction that renders anything theatrical as irrelevant to reality (Butler 527). As the production history of *Cloud Nine* features multiple alterations to the placement of lines and the doubling of the cast (Godiwala 161–71), it is also worthwhile to investigate how the playwright’s casting arrangements, made in the early 1980s on cross-dressing, can be modified to maximize its agenda while retaining the necessary humour and farce for current audiences.

The most recent commercial revival of *Cloud Nine* opened in late 2015 to generally favourable reviews, the exclamation that “1979 feels not like yesterday but today” (Brantley) is not unmixed with, once again, regrets of certain flaws the production “makes no attempt to remedy” (Soloski). Carnavalesque in its juxtaposition of incongruous elements, *Cloud Nine* is regarded till this day as the site where people of various backgrounds expect to see their specific exigency noticed and performed. This is, without doubt, an enormous mission, and engages are both presenting the play’s interpretation and reinterpreting the play—a product of confined spatiality and temporality—as an attempt to expand or redefine its scope and ethics. National identity and its related historical and social issues can perhaps cooperate as a modest assistant, for its dawns on the possibility for theatre’s participants to wonder what it takes in reality to be a national, an individual of, in *Cloud Nine’s* case, Britain, and of any other country as well.

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Forum Prompt

Adaptation Studies

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At first glance, one might assume that adaptation studies is the study of adaptations. That is true, to a certain extent, but it is more accurate to say that adaptation studies is a way to understand texts, generally, rather than the study of a particular kind of texts. At its most basic level, an adaptation studies approach to texts is fairly simple. Any attempt to understand a text requires that we compare it to what we already know. A biographical approach to a literary text, for instance, demands that we interpret based on what we know of the author's life. A Marxist approach stipulates that texts, as well as the characters and events they portray, function within socioeconomic systems. Understanding those systems, thus, allows us to understand texts. Adaptation studies functions in a similar way, but in the case of adaptation studies texts are understood in relation to other texts. It is, in short, a comparative method.

If I want to understand a new film titled *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, it pays to have a working knowledge of Jane Austen's 1813 novel. With their title, the filmmakers have provided a warrant, and even an invitation, for viewers to compare the two texts. The same would be true if the film were

titled *Bride and Prejudice*, or *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. In each case there is a suggestion that there is a special relationship between Austen's novel and the new text. We typically identify this as a hypotext/hypertext relationship, where one text (the hypotext) has clearly been a major source or influence for another (the hypertext).

But an adaptation studies approach need not always be warranted by such a clear invitation. I have argued, in fact, that a relationship perceived by a reader or viewer is sound justification for an adaptation studies approach. Consider, for example, Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*. The title certainly does not encourage readers to compare this novel (or the later film) to other texts. But someone who had recently finished reading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* might see clear analogs between the two texts. Both novels have as characters well-meaning and brilliant, but naïve, scientists who seem more concerned with *if* and *how* a thing can be done, and less concerned with the question *should* it be done. Both novels have man-made monsters, created from the parts of other creatures, and in both cases these creatures achieve some level of agency, and begin to run amok. In both novels family members of the creators are put at risk by the creation.

Notice what I've done there. I've *abstracted* the plots of both novels in a way that emphasizes their similarities. Abstraction is a key move any time you approach text as adaptation. It is fairly straightforward to recognize the BBC's *Sherlock* as a series of adaptations based on Conan Doyle's works, but it does not take too much abstracting to see Fox Network's *House* as an adaptation, too. Notice the similarity in the names, the genius who has trouble relating to normal people, the solving of mysteries, and the bumbling companion (or in the case of *House* the series of bumbling companions). The ability to abstract plots, ideas, and characters is a necessary step in an adaptation studies approach to a text. But one has to be careful. We can abstract too much, simplify too completely. I'll discuss that more later on. But to return to Michael Crichton for a moment, there's another good reason to believe that he might have been influenced by Shelley. Crichton also wrote *The Andromeda Strain*, *Congo*, and *Prey*—each of which has a similar plotline. Crichton seems thoroughly entangled with Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In short, once we establish an abstract relationship, it is useful to have corroborating data, in this case the fact that Crichton has written several novels with similar plots.

It is worth noting that an adaptation studies approach is not limited to plot or characters. It might even apply, as scholars have recently shown, to tone or style. Consider the Netflix series *River*. It has the look and feel of a Nordic Noir like *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* or *The Bridge*, and even stars the Nordic Stellan Skarsgard in the title role. But the plot does not seem to be adapted from any particular Nordic police procedurals. In this case it is merely the Nordic Noir style that has been adapted.

While most of the examples I've cited above involve different kinds of media, that is not a requirement for an adaptation studies approach. The novels of Cormac McCarthy, for instance, have been studied as adaptations of the novels of Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner. So one might take an adaptation studies approach to intra-medial adaptations (novel to novel, for instance), or to "adaptations" that seem to cross even more interesting media boundaries. A novelization, for instance, may be studied as an adaptation. As could a video game that becomes a novel and film series, or an amusement park ride that generates no less than five increasingly bad films.

I have avoided, up until that last sentence, the old saw, "The original was better." But the idea of evaluation brings up the most important question we might ask of an adaptation, or a perceived adaptation. That is, so what? So what if Michael Crichton has adapted *Frankenstein* five or six times in the course of his long career? A few answers spring to mind from this example. The first is that an adaptation studies approach might allow scholars to say something about the pattern of an author's career. That would certainly be worthwhile. But what if, in addition to the similarities we note in an adapted work, we also notice significant differences. Cormac McCarthy might have Ahab-like and Ishmael-like characters in his *Blood Meridian*, but his new characters are also significantly different from Melville's. These differences allow us to see McCarthy not simply as someone remaking *Moby Dick*, but as someone in conversation with Melville and *Blood Meridian* as a novel in conversation with *Moby Dick*. It is genuinely rewarding to recognize how McCarthy responds to the questions of agency or good and evil posed by Melville in *Moby Dick*, or, as noted earlier, to the questions of romance, sacrifice, and intercultural relations posed by Ernest Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

A second "so what" has to do with the different ways texts are adapted over time. In addition to the possibilities already mentioned, consider that

adaptations, particularly when they have reoccurred over long periods of time, are kind of like the study of tree rings. More clearly than original productions, they offer excellent ways to measure the cultural and literary climates of the times when they were made. A quick example can be found in the many filmed adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Each new adaptation is a kind of bug preserved in amber (if you'll forgive the Michael Crichton joke), a particular moment frozen in history. Because we still have Shakespeare's script (more or less) we may more easily notice how each new iteration does slightly different things. Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948) offers insights into the post-WWII world and the rise of Freudianism. Mel Gibson's *Hamlet* (1990) emphasizes the oedipal elements of the play, and *Hamlet 2000*, starring Ethan Hawke, stresses the role technology might play in the narrative. Perhaps just as interesting is the fact that since the age of film hypertexts also persist. Any new production of *Hamlet*, therefore, exists in the context of all the still-available *Hamlets* that have come before. All of this suggests that the choices made by writers, directors, and actors, as well as those made by editors, publishers, reviewers, producers, censors, and studios are a little easier to recognize and identify in adaptations because the hypotexts continue to exist alongside the hypertexts.

As long as we're discussing *Hamlet*, how should we deal with a play/film like Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*? It clearly has something in common with Shakespeare's play, but it's also more than a straightforward adaptation. Most viewers would consider it a parody. But like an adaptation, many of the jokes, and nearly all of the serious content to be found in a parody is only available or visible in the context of the original text. Thus the tools of adaptation studies are completely applicable and perhaps necessary to anyone wishing to understand parody. Even more important is the fact that studying a parody like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* might allow me to gain a new understanding of *Hamlet*, a text that has been studied for more than 400 years.

So how does one begin writing about adaptations? Below I've made a list of possible steps when approaching texts as adaptations. These steps are suggestions, however, rather than hard rules. The main thing to remember is that studying the relationships between texts often highlights unexpected and productive aspects of both hypotexts and hypertexts.

- Recognize a relationship between texts. These relationships can be acknowledged (*Bride and Prejudice*) or unacknowledged (*Jurassic Park*).
- Compare the two (or more, if you are brave) texts. How are they different? How are they the same? I often find it useful at this point to make a series of lists.
- Look for supporting evidence. It would be valuable, for instance, to find an interview where Michael Crichton says that Mary Shelley is his favorite author. Of course, this kind of thing isn't always available, but it is quite useful when it is.
- Look for the "so what?" Does one text make the other more understandable, richer, or unexpectedly interesting?
- Write. Note that the process of writing is reflexive, and you'll likely return to the first four steps several times before you are finished.
- Get published.
- Become famous.
- Make a large donation to the university's English department.

Recursive Art

Sports and Theatre as Adaptations

Chris Althoff

On Super Bowl Sunday, 2018, I sat on my friend Todd's couch watching an old film on TCM. After some gentle prodding, Todd flipped over to the largest American sport event of the year, but it was clear he wasn't very concerned with the action taking place in the matchup between the New England Patriots' veteran super-star quarterback and the surprise backup who led the Philadelphia Eagles to their chance at making history. Despite the drama developing in the football game, my friend's interests remained with TCM—in theatre and film. Don't get me wrong, I also enjoy films, but not to the exclusion of sports. Todd also is not unique by any means. I know plenty of people who detest watching sports. There was even a point in my own life that I wasn't that fond of the activity myself. As I started to think about what I have come to like about both viewing sports and watching theatre/film, and why other people might like one but not the other, I realized that both make me feel an endless variety of emotions: excitement, joy, pride, elation, anticipation, hope, disappointment, heartbreak, inspiration, etc. Sports and, specifically, theatre are both forms of live entertainment. They have similar emotional, cathartic impacts on their audiences. Yet despite their many similarities, we hold theatre above sports as a higher form of culture. In other words, we consider theatre to be art, while sports remain, for most of us, a distinctly low-brow form of entertainment.

Not that sports haven't been seriously considered for their possible merit as art. Wolfgang Iser looked at the aesthetics of sports and how they might fit into the ever-evolving modern definitions of art and sport. In his article "Sport—Viewed Aesthetically and even as Art," Iser opens sport up to critical examination by giving "some reasons why—in today's conditions of art as well as of sport—many people find it highly plausible to call sport an art," (236). In our post-modern culture, art no longer defines the aesthetic but merely represents instances of the aesthetic. Modern art looks to be intermixed with normal life, and "low brow" pop art has been reevaluated and accepted as aesthetically valuable (220–22). But even if the changing view of art allows sports to be in the same conversation as art, it does not mean that sports reach the level of aesthetic significance as traditionally-recognized artforms like theatre.

Defenders of art, or dissenters of sports, recognize the aesthetic values of sports, but segregate them from other art forms by saying they don't have the same "semantic and syntactic density" (Mandoki 84). Objects or activities whose "utilitarian value is greater than its artistic quality or the aesthetic concept behind it" (Kosiewicz 73) should be distinguished from those whose artistic qualities are of greatest value. These distinctions seem to suggest a semantic difference within art itself, a difference that distinguishes between a form of art and an artform. The way Mandoki and Kosiewicz define art seems to emphasize a focus on the form of art, the end product of creation. It is the completed painting, statue, and novel that constitutes art and allows for significant interpretation of meaning. Others might choose to look at artform, or the action itself in the process of creation, as the art. For them, the art lies in the brushstrokes of the painter, the chiseling of the sculptor, and word-choice of the writer. Is it within the product or process that art should be defined?

Performing arts, where the process or act is also the product, complicates the dichotomy between a form of art and an artform. There is no artifact, for instance, in dancing or acting in the same way there is in painting or writing. The action or process of performing arts cannot be separated from the product: the performance. Lev Kreft builds on Paul Woodruff's definition of theatre—actions that are worth watching in a measured time and space—by breaking down the actions into three distinct categories (standard action, mimetic or imitative action, and complex action), thus narrowing down the aesthetics of drama (Kreft 226). The aesthetics of drama

Kreft constructs are the performance of speech, movement, and character in a play. These aesthetics combine sights and sounds and come together to create an example of “Guy Debord’s ‘spectacle,’ emphasizing the role of images as cultural ciphers that carry meanings beyond the people and things pictured” (Little 44).

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that sports share the same attributes that create spectacle in theatre. Both versions of spectacle are created by groups of people working together to perform and reach a specific outcome. The interest in the performances of a sports match and a play, especially one frequently performed like *Hamlet*, does not come from *what* is performed but from *how* it is performed. Once you have seen one soccer match or one performance of *Hamlet*, you have most definitely not seen them all. Each match, each performance, still captures the audience’s interest even though we know that the soccer match will end in victory for one team, and the performance of *Hamlet* will end with a pile of dead bodies on the stage. What changes from performance to performance are the athletes’ and actors’ actions on the playing field and stage. With this in mind, and since “every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance” (Hutcheon 39), looking at the relationships of sports and theatre as adaptations can further contribute to the debate on sports as art. Sports and theatre as adaptations become recursive acts of creation through processes of interpretation. Players, as well as audiences, must interpret idyllic forms, player roles, and narrative arches. This creative recursion allows for comparative analysis, and it is this comparative analysis of cultural ideas and values that is one of the aspects most cherished in the arts. Therefore, the performance of sport and of theatre captures a fundamental human pleasure found in experiencing art, what Linda Hutcheon describes as pleasure coming from “repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise” (4).

To begin, I am going to establish sports and theatre within a frame of platonic idealism. Plato theorized that the physical world was a series of imperfect imitations of the absolute, eternal essences of all “Ideas” or “Forms.” All trees, tables, and chairs are different variations of the metaphysical ideal that they are based on. That metaphysical ideal is difficult to nail down, though. It is an abstracted concept created by combining all the versions of an object into a single entity in the mind. The different versions morph into each other with a palimpsestuous effect that leaves a foggy version of the object

created by the density of overlapping commonalities and the blurred edges of less frequent attributes. Every new experience with a different version of an object adds another layer, giving further details that both distinguish and muddy the abstract ideal.

Applying platonic idealism to activities, there are abstract essences of a play like *Hamlet* and a sport like soccer. Though the use of the term “essence” has had a problematic history in the study of adaptations, as it has generally been applied to describe an absolute, core substance inherent in a text, Paul Woodruff points out the term’s usefulness in trying to define an “essence,” even if it be a relatively abstract ideal the way I have described it above. Woodruff states, “For *Hamlet*, the question is what makes this piece of theater *Hamlet* and not any other thing. Philosophers have used the word ‘essence’ for this kind of importance, and they have held that the aim of definition was to state an essence,” (Woodruff 50). The abstract ideal is an attempt to define the essences of *Hamlet* and soccer, and the script of *Hamlet* and the “Laws of the Game” (the title of the official soccer handbook) are physical representations of those essences. As such, every performance and match is an adaptation of the abstract ideals of the play and sport. To arrive at this physical embodiment of the metaphysical paradigm, everyone involved—the players (in both senses of actor and athlete), coaches, and directors—combine their many experiences watching and performing *Hamlet* or soccer. Thus, the adaptation of a sport or play’s essence is not an interpretive act of a single person but one split across the many different persons participating in each activity.

Each person involved in this collaborative creation has a specific and unique role they must fulfill. The coaches and directors have the perspective to be able to see all the action on the stage or field. They give direction to the players about how they should carry out their roles. The players know that the coach and director have visions they are trying to accomplish, but it is ultimately up to the players to decide how they will choose to portray their roles. Considering every player will have had different experiences with a play or a sport, each of their ideal versions of their particular activity will be slightly different. Each player’s ideal is further complicated by the fact that they are not formed just about the play or sport as a whole but also about the different roles each participant plays in each activity. Before performing their roles, every player must first interpret how that role will function within the context of the greater goals of the activity—to push the plot forward

in a play or to score more points than the competition in a sports match. A defender in soccer must decide if he/she will play an aggressive style and push up with the ball, overlapping with midfielders to create more offensive opportunities, or hang back to make sure the other team's offense doesn't get a fast break. An actor playing Hamlet can choose to portray the titular character as a man who takes brash action in obtaining revenge or as a more pensive, contemplative man willing to enact a slow-burn approach to his vengeance. In every soccer match and performance of *Hamlet*, the different interpretations of each role are constantly interacting and bumping up against each other, requiring each player's interpretation to be continuously adapted in reaction to other players' interpretations.

In order to react to the interpretations of other players, each individual must be prepared to adapt as they perform their roles. Theatre has dress rehearsals; sports have scrimmages. Players are given direction by the people with the vision of the whole stage/field, practice their roles, and learn how their fellow collaborators perform their own in order to learn how to react to each other's strengths or weaknesses. Given the example above of the aggressive defender, the midfielders on that defender's team must be able to anticipate and recognize that that player has the tendency to push forward. That way the midfielder will be ready to fall back to a defensive location and cover for the defender who is out of position. In theatre, actors must be aware of how their colleagues will deliver lines of dialogue so the timing of their response will match the tone they desire. An emotional scene might require a dramatic pause, while a witty quip should be given in quick response or even in interruption of the fellow player. In both activities' practices, players must be able to work together and anticipate the actions of their collaborators in order to realize their common goals.

Sports practices, however, have an extra element to prepare for that theatre does not: an opponent. Though up to this point I have been talking about sports and theatre interchangeably, both can be broken into different offshoots of the same cultural branch of live entertainment: sport is the ludological (the theoretical study of play) offshoot and theatre the narratological. For the facts that sports are games and competitive in nature, athletes must prepare themselves to face and overcome the skills and vision of the other half of the players on the field. Both teams are actively working against each other to impose their visions for the conclusion of the match. There is no guaranteed winner or loser; the game's outcome depends on

the abilities of each opponent to overcome the obstacle that is the opposing team and accomplish the goal of scoring. Each event in the game happens in direct reaction to the events prior to them. Not only is there an element of reactionary physics from the movement of the players and the ball, but players learn and adapt to their opponents' strengths and weaknesses over the course of play. The randomness of the inexact physicality of the game and the element of impromptu decision-making done by the players results in great variations in the way sports matches unfold. While the character parts in a play's script are predictable due to their nature as segments of a linear narrative experience, sports—due to opposing players' determination—exist within a realm of uncertainty that creates suspense and spectacle that entertains in a similar but distinct fashion from the narrative of theatre.

In theatre, adaptations of the narrative structure, which can be broken into basic units called narremes (Dorfman 5), happen before the actual performance. The director and actors in a play can decide what they want to change in a script to accomplish their particular goal in performing the play. They can include, exclude, or change characters, scenes, subplots, specific plot points, and certain setting details like time period or location. Sports do not follow a script but are contained to a certain time, space, and collection of actions by the game's rules. A sports match equivalent of narremes are everything you might keep statistics on or that you would see on a highlight reel: penalties given, points scored, momentum-shifting plays, throws, catches, shots, etcetera. While a sports match does not have a script the players follow in order to tell a narrative, the game events listed above can be selected and interpreted as narremes for a specific match, during or after the fact. The selection of these key moments in a sports match could be referred to as the para-narrative, or the chosen narrative thread that permeates through but is secondary to the main action.

A para-narrative can be created from every sports match. The process of creating that para-narrative is split amongst multiple people with their own ideas as how the narrative will play out and half of which are unwilling to compromise with the other half. The narremes of the para-narrative happen spontaneously and, to some extent, randomly. It reflects the clashing of opposing wills. In some instances, one side's wills, desires, and efforts will overcome the opponent's until the tidal momentum of competitive energy shifts the other direction. The unpredictability of two skilled opponents battling it out in their respective sport can organically create

a fiercely emotional drama that rivals the best of novels, plays, and films. Kosiewicz claims that the emotional drama of sports “inspires various art forms. . . . However, sport is not as significant or powerful a source of artistic inspiration as love, war, or family relationships,” (77-8). What he fails to recognize, though, is that sports can be representative of the universal human experiences he mentions. Art is mimetic; it mimics, represents, recreates artificially, and depicts nature or life. Art as such is a form of culture. Sports are a part of life but also reflect culture within them. Art can depict sports and sports can then in return reflect art through a para-narrative.

While sport is action and theatre is the mimetic imitation of action, they both require an audience to interpret meaning within them. In the 1966 World Cup Finals, England met against Germany on the pitch. David E. Little describes it “as much a political event as it was game,” saying:

With the violence, trauma, and outrage of World War II fresh in everyone's mind, two formally warring nations were competing on a new battlefield. The 1966 match took place at Wembley Stadium, a relic of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, and in London, which had endured Germany's nighttime bombings of civilians—ideal sites for this symbolic war. England's victory over Germany, 4-2 in overtime, was the country's first World Cup victory (and to date its only one). This was more than a simple victory. It represented a cultural triumph and signified a broader return of social order in the world. (48)

Little's interpretation of that World Cup final transformed the match into an allegory for the Second World War, giving a physical representation of the struggle of two nations within the confines of the regulations of the game in the same way a play represents a war within the parameters of theatre. More often than not, matches are interpreted as the struggle of good vs evil or civility vs anarchy but whose heroes and villains are decided solely through perspective of the audience. This is the major difference between a play and a soccer match representing World War II: the play has someone controlling the fictitious narrative to make sure the correct side wins; there is no guaranteed victor in a soccer match.

Fictional narratives happen within a fictional world, and as such, we don't have access to the events that the author doesn't deem important. At the moment that we as an audience interact with the work for the first time, the author has already selected what matters. The audience can then interpret those worthy events. In sports, which take place in real time, it is

up to the audience to sift through all the moments as they happen and decide for themselves what is important. In the real-time creation of narrative that happens when viewing sports, there is an extra step of deliberation before one can begin to interpret. This deliberation causes narremes to be generated through instantaneous retrospect. You might hear a fan say, "That was it. That was the game," after a team goes up a goal in stoppage time or, "That was the turning point," seconds after a momentum-shifting play. Sports must first develop a para-narrative through the exclusion of moments from the complete narrative of the sports match before relevant plot points in that para-narrative can then be sifted through and interpreted for more cultural and existential significance. Each moment of the match could be considered a narreme, making for a personally crafted para-narrative for every member of the audience.

The intimacy an audience has in creating the para-narrative of a sporting event causes the emotions they experience while watching to be closer to the source. The audience is, therefore, more invested in the acts themselves rather than a retelling of the events. The audience feels anger at bad officiating, excitement from scoring, and heartbreak at their team's loss. Though not active participants, they are invested in what is taking place in the sports match. This description starts to blend with the experience of theatre or watching a narrative. The audience in these situations are certainly invested in the events that take place, but there is a difference. In a medium that depends on narrative, there is an author who chooses the events with the hopes to create a controlling idea—a specific effect or emotion—in the audience (McKee 112). Sports and their events are created spontaneously by individuals with their competing agencies. The author (or narrator) in a play acts as an intermediary of interpretation that controls much of what and how the audience experiences the narrative. Sports are limited by the laws and nature of the games, but those laws provide for an infinite outcome of scenarios that are only predetermined by the player's style of play and skill level. Each individual member of the audience then takes the role of author to highlight the various events that they personally deem important in creating an emotional narrative from the sports match.

This representation of creating narrative in sport is under the assumption that the audience is viewing the match directly. In the modern form of sport entertainment, the audience does have a mediator of the action, even if it is live. When watching a professional sport on television, there are commentators,

a camera crew, and a director giving instant interpretation and creating a para-narrative in real time through descriptions of the action and players' histories, through camera angles and cuts, and through instant replays. The television media team become the intermediary for the audience in the same way the author of a play is. They decide how to direct the attention of the audience to the specific narremes they believe matter most in making a captivating narrative worth watching.

Thus, we see that both sports and theatre are a series of interpretations that lead to a unified adaptation of spectacle and entertainment. Individual players interpret the metaphysical ideal of the role they play on the field or stage. Each player must then adapt their role in reaction to the other players interpreted roles. The audience then interprets the combination of all the roles being performed. In theatre and sports, players act and make decisions in the way they perform. There are varying degrees of agency and control in both. But the audience then observes the players, analyzing and critiquing them. Are the players subjects or are they objects? Are they artform or form of art? Do they create the art through their movements or are they themselves the art? Whether or not you want to believe sport is art, comparing sport with theatre as adaptations gives us insight into what art is and who the creator is.

Consequently, who can be a creator of art? Is it they who perform the action—the players? Is it they who guide the action—the director or coach? How about the mediators of the action throughout the narrative—the author or media? Or the interpreters of the action—the audience? The truth is, meaning within art does not lie in any single part of the creation process; all these agents have a hand in the art experience. Though we can distinguish each of the parts and look at them individually, we cannot separate them and remove them from each other. In other words, this atomistic breakdown does not help explain the nature of meaning creation in art let alone the ways in which a sporting event functions as an artistic artifact. Every member of the audience sitting in the stands or on the couch in a living room, every player on both sides of the ball, every coach and trainer, every referee officiating the game, and every member of the media covering the game contributes to a network of contextual nodes that influence each other over the course of the event. Art, entertainment, aestheticism, and spectacle are the culmination of that network of shared experiences formed between creators and audiences, and meaning is created through the interpretation of those experiences. Therefore, “knowledge is co-created rather than received, [and]

meaning is made rather than transmitted" (Moe 75). But of course, there has to be something to interpret in the first place. There has to be a catalyst for meaning to be made, and that catalyst being the actions of those involved in performing a play and playing a sport. Meaning can come from and even be contingent on action, but it is not created by the actions being performed. The movement and interactions of players on a field or the acting in a play become concrete images which an audience can 'see as,' projecting their life experiences and knowledge onto those images and creating a *Gestalt* (Ricoeur 252). It is the experience-act of 'seeing as' where meaning is created, not in the playing or performing. In this way, meaning is created from the interpretation of actions or, in other words, acts and actions are understood beyond their physical forms and in conjunction with the greater human experience.

The concept of 'seeing as' also applies to the way actors are viewed. While their actions can be motivated by emotions (in the sense that emotions drive the action), the metaphysical outcome, rather than physical outcome of those actions, must be created through interpretation. The act of performing in sports or the physical motions within acting create opportunities or exigences that compels the audience to then analyze and create meaning. This leads us to a new perspective on what makes a piece of art. An object's capacity to compel an audience to interpret will indicate its value as art. There will certainly be a range of depths and subjects of interpretation that an object can possibly incite, but is the question of what constitutes art a judgment of form, or of outcome, or of quality? Does a play, dance, novel, or painting only reach status of art if it reaches a specific intensity of interpretive urgency? If these other mediums can reach the status of art despite their inability to constantly inspire high standards of interpretation, certainly sports across their many variations and iterations can be considered in the same league of artistic expression.

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The Madness of Motherhood

The Implications of Postpartum Depression in the Adaptation of Victor Frankenstein

Amber Bird

Plagued by the death of her unnamed daughter, Mary Shelley began writing *Frankenstein* in 1816 (Hitchcock 9). Citing from a journal entry on March 6, 1815, four days after the baby girl was born, Mary wrote: “Find my baby dead. . . . A miserable day” (Simons 70). This misery would be repeated for Mary, who buried three babies all before the age of three (and two of them in the same year.) With these life experiences noted, it is easy to identify how the creator of the now classic horror story began writing her novel deep within the trenches of the postpartum period.

The autobiographical connections between Mary Shelley’s own life and the depictions of birth and death in the novel have proven to be a foundation for scholars to engage with themes of monstrous maternity and fearful parenting (Almond 775). Ellen Mores established the foreground of much the work surrounding the “birth myth” that the novel embodies. More’s scholarship pairs Shelley’s experience becoming a mother with becoming an author.¹ Marc Rubenstein extends such scholarship by arguing that Shelley’s novel was a subconscious desire to reconcile the death of her own mother, Mary Wollstonecraft—who died due to complications

following Mary's birth. For many years, motherhood has been a rich field for scholarly engagement with the text.²

In recent years, scholars have returned to *Frankenstein* using the lens of parenthood as a point of criticism. Not only do scholars accept the autobiographical potentials of the novel, but they have also pinpointed Victor and his subsequent "child birthing" experience as a justifiable interpretation.³ Victor is the parent, and an "imprudent" one at that (Goswami 211). Throughout these interpretations, it is Victor's failure as a parent figure that has been used to articulate the monstrosity of the monster. Debapriyn Goawami and Paul Sherwin argue that if Victor were a better parent, a more "ethical parent," the monster may not have been so bad (Goawami 212).

Pairing together the maternal interest in the text with subsequent interest in parenting, it is important to note that adaptations of Shelley's text seldomly engage with this parental sphere. *Young Frankenstein*, directed by Mel Brooks in 1947, is the closest attempt to embody the complicated narrative between scientist and creature, between parent and child. But even in the adaptation mentioned, the end result is a comedic (and somewhat base) attempt for Victor to embrace the role of parent. Additionally, other interpretations and adaptations that portray Victor as selfish, psychopathic, sociopathic, or evil also prove to be troubling because they fail to address his parental reality.

Despite the lack of attention the field of adaptation has given to parenthood, I argue that scholarly interest in Shelley's own biographical influence on the text, evidence found throughout the narrative, and Mary's personal understanding of motherhood and childbirth reveal that the actions of Victor cannot be written off as merely bad parenting. The text offers an alternative way to adapt Victor Frankenstein, and due to the current social attempts to be more understanding and empathetic, a re-reading of Victor—one that regards the circumstances that follow a postpartum reality—must be considered.

It is important to note that although the term "postpartum depression" would not have existed for Mary Shelley, the condition most certainly would have. The pattern of having a baby and developing the symptoms of depression would be expected of women giving birth. Paired with the acceptance of Victor's role as mother/parent in the novel, it is important to note that he manifests the feelings of anger, anxiety, guilt, hopelessness, and lack of interest that are commonly associated with postpartum depression.

Regardless of the lack of medical jargon needed to talk about the effects of child birthing, postpartum depression was and is a real, debilitating, mental illness that demands attention. Noticing these connections, one can no longer push for surface-level interpretations of Victor as a bad parent. He is a sick parent. He is a mentally ill parent. And adaptations should provide space for this type of Victor to exist.

By taking a closer look at the symptoms and struggles Victor exhibits throughout the text, a postpartum-depression reading makes possible a re-reading of the characterization, and subsequent adaptations, of Victor. The purpose of this essay is to critically engage with the textual evidence that demonstrates evidence of Victor's postpartum depression, and then use that evidence as a foundation to re-evaluate how the character of Victor has been treated and adapted. Without reducing the novel to simply "bad parenting," the text affords one the opportunity to have critical conversations about ways that mental illnesses or struggles are interpreted as negative behavior throughout society.

Before directly considering what the text has to offer, it is essential to understand the viewpoint that would have influenced how Shelley approached birth and motherhood. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the process of childbearing was highly augmented by numerous publications on midwifery—mostly written by men—focusing on the "management and government of pregnant wives" (Bewell 107, emphasis added). Beyond the anachronistic tendency to mansplain everything, publications on obstetrics demonstrate a heightened concern for the upcoming generation and the assumed need to control that process. Attempts to control the growth of an unborn child centered around the proper balance of the classical six non-naturals: air, food and drink, exercise and rest, sleeping and waking, fullness and emptiness, and emotions or passions.⁴ If a mother acted out during this period, or failed to maintain a balance, pregnancy experts believed that the following birth would result in a "monstrous progeny" (Shelley 3). A pregnant woman was to avoid foul air, seek for regularity in sleep and diet, refrain from overworking herself, and maintain pleasant company while also avoiding solitary situations (Bewell 108).

More than just good advice, these midwifery publications "constituted an important early discourse on the female imagination, one that accorded it extraordinary powers. Central to this theory was the notion that a woman's imagination functioned mimetically" (Bewell 109). Under this premise, the

thoughts, feelings, imaginations, and fears that a mother experienced while pregnant would be replicated and passed on to the baby.⁵ The attempts to maintain a balance of the six non-natural were made to keep a pregnant mother from experiencing or imagining anything that would potentially lead to a deformed or monstrous child. This maternal understanding would have been familiar to and accepted by Mary Shelley.

When Shelley was writing her novel, the concept of postpartum depression was blanketed by the universal term of “melancholy”—believed to be one of the four bodily fluids, or humors,⁶ that influence vitality and temperament (OED, Def. 2.a). Although men were also susceptible to the lows of melancholy, the melancholy characteristic of childbearing was specifically ascribed to women (Goodson 18). It was believed that the imbalance of the four humors and the manipulation of the previously mentioned six non-naturals would lead to the rejection of the baby—to the symptoms of postpartum depression. By framing Victor Frankenstein with postpartum depression symptoms, the text suggests that Shelley didn’t view these symptoms as biologically specific, but rather situationally specific. Anyone who had a baby, and who didn’t maintain the proper conduct and balance regarding the non-naturals and humors was doomed to suffer haunting effects. Without moving towards “reducing the text . . . to a monstrous symptom” of Mary Shelley’s own postpartum depression, understanding the public interest surrounding parturition demonstrates the potential degree to which Shelley believed in the pseudo-medicine of her day (Jacobus 138). If Victor created life without maintaining the proper balance, his fate would be “scientifically” expected, regardless of his sex.

In order for Victor to embody the experience of postpartum depression, Shelley must first make it clear that Victor is the mother-figure of the novel. Once Victor discovers the “spark of life,” he reports that “winter, spring, and summer passed away during [his] labors” before he is fully able to animate his creature (Shelley 82). By dividing the year into four seasons (summer, fall, winter, and spring) and only mentioning three of those seasons passing, roughly equates to the same amount of time required between conception and birth. Throughout this nine-month period, from the conception of the thought until the quickening of the creature, Victor’s actions deliberately went against balancing the six non-naturals. During this period, Victor informs Walton that he has frequented the “dissecting rooms and the slaughterhouse,” and that he chooses to work in a “solitary

chamber," exposing himself to contaminated air and extensive isolation (Shelley 80). By deliberately going to the "unhallowed damp of the grave" Victor was failing to maintain the needed balance during the gestation period of creating life (Shelley 79). In addition, this time period was also fraught with deep bouts of isolation, lack of nourishment, loss in physical activity, emotional instability, and insomnia (Shelley 78–81). Framed by the beliefs regarding pregnancy during Shelley's lifetime, if a pregnant woman were to frequently engage in negative actions like the ones that Victor describes, then the negative consequences would be transferred to the unborn child. Such a "pregnancy" would yield negative results (Bewell 116).

Shelley strengthens the argument of Victor as the mother-figure by framing his expected moment of triumph with the same words used to describe the delivery of a baby. The text reads, "After so much time spent in painful labor, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires, was the most gratifying consummation of my toils" (Shelley 77). Throughout the process of parturition, the involuntary uterine contractions that force the baby through the woman's cervix and down the birth canal is most commonly defined as "labor." Without the medical intervention of anesthetics or medications, this experience is primarily associated with pain. However, the expectation of having a baby is in the moment when the baby arrives, the newly-labeled mother is justified for all her pain and laboring by the sheer gratification and joy of that new life. The text demonstrates that Victor followed the same parturition pattern, first having to suffer through a painful labor before the creature could fully be given life. Following this painful labor, Victor notes that his joy was the "most gratifying consummation of my toils" (Shelley 77). The hoped-for gratification Victor experiences mirrors the gratification of an expected a baby—a newborn baby would be such a culminating accomplishment that the mother would no longer be able to recall the discomfort, sacrifice, and pain associated with bringing this life into the world.

Despite the anticipated joy associated with the arrival of Victor's "baby," Victor's postpartum period quickly slides into the smothering darkness of depression. According to the Mayo Clinic, "Postpartum depression isn't just the 'baby blues.' It's severe depression marked by feelings of sadness or emptiness, withdrawal from family and friends, a strong sense of failure, and even thoughts of suicide" (Postpartum Depression). Although a complete postpartum depression diagnosis requires the expertise of a

licensed health-care professional, and I in no way assert that type of authority, the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS), published in 1987, by J. L. Cox, J.M. Holden, and R. Sagovsky in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* is common tool used by healthcare professionals to identify individuals who may be in need of additional medical assistance. EPDS is a survey that identifies patients who are unable to see the funny side of things, do not look forward to hobbies with enjoyment, feel distant from their infant, and unnecessarily blame themselves when things go wrong or circumstances do not go as planned. They experience emotions such as worries, anxieties, panic, and fear, have difficulty sleeping, manifest sadness or misery by crying, and are unable to cope or manage typical life experiences. Patients who have thoughts of self-harm or suicide are immediately recommended for intervention regardless of how they score in other categories (Cox, et al.) These questions address symptoms, struggles, and indicators of postpartum depression, and directly fall in line with Victor's actions after the birth of his "baby."

One of the first indicators of postpartum depression that Victor experiences is in regard to his ability to look forward to experiences with enjoyment. Within the EPDS question, the patient is asked to consider things that they found enjoyable prior to experiencing postpartum. The text indicates that Victor experiences a mental barrier that keeps him from enjoying his pursuits of natural philosophy after his creature comes to life. In relating his story, Victor admits, "Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy" (Shelley 96, emphasis added). Victor's violent antipathy towards natural philosophy acts in contradiction to the level of investment and enjoyment Victor had given to the subject starting at the age of thirteen (Shelley 41). Before creating the creature, Victor described "natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry in the most comprehensive sense of the term, [as] nearly [his] sole occupation" (Shelley 74). His new found abhorrence for the subject flies in the face of the many scientific accomplishments that he contributed to the university and the relationships he established with his professors. This type of fear points toward mental imbalance and not just a loss of interest.

When Victor is adapted, the pattern of repressing or ignoring his manifestations of postpartum depression frames him as a character who is self-centered and dramatic, always blaming himself for things that are

beyond his control. Following the murders of William and Justine, Victor laments, "All was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave, and I the cause!" (Shelley 111, emphasis added). Victor is bothered by the deaths so much he is "seized by remorse and the sense of guilt" (Shelley 123). The guilt that Victor experiences falls in line with the EPDS question which asks whether the patient "blames [themselves] unnecessarily when things go wrong" (Cox, et al.). Although Victor created the creature and is therefore somewhat responsible, he never actually committed any of the murders, nor did he cause the murders. By bestowing what the text calls the spark of life to the creature, Victor forfeits a degree of control that he has over his creation. In other words, like any parent, Victor must accept the individuality and autonomy of his "child." However, because Victor views himself as "the cause" of the murders, it indicates that he blames himself for things beyond his control (Shelley 111).

Victor's inability to cope with William's death is interpreted by his father as "excessive sorrow" (Shelley 237). Whenever Victor accuses himself of unreasonable blame for the creature's actions, his father "instantly [changes] the subject of [the] conversation" (Shelley 237). Rather than ameliorating Victor's struggles, his father, Alphonse, exacerbates them. Victor notes that he "endeavor[s] to hide to hide [him]self from his [father's] view" and pretends that nothing is wrong (Shelley 124). Unable to fully pretend nothing is wrong, the seriousness of Victor's condition comes to light when he admits contemplations of suicide. Using Victor's own words, "Often, . . . I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities forever (124). Victor's meditations on suicide reveal the complicated implications of suffering through postpartum depression without help. All of this evidence suggests that the Victor of the novel isn't one of evil intentions, sociopathic tendencies, malign judgment, or even hubris selfishness. He is a Victor of illness. A Victor in need of help. A Victor who has fought in the battle against postpartum depression and lost.

However, the divergence between a self-centered, egotistical Victor and a suffering mentally-ill Victor carries vast repercussions in the field of adaptation. First, choosing to reconsider how Victor is adapted is important because contrary evidence exists in the text. Because Victor's signs and symptoms have gone unnoticed or were misinterpreted by Victor and by those around him, this type of adaptation leaves Victor powerless. It

isolates him and vilifies his experience. The mere “excessiveness” of Victor’s experience immediately makes the experience one of weakness.

Shelley’s use of a male character highlights the problems and struggles postpartum mothers face every day in the light of being framed as “the other.” If Shelley used a female character to demonstrate the effects of “melancholy” and creating life, the actions of that woman would go unnoticed; that’s just what it meant to be a woman (Meek 2). As a reader, it is very easy to view Victor’s weeping approach to the situations he is faced with as weakness and over-exaggeration, because he is a male. If he were a female character, his weeping wouldn’t be out of the ordinary (Meek 3). His self-obsession with his loss and destroyed destiny seem inappropriately proportioned to the task at hand, and this self-centeredness makes Victor difficult to sympathize with. These feminine traits would not be as meaningful if Victor was actually a Victoria. By transferring the symptoms of postpartum depression to Victor, the novel becomes a lens to re-analyze the treatment of the mentally-ill mother, and construing Victor as the mother figure draws attention to the way society treats those who are ill. Assuming that adaptations represent the views of a particular culture, continually ignoring a mentally-ill Victor is not only harmful to individuals, but also to societies. Without a safe place for Victor to overcome his mental illness, Victor becomes more susceptible to the isolating darkness of his postpartum depression. In applying this to adaptation studies, a culture that is continually telling individuals to hide weaknesses and deny faults only creates a more isolating and unstable society.

Evidence of this societal danger is found in the text when Monsieur Waldman attributes Victor’s reluctance to engage with his previous interests as a display of “modesty” (Shelley 96). The underlying connotations of modesty carry the meaning of being unassuming or average, and such a description lacks an air of seriousness. Not only does this comment dismiss Victor’s reactions during the triggering conversation with Monsieur Waldman, but it also dismisses the reality of Victor’s entire postpartum experience as one that isn’t very important. If one constantly construes the symptoms of postpartum depression as something else, then there will never be available space to access the help needed. Victor’s response to Monsieur Waldman’s commentary—that Victor “writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain [he] felt (Shelley 96)—demonstrates the debilitating social silence that is forced upon those who suffer from mental illness. Because continual adaptations of *Frankenstein* also refuse to recognize even the possibility of

these symptoms, our society creates the message that vulnerability is not acceptable. If those around an individual are not even willing to notice the symptoms of postpartum depression as out of the ordinary, then how is that individual ever supposed to feel empowered to ask for help?

The modern-day implications of this reading frames Shelley's novel as a mandate to rise up and perceive the world differently. *Frankenstein* can no longer be read or adapted through the lens of simply "bad parenting." Admittedly, Victor was a bad parent—he abandoned the creature the day it was created. But those actions, the weeping and wailing and self-absorption that make Victor a bad parent, cannot stand without a serious consideration of the symptoms of postpartum depression that are also present in the novel. More than anything, applying an understanding of postpartum depression to Victor provides room for empathy and understanding. It makes him human—a living, breathing, feeling human. He is no longer "the other." Using postpartum depression as a way to remove the "otherness" from Victor implies our social need to do the same for those who actually suffer from mental illness. However, the evidence of the text will mean very little unless those reading the text are willing to return to Victor with new eyes, new interpretations, and new adaptations. Within the twenty-first century, we as a society cannot be satisfied with surface level interpretations of individuals or experiences. Re-reading the "Evil Dr. Frankenstein" as a potentially mentally-ill patient is not only supported by the text, but is necessitated by the sheer progress of our time. A Victor Frankenstein with postpartum depression is evidence that we can no longer afford to read individuals or societies on the surface. Instead of ignoring, brushing off, or vilifying behavior we do not understand, it's time we embrace vulnerabilities with empathy and understanding.

Endnotes

1. Ellen Mores, "Female Gothic," in *Literary Women*. Mores coined the term "Female Gothic" and argued that it was specifically Shelley's experience as a mother that directly influenced the production of her text. In this light, motherhood isn't only a lens to read the novel through, rather it is at the root of the entire conception of the novel.
2. For more about Frankenstein and the role of women, see Rubinstein; Gilbert and Gubar 213–47; Johnson; Jacobus 99–103. Women framed as mothers drive much of this scholarship. Shelley's own experience as a mother and as a female author provide the opportunity for unique criticism.

3. Most commonly, accusations concerning Victor as parent construe him in the role of a bad parent. For more scholarship on this topic see: Ashley Lall; Baysar Taniyina; Paul Sherwin; Debapriyn Goswami; Laura Claridge.

4. Classical understandings of health required a balance of the six non-naturals and the four humors of the body. When these elements were out of balance, it was believed to be impossible to maintain health. For more on the non-naturals see Institute of Historical research, Bloomsbury, London, *Healthy living in Pre-Modern Europe*, 2013.

5. Boswell sights various accounts of women giving birth to children who have various deformities or problems. The imaginative aspect of this process included women who frequently looked at paintings and subsequently transitioning those particular characteristics to the child. This included facial features, temperaments, skin and hair color, and personalitie

6. "In ancient and medieval physiology and medicine: any of four fluids of the body (blood, phlegm, choler, and so-called melancholy or black bile) believed to determine, by their relative proportions and conditions, the state of health and the temperament of a person or animal." These were known as the cardinal humors of the body. For more, see Oxford English Dictionary "humor" 2.a. and 2.b.

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Identity and Écriture Féminine in Beyoncé's Lemonade

Morgan Lewis

On the morning of February 6, 2016, Beyoncé dropped the anthem that would come to frame her entire upcoming album: "Formation." She sang, "My daddy Alabama, momma Louisiana / You mix that Negro with that Creole, make a Texas bama," declaring her heritage proudly to the world (Beyoncé). I remember watching the music video four times in a row on the couch in my small apartment and then replaying it for everyone who walked in my door that day—I could talk of nothing else. This song was not written for me, a white woman living in Utah, and yet I felt its impact deeply. Yes, Beyoncé was addressing current controversies and openly acknowledging her stake in those issues, but, more importantly, she was presenting her Self—and doing so unapologetically—which made me feel inspired to do the same. The rest of the *Lemonade* album was released two months later, and it became abundantly clear that this was her magnum opus: a cohesive and intensely personal journey told through a visual album, a unique medium combining poetry, music, and film, and the vehicle through which she could explore and articulate her identity. By presenting her past experiences through the mode of what Hélène Cixous coined *l'écriture féminine*, Beyoncé made an important contribution to the

dialogue about identity and self-acceptance, thereby allowing other women, especially women of color, to explore their own experiences and identities in the world today.

This problem of identity has long been debated by philosophers who struggled to determine whether the “self” actually exists and, if it does, how it can be discovered and defined in relation to other entities. Hume, as one of these philosophers grappling to define identity, found a lack of both simplicity and stability in his attempts to define his own self, contrary to Locke who claimed that there are certain unchanging elements in a substance’s identity. In his essay, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume writes “I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are remov’d for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist” (Hume 252). Hume, here, begins to argue that pinning down a single core identity is impossible, or at least unsatisfying, because a being’s identity is based solely upon its perceptions, which are constantly present, ever changing, and wholly dependent upon the being’s sentience. This observation in himself leads him to the larger claim that “[mankind] are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity...all our other senses and faculties contribute to this change; nor is there any single power of the soul, which remains unalterably the same, perhaps for one moment” (252). For Hume, our identities are constantly in flux and reside in our perceptions. In other words, our identity is determined by our minds in our observations about ourselves and the world around us.

Though Hume added an important layer of nuance to the issue of identity by acknowledging that volatile impressions construct a significant part of one’s self, he overlooked another substantial contributor to identity: the body. In her essay “The Laugh of Medusa,” Hélène Cixous builds from Hume’s theories, discussing the essential nature of the body in women’s writing. Cixous, like Hume, rejects the notion that the self is either singular or unwavering. Rather, she posits the notion that multiple “alterities”—or sources of otherness—exist within each person. Marta Segarra notes that, for Cixous, “the other is always plural, and ‘no other is first’ among these others. This also implies the necessity and importance of acknowledging the singularity of these multiple others” (100). This theory is reminiscent of Hume’s ideologies about identity: multiple perceptions are at play in forming

identity, and a stable identity is difficult to pin down because all alterities are influencing each other equally and simultaneously within a single being. For Cixous, some of these alterities include her femininity, her Jewish faith, and her Algerian nationality.

Yet Cixous moves beyond Hume as she discusses the role of the body in expressing identity—especially that of the female body. Cixous suggests the need for an *écriture féminine*, a “female writing.” But this “feminine practice of writing” is not binary, and is not even limited to only women. Segarra instead suggests that although *l’écriture féminine* cannot be defined without oversimplifying its intricacy, it “might be characterized by ‘writing with the body,’” or, allowing the perceptions that define one’s identity to flow freely, thus allowing the “self” to be heard (21). *L’écriture féminine*, therefore, is the medium that expresses the complex connection between one’s perceptions and one’s body—that connection being the source from which identity originates. According to Cixous,

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display. . . . Censor body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. (32).

Cixous recognizes that, for much of history, a woman’s body has been owned and censored by others while her own stories have been silenced. In freely writing her experiences, woman expresses and reclaims her body which has been so heavily censored. She is then able to interpret the alterities that constitute her identity.

That the body is inextricably linked to perception, and therefore to identity, is especially apparent in women. In her essay, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” Sandra Lee Bartky recognizes that Foucault overlooked the different experiences of men and women as defined by their bodies. She writes, “To overlook the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body is to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed” (27). Bartky reveals that current capitalistic society has placed stricter and more punishable regulations on women’s bodies, including body size, movement, hair, and beautification—regulations that many men often do not understand because

the patriarchy allows them a wider degree of freedom in performing their Selves.

Although society's expectations of gender and bodies also constrain men, these regulations often affect a woman's sense of self even more deeply. Bartky maintains that "To have a body felt to be 'feminine'—a body socially constructed through the appropriate practices—is in most cases crucial to a woman's sense of herself as female and, since persons currently can be only as male or female, to her sense of herself as an existing individual" (39). Bartky solidifies the theory that both the body and the mind interact and depend upon each other to create identity through alterities. These alterities are not limited to gender, but include race, religion, nationality, and other societal organizing functions. As a woman forms her identity, her body is interpreted by her society, which then projects its expectations of femininity (and other alterities) onto her, shaping her experience. A woman's experience colors her self-perception, which determines the future choices she will make with her body, which will then evolve her existing perceptions—and the cycle continues. Because it is nearly impossible to dissociate one's body from its surrounding culture, the body retains a profound influence on one's personal identity.

As women write to express their personal identity, they then liberate others to do the same. Cixous writes, "I wished that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs" (28). This is the power of *l'écriture féminine*: it enables both the writer and the consumer of the text to discover and express their Selves more fully—especially when those roles are played by women. In *Lemonade*, Beyoncé uses the relationship between her experiences, her body, and her writing (the visual album acting as a written text) to form and express her identity, thereby freeing other women to do the same. At the beginning of the album, she reads a line from a Warsan Shire poem: "The past and the future merge to meet us here / What luck. What a f—ing curse." In *Lemonade*, time converges as Beyoncé analyzes past, present, and future to find her place in each. She considers her history and heritage, addresses contemporary issues that affect her as a Black woman, and invites her audience to help her break the curse and reshape the future.

The *Lemonade* visual album begins with the song, "Pray You Catch Me," a soft confessional that Beyoncé has lost trust in her significant other.

She sings, “You can taste the dishonesty / it’s all over your breath as you pass it off so cavalier. . . . My lonely ear pressed against the walls of your world” as one shot depicts her kneeling in the middle of a stage, and another shows her surrounded by only tall grass (Beyoncé). Her body language and surrounding scenery convey that she is locked out, alone and hurting. The song sets the premise for the album: her journey coming to terms with the infidelity of her husband. This song also presents the visual setting for the album: various places in the Deep South—the site of slavery and oppression for Beyoncé’s ancestors, but also of her childhood happiness. The scenery is both beautiful and painful, and in the silent moments between songs, the viewer can feel those conflicted sentiments in the moss hanging from the trees and the run-down plantation shacks. It is both her long-term and her short-term history, both her ancestry and her recent marital struggles, that have brought her to this album and have shaped her identity. Cixous explains, “In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history” (35). And so, Beyoncé, in choosing to share this deeply personal story, addresses a cause much greater than herself. This album is about her personal journey of perseverance and forgiveness, but it is also about the journey of Black women in America, who are struggling to reconcile their history as, according to Malcolm X, “the most disrespected . . . the most unprotected . . . the most neglected person in America” (qtd. in Beyoncé).

The journey of Black women, especially those in America, has an arduous one with no foreseeable end. Rose Weitz, in her essay “A History of Women’s Bodies,” recalls that because African-American slaves were considered property and had no human rights, “Rape was common, both as a form of ‘entertainment’ for white men and a way of breeding more slaves, since the children of slave mothers were automatically slaves” (4). The results of this practice were that Black women were and are still hypersexualized, and therefore are often ignored or even blamed when they suffer rape and abuse—a problem that became especially evident once again in the recent R. Kelly case (Ross, “R. Kelly’s arrest”). Black women also continue to face a beauty standard that glorifies and caters to white women. Beyoncé addresses both the issue of residual effects of slavery and the issue of biased beauty standards in *Lemonade*, using her own story and her art to begin to correct the misconceptions about the bodies of Black women.

In the song “Six Inch,” Beyoncé reclaims Black female sexuality, subverting the previous tendency to hypersexualize Black women and turning that sexuality into female empowerment. The lyrics read,

Six inch heels, she walked in the club like nobody’s business
... she murdered everybody and I was her witness
She works for the money, she work for the money
From the start to the finish
And she worth every dollar, she worth every dollar
And she worth every minute.

These lyrics focus far more on the subject’s act of working and earning a paycheck, rather than the aesthetic or sexual pleasure of her line of work, be it dancing or sex work. This humanizes the subject rather than objectifying her. The video for this song is colored entirely by the red light, indicating that the song is about the red-light district. However, instead of sexually exploiting the Black body, as media often does, the video focuses on female empowerment rather than male pleasure. Men hardly appear in the video, shown only from Beyoncé’s view as she rides in the back of a car, passing them all by. In the shots onstage, the focus is on Beyoncé as a performer in strong stances, not on a gawking audience. For the shots that depict Beyoncé in bed, she is fully clothed and alone—no man is present. In other shots, Beyoncé stands, swinging around a red lightbulb on a cord, symbolizing that she is in full control in her career. Therefore, the song is empowering to the so-called “working woman”—the female sex workers—who are doing what they have to do to support themselves. Because Black women have been so disadvantaged in America, prostitution or dancing are often their only options for making enough money to survive. These women use their sexuality, not because they have an insatiable thirst for sex, but because they have no alternative. This song switches that power dynamic by focusing on the workers, depicting them not as sex slaves, but as career women who “love the grind”—who love to work hard and are determined to succeed.

Beyoncé also subverts the power structure through the costuming in *Lemonade*, which is reminiscent of the antebellum South. Beyoncé and the surrounding Black women wear large brimmed hats, wide flowing skirts, and thick puffed sleeves, brandishing fans and wearing jewels while sitting upon rocking chairs or plush benches. In the antebellum South, this was the wardrobe of the upper-class, the white plantation holders who owned slaves

and profited from their work. However, by clothing the descendants of slaves in the apparel that the slave owners would have worn, Black women are given the power represented by that clothing. This allows Black women to reclaim an empowered identity rather than an oppressed one—perhaps an identity they would have inherited if they had not been uprooted from their African home. Beyoncé is writing herself and Black women into the narrative, speaking up for the silenced women who came before her by reversing the power dynamic and adorning Black bodies in the lavish antebellum clothing.

Another body-related issue for Black women is their hair. While Beyoncé's signature long blonde locks are iconic, she sings in "Formation," "I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros," responding to the discussion surrounding whether she should style Blue Ivy's hair differently by expressing pride in her daughter's natural look. It's common knowledge that Black women's hair requires different maintenance than white women's hair because of the difference in texture. Often, society deems those hairstyles which protect Black women's hair to be "unprofessional" or "unattractive." Not only does Beyoncé defend her choice about her daughter's hair, she incorporates more typical Black hairstyles in her own appearance throughout the visual album—including corn rows, head wraps, afros, and braids. Beyoncé addresses the hair issue once again in "Sorry," singing, "You better call Becky with the good hair" as she says goodbye to an unfaithful partner. The name "Becky" here refers to any generic white woman, and Beyoncé is insulting her partner for buying into white beauty standards and choosing a white woman with "good hair" to be unfaithful with. In rejecting the white standard for hair, Beyoncé embraces her own hair as one of the alterities that makes up her identity and thereby allows other women of color to do the same.

Beyoncé's reclaiming of the female body involves more than just physical appearance, though. It also includes ideals of gender roles. Cixous asserts that, while each human has both masculinity and femininity inside of them, women are generally more accepting of the masculinity within them than men are with femininity in them. She calls this "bisexuality," or, "the presence—variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, nonexclusion either of the difference or of one sex" (36). Cixous recognizes that each person has varied amounts of masculinity and femininity within them, and explains that bisexuality calls for acknowledging and playing with the difference between the two while still including both in one's identity and Self performance.

Beyoncé exemplifies this idea of embracing the difference between masculinity and femininity, which is especially prominent in the video for “Don’t Hurt Yourself.” The video opens with Beyoncé reading Warsan Shire’s poetry: “Why can’t you see me? / Why can’t you see me? / Everyone else can” and she glares into the camera, which moves away and downward (2016). By using this line of poetry, Beyoncé expresses her frustration that she is getting recognition from seemingly everyone except her significant other. She pleads for his attention and, in resolution, decides to speak in his more masculine language using her body language, emotion, and words. “Who the f— do you think I am?” she shouts to the camera which records her from a low angle, creating an air of intimidation. She walks with a slightly flexed swagger, imitating the posture typical of hip-hop and rap music videos by male artists such as that in the “Otis” music video from the Kanye West and Jay-Z’s *Watch the Throne* album. By presenting herself as masculine, Beyoncé is able to subvert the power structure which privileges the male voice, appropriating the masculine voice to speak her message. Yet, this appropriation is not acting out a character separate from herself, but simply the revealing of an aspect already in her identity. She is a powerful woman demanding to be heard, and she is capable of using her inherent masculinity to seize that power.

Through her very personal journey depicted in *Lemonade*, Beyoncé invites others to participate in creating their own stories, seizing power, and moving forward with her. She, like Cixous, is writing to a larger cause and recognizes the individuality in each person she addresses. Cixous writes:

There is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. What they have in common I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes—any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing; their stream of phantasms is incredible. (27–28)

Therefore, identity is not only constantly in flux, it is entirely unique. Though there are common threads caused by shared experiences, women—and all people—are as diverse as snowflakes. This individuality, however, creates a space for celebration, both for common connection among people and for the infinite possibilities for inimitability in each person. By demonstrating that this album is about more than her own experience, Beyoncé sends out a call

to Black women to join her in the process of reconciliation—to feel the pain, anger, grief, and healing with her.

Throughout the entire album, Beyoncé opens a space for her viewers to put themselves into the narrative by showing headshots of Black women, average and unglamorized, in their everyday beauty. These headshots are a periodic reminder that the issues that Beyoncé addresses—infidelity and marital strife—affect a greater demographic than just herself. The headshots are shown for two or three seconds, giving the audience enough time to see the humanity and individuality of each woman's expression. Some of these women include the mothers of Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, and Mike Brown—three Black men who died from police brutality—holding the portraits of their sons. These headshots connect Beyoncé to her audience in a different way by demonstrating that Beyoncé, even with her fame and success, is not above the impact of racial injustices. Just as she invites viewers to feel her personal heartbreak, she allows herself to empathize with plight of the common Black woman.

The song "Freedom" shows the power of Black women coming together to support each other. The stage is the centerpiece in this song, beginning with a shot of all the women sitting on stage facing an empty theater. Beyoncé then takes the stage and begins singing a capella to an audience of all Black women, demonstrating that this is the time for Black women to shine, and to do so for no one but themselves. The connection between Black women is also prominent in this song through the symbolism of the tree, which extends in deep curves, draped in Spanish moss. The tree's shape evokes the curves of female bodies, and the moss reflects the textured hair of women of color. Women sit in the tree and stand around it; all are different in age, dress, and appearance, but all are facing the same direction. The tree here is also symbolic of a family tree, reminding women that they are all connected through genealogical heritage and shared experience. In facing the same direction, the women indicate that they have the same goals and are looking forward, hopeful and ready to make things happen. There is power in their stances and their solidarity with one another.

In addition to the connection among Black women shared through common experience, Beyoncé emphasizes love as the connective healing balm that will fix broken relationships and fractured histories. Once again, she places herself on equal footing with average people by juxtaposing her

own home videos with videos of other couples of all ages, races, and sexual orientations. She sings,

They say true love's the greatest weapon
to win the war caused by pain . . .
True love brings salvation back into me
With every tear came redemption
And my torturer became my remedy. (Beyoncé 2016)

The love that helped her overcome the trials in her marriage is the same love that will help heal the nation of its past blights against Black women. In these lines, she demonstrates that one cannot heal without confronting and working with the cause of the pain—in other words, true healing cannot be done alone.

Beyoncé's *Lemonade* was lauded as a love letter to Black women because of the album's focus on women of color and the issues they confront. But although she spoke to a larger demographic of Black women, *Lemonade* was so poignant because she was writing her self, and therefore writing *l'écriture féminine* with which women could identify. Cixous prophesied the power of *l'écriture féminine* when she wrote, "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (27). Though Black women have historically been violently torn away from owning their own bodies, *Lemonade* allowed Beyoncé to reconnect with and celebrate her body, which allowed other women to do the same. By exploring her own identity, she wrote Black women into the narrative and, because of her widespread platform and fan base, she enabled women on a massive scale to tell the stories they had previously hidden away. Cixous theorizes, "Writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (31). The process of writing and reading stories is the process of creating culture. When new stories are told that contradict the predominant culture, a transformation begins to take place—which can be seen in the impact of *Lemonade* only one year later. The album was the third best-selling album in the United States, and the top best-selling album globally in 2016, demonstrating that

Beyoncé's words resonated on a massive scale. ("Nielsen Music"; "Global Music"). The influence of her empowering album could be felt in the lives of women—especially Black women—from its inception, contributing to an environment that made possible powerful cultural moments like the Women's March, the #MeToo movement, and countless acts of resistance against racial injustice. Although there is still a long way to go to mend the past and current treatment of Black women, through *l'écriture féminine* like *Lemonade*, women can begin to write their own stories and enact the change necessary to reach reconciliation and healing.

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Contributors

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Sara Dorsten graduated May 2019 with an MA in English Language and Literature from the University of Toledo. She specializes in disability studies with specific research interests in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and debunking inaccurate representations of disability in literature and media.

Grace Engelman grew up in the middle of the woods in Western Massachusetts, and is a senior at Brown University majoring in philosophy. She has gravitated toward courses in moral and political philosophy to coincide with her interest in reforming the criminal justice system, and she hopes to attend law school and become a public defender in the future. This essay was originally written for a course taught by Professor Arnold Weinstein called "Literature and Medicine," and it was inspired in part by the experiences and stories of people in her life who have navigated the invasive medical world.

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Amber Bird is a masters student at Brigham Young University. Her interests include religious and devotional poetry of the English 17th century. When she isn't reading or writing, she enjoys backpacking and being with her kids.

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