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VOLUME 10

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- “For my dear wife had no hands”: Sexuality and Objectification in a Modern Maiden Without Hands Folktale
Taylor Drake, Agnes Scott College 5
- Intertextuality, Aesthetics, and the Digital: Rediscovering Chekhov in Early British Modernism
Sam Jacob, Brigham Young University 21
- Femininity, Domestic Spaces, and “Bartleby, the Scrivener”
Alex McCarron, Shepherd University 40
- Rethinking the Cyborg: Posthuman Representations in WALL-E
Madeline Merritt, Marshall University 50
- Boys Will Be Boys: Toxic Masculinity and Conditioned Heroism in “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds”
Kelsey Lumsden Mullinax, University of West Georgia 59
- “Domestic Imperialism” and the Landed Gentry in *Pride and Prejudice*
Thomas Nielsen, Columbia University in the City of New York 69
- Grotesque Wives: Female Monstrosity in Medieval Texts
Juli Olson, University of West Georgia 79
- Shifting Culture: A Study of the Post-Civil War Contention Between Freedom and Conformity in Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Esther Caroline Riordan, University of West Georgia 91

Atlanta's Gentrification Crisis: How Affluent Whites Harm Their Black and Queer Neighbors Hayden Robinson, Model High School	103
Lost in Translation: Examining the Manipulation of Las Casas's Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias Muhammad Siddiq, University of Georgia	109
The Significance of the Floral Motif in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale Hannah Rachel Stanley, Okanagan College, Kelowna	122
Redefining Borders and Identity through The Angel of History and Exit West Sierra Zielinski, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame	130



“For my dear wife had no hands”: Sexuality and Objectification in a Modern Maiden Without Hands Folktale

Taylor Drake, Agnes Scott College

As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno write, “Being unable to escape it, one praises the body when not allowed to hit it” (195). Folktale bodies are the perfect site for such contradictions—as much as they are often pristine and preternaturally beautiful, they are also often maimed, transformed, or disfigured. The prince is turned into a hideous toad, then restored through true love’s kiss. The princess offers her bones as a ladder for her beloved, and winds up with missing fingers. This dichotomy between beauty and hideousness—and its resolution through love—continues to influence the romance genre to this day, with many disability scholars like Sandra Schwab noting that “romance heroes and heroines typically have ‘not merely ‘normal’ bodies, but perfect bodies”” (Cheyne 38). The proliferation of romantic subplots is to such an extreme that a wedding is not only a core tenet of popular culture’s, but also academia’s own generic understanding of folktales. A wedding is, after all, the last of thirty plot “functions” that form the spines of many of our most enduring tales, including Red Riding Hood, Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Snow White.¹ What to make, then, of a collection of folktales that portrays a beautiful young woman mutilated by the Devil or an incestuous father, who then goes on to find the same happily ever after as her able-bodied peers? *Crimson Bound*, fantasy author Rosamund Hodge’s 2015 sophomore novel, allows modern audiences to start deciphering that question.

Crimson Bound is a combination retelling of Red Riding Hood

(ATU 333)² and *The Girl Without Hands*, here used synonymously with *The Maiden Without Hands* (ATU 706), which rebuilds Red Riding Hood into a superpowered, but traumatized, action heroine, the Maiden into a man forced to be a saint, and the Wolf and the Devil into one violent, chauvinistic stalker. Rosamund Hodge addresses the Maiden folktales' fetishization of disabled women as morally pure martyrs through her male Maiden Prince Armand, whom the populace hails as a "living martyr" after his mutilation by a demon. Told through the eyes of Rachelle, the Red Riding Hood who at first believes Armand is a fraud vying for the throne, the novel concludes that even sainthood does not break Armand free of the system of dehumanization and state violence that has created both his disability and his deification. Utilizing the Christian iconography of many *Girl Without Hands* folktales, Hodge deconstructs the notion that fetishization is not its own insidious form of violence upon marginalized bodies. Furthermore, by presenting Armand as the main love interest, *Crimson Bound* disrupts the notion that disabled people are unworthy of romantic and sexual love. Despite its wonderful head-start, the novel stumbles in its adherence to generic constraints and the sex-negative moral of Charles Perrault's foundational "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge," ultimately sacrificing the ideological for the narratological.

Before proceeding further, a brief overview of the Maiden Without Hands—specifically the Brothers Grimms' "The Girl Without Hands," likely Hodge's primary source—is in order. In the Grimms' version, a poor miller is tricked by the Devil into promising he will exchange whatever is directly behind his house for riches, thinking it to merely be his prized apple tree. Instead, it is his daughter, and when her purity prevents the Devil from touching her, the Devil orders the miller to cut off her hands. The girl submits to her father and leaves, handless, to wander into the forest. There, an angel helps her sneak into the king's garden and eat from his pear tree, and when the king catches her in the act, he falls in love. After they are married, he goes to war, and the Devil (or, as is most common in other versions, a wicked mother-in-law) intercedes and forges the king's letters to order the Maiden and her children killed. A compassionate executioner, however, frees the Maiden and her children, whereupon they are kept alive by God until the heartbroken king finds them again (Grimms 118–23). The tale's classification within the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index as Type 706 marks it "genetically" closer to the likes of Snow White (ATU 709) than Red Riding Hood, and indeed, the line between Maiden and Snow White

tales can become incredibly blurred. For instance, Peter Buchan's "The Cruel Stepmother" and Alan Bruford's "Lasair Gheug," a Maiden and a Snow White tale respectively, both feature a cruel stepmother who frames the princess for the murders of the king's prized animals and heir, for which the king then maims and abandons her (Buchan 25–28; Bruford and MacDonald 98–106).

The main differences between these two tale types manifest during the second-act romances and the trials therein. While romance as a commercial genre has been largely dismissed by scholars, some, like Ria Cheyne, view romance as a fertile ground for problematizing cultural norms. Romance stories, even those lacking any literary pretense, are nonetheless capable of "position[ing] all disabled characters as potential romantic actants," and thus "encourage[ing] readers to reflect critically upon how they conceptualize disability" (Cheyne 37). Though Maiden Without Hands stories would appear to fit Cheyne's paradigm, the folktales' less savory dimensions undermine any subversive potential—not only their positioning of extreme physical beauty as representative of moral goodness, but also the mutilation's own narrative function as a Jobian trial to prove the Maiden's virtues (37). As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder write in *Narrative Prosthesis*, while "disability pervades literary narrative . . . as an opportunistic metaphorical device," these same narratives "rarely take up disability as an experience of social or political dimensions" (222). This could not be more true of Maiden Without Hands folktales, which mitigate the physicality of the mutilation through guardian angels, kind strangers, and saints that regrow hands as rewards for good behavior.

Despite the Maiden's obvious disfigurement, the King falls in love with her immediately, which would seem to subvert conventions about disabled sexuality—i.e. that it does not exist. The assumed sexlessness of disabled people, especially women, has been a point of contention within disabled feminism since at least the 1970s. Carol Gill describes the situation thusly:

Keeping us genderless by discounting us as women and as sexual beings helps prevent us from reproducing, which keeps us harmless to society. And, once we are categorized as non-breeders, we are discarded as socially useless and join post-menopausal women in health care limbo. (188)

Barbara Faye Waxman Fiduccia enumerates some symptoms of this

“health care limbo”: unnecessary C-sections; coerced abortions, sterilizations, or hysterectomies; x-rays done without any care for the disabled woman’s reproductive organs, among other malpractices (278). Put simply, desexualization can be considered “a eugenic strategy to bar these women from motherhood” (Fiduccia 278). Yet the folktales’ Maidens are *not* barred from motherhood—quite the contrary, motherhood is often a plot point in the latter half of the tales, with the letter announcing the birth of the Maiden’s first child usually the first to be intercepted by her evil stepmother. Additionally, the children can themselves become plot devices, illustrated most provocatively in Italo Calvino’s “Olive,” wherein the titular Olive regains her hands by diving the stumps into a river to save her drowning infants (259).

“Olive,” however, also allows us to peek behind the curtain, revealing the Maidens’ disabilities to be tactile metaphors for Jobian endurance and adherence to conventional morality and gender roles, for it is in refusing to abandon Christianity that Olive’s Jewish father finds reason to cut off her hands (Calvino 256). Christian imagery abounds, from an angel watching over the Maiden in the Brothers Grimms’ tale to the Maiden living with Saint Joseph in an Italian variant. Thus, while the evil stepmothers play upon the “threat” of disabled women spreading their “contagion” to their children, our anxieties as readers are assuaged by the texts stressing that the Maidens are godly women who were not disabled for their sins, but rather by outside demonic forces, and usually end the narrative “made whole” again. This lack of horror at disabled women’s reproductive potential is all the more fascinating given the attitudes observed by Fiduccia, who notes that even pornographic websites featuring disabled actors market themselves as

an unfettered place where sex is made especially dirty . . . blow[ing] the lid off one of the last taboos, sex with a cripple, which in both a moral and public policy sense, *is analogous to pedophilia and incest*. This is because disabled women have the social status of a dependent child, and because they are considered to commit a crime against society when they reproduce. (280, emphasis mine)

Noteworthy here is that many Maiden Without Hands stories feature attempted incest as the inciting incident, with the mutilation occurring at the Maiden’s request to dramatize her disgust with her father’s advances. In this folkloric landscape, disabled sexuality may not be monstrous

in and of itself, but monstrous sexuality is nevertheless its cause. This attitude of disabled sexuality as “contaminated” and “taboo” continues today, such as in the song “I’m Bo Yo” by comedian Bo Burnham, wherein he boasts, “I’m offensive and creative like handicapped porn.” Here in the real world, disabled sexuality often exists only as a perversion or a punchline.

If the “offensiveness” of disabled sex does not exist within these folktales, however, it is solely because the Maiden’s piety and noble airs shine through in spite of her disability. In Giovanni Straparola’s “Biancabella,” for instance, a woman’s initial anger at the disabled Maiden melts away as she becomes “conscious of some subtle air of dignity and high breeding which seemed to emanate from Biancabella as a token of her lofty estate” (322). In fact, the Maiden’s acceptance of her disability is often combined with her otherwise exceptional physical beauty as an outward sign of her inner moral goodness. That the Maiden is most often “rewarded” with a reversion to her previously abled self proves that a true happy ending has only room for normative relationships and bodies. Disability and disabled sexuality are admissible, only insofar as they are inflicted and therefore, *hopefully*, reversible. For all its subversive potential, Fiduccia’s assertion that “the majority culture and its sexual orientation towards physical prowess . . . is eugenic at its core” proves true in the folktale (279).

Disabled men do not fare much better than their female counterparts. As a paraplegic man, Mitchell S. Tepper summarizes his own experiences with medical ignorance: “There was no acknowledgment of my sexual concerns from the doctor, no follow up questions . . . and no offer of hope for a sexual future” (39). Thus, as Tepper and Fiduccia have detailed, for any question of a sexuality post-disability, the answer is an immediate but unspoken, “Of course not.” Disabled men likewise do not escape from characterization as “dependent children.” If disability is a defect in performing proper (hetero)sexuality, by extension it must also be a defect in performing proper gender identity, rendering virile men impotent and emasculated. Thomas S. Gershick and Adam S. Miller describe three patterns in physically disabled men’s attempts to “properly” perform masculinity: reformulation, redefining the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity to accommodate themselves; reliance, “developing sensitive or hypersensitive adoptions of particular predominate attitudes”; and finally rejection, creating their own values or rejecting masculinity’s importance in their lives entirely (187). “In an important sense,” as Erving Goffman writes, “there is only one

complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white . . . heterosexual Protestant father” who is, most importantly, able-bodied (128). One would assume, then, that the Maiden’s recasting as a man in *Crimson Bound* would be of some prominence—but interestingly, Hodge largely circumvents commentary on Armand’s gender. Instead, she presents an inversion of the supernatural male lover and weak human female dynamic standard to many of her contemporaries, both within folklore and Young Adult fantasy literature as a whole. Armand’s presentation is decidedly more feminine, keeping up the façade of the Maiden’s docility to such a degree that Rachelle is shocked when Armand is not in his room waiting for her: “She was so used to him being obedient that it took her a moment to absorb the fact that he really had vanished. Without permission” (Hodge 127). Armand’s potential crisis of masculinity is ignored to position him silently within the “rejection” pattern, although only insofar as he rejects the crass chauvinism of men like Erec. The closest the novel comes to asserting Armand’s masculinity is him rejecting others’, most often women’s, attempts to “help” him, though no particular attention is given to the gendered aspect of this dynamic. As far as his romance with Rachelle is concerned, he rebuffs her assumption that he would need help pulling books off a high library shelf, and from then on, she is content to leave him be and only assist him when absolutely necessary.

Armand seems antithetical to most of the generic and cultural assumptions discussed thus far. After all, Rachelle describes his features as “bland, boring,” rather than jaw-droppingly gorgeous, and while Armand is not as openly sexual as Erec, the Wolf, he is not dismissed *entirely* (131). His sexuality is always undermined as “clumsy” and “nothing like” the practiced, womanizing Erec’s, but is at least genuine and nonthreatening, whereas Erec’s advances towards Rachelle are at worst non-consensual and at best regarded as cruel jokes (282). Armand’s sense of ethics and forgiveness, though diametrically opposed to Rachelle’s, are enough to start forming a more genuine emotional connection between them, and as the novel continues, they find further shared ground in their overlapping oppressions. Though Rachelle views Armand first as a con artist (and even a threat to her social class), she is, paradoxically, the most fitting of all the characters to fall in love with him; without the glare of his supposed sainthood, she can see his person most clearly.

Here, however, is when the narratological restrictions begin to compromise the book’s positive attributes. Lennard Davis notes that

in literature, “the disabled character is never of importance to himself or herself. Rather, the character is placed in the narrative ‘for’ the non-disabled characters—to help them develop sympathy, empathy, or as a counterbalance to some issue in the life of the ‘normal’ character” (45). This, unfortunately, is certainly true in *Crimson Bound*. Armand is a character in *Rachelle’s* narrative, and given that the story is told from her point-of-view almost exclusively, he can only exist on the page whenever she is there to witness him. He does exist *beyond* her, though—the arc of their relationship hinges upon Rachelle discovering how much Armand schemes behind her back, how many secrets he keeps from her. Armand and essentially every other character of even marginal importance demonstrate how unequipped Rachelle is to conceive of others having complexities not immediately obvious to her. Thus, within the world of the story, Rachelle’s perspective is repeatedly shown to be woefully narrow. Moreover, Armand’s anchoring to Rachelle has easily identifiable generic roots: Armand’s primary function as a love interest is to counter Rachelle’s own self-loathing, a dynamic common to many romance novels, both in Young Adult genres and beyond. Furthermore, by the novel’s own construction, Armand *has* to be less sexual than the super-abled Erec not just because they are foils, but because the novel’s twists rely partly on readers lacking access to his full perspective. Armand’s tamer sexuality thus plays more as the messy result of transposing tropes and generic restrictions without considering how his disabled identity complicates them.

While *Crimson Bound* does not focus on the sexual implications of Armand’s disability, it does deal heavily with its political implications. The most potent commentary *Crimson Bound* possesses is its criticism of what late disabled comedian and activist Stella Young calls “inspiration porn,” wherein disabled people’s mundane experiences are repackaged as heart-warming triumphs for the consumption of able-bodied audiences. While the term is never used explicitly in *Crimson Bound*, Hodge nonetheless utilizes Armand’s coercive “sainthood” to expose how abled society subtly exploits its disabled “inspirations.” In *Crimson Bound*, while society criminalizes super-abled bodies such as Rachelle’s and Erec’s, disabled bodies such as Armand’s are apotheosized. Although seemingly opposed, both of these attitudes nonetheless submerge any latent threats to “regular,” or compulsory able-bodiedness, rendering any options of escape either impossible or inhuman. The monarchy allows Rachelle and Armand to live solely due to their usefulness—the former because she can be a guard and executioner,

and the latter because his alleged sainthood reinforces the superiority of the royal bloodline.

Hodge belabors Armand's exploitation by his father and the state throughout the novel—most poignantly when Rachele learns that Armand has had to bribe a jeweler to place a tiny, lengthened fingernail on one of his hands in order to turn pages. When questioned, Armand answers simply that his father “doesn't like [him] having useful things” (Hodge 174). Rachele then remembers a town butcher who has much more ability with a hook than Armand has with his lavish silver prostheses (175). An assumed symbol of vanity reveals itself instead as a tool of the state to artificially limit Armand's independence, cementing the social construction of disability. Even those who do not directly benefit from Armand's marginalization treat him as a symbol rather than a person, best epitomized in the scene wherein a girl tries to feed Armand cakes despite his repeated attempts to politely decline, until he snaps at her that he “didn't get [his] hands cut off to make [her] feel special” (153).

Robert McRuer writes that a key element of compulsory able-bodiedness is “the able-bodied need for an agreed-on common ground . . . [that] repeatedly demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?” (92–93). For Armand's followers, a begrudging acceptance of his disability as a burden is intrinsic, much like in the folktales, to his living martyrdom. For the “bloodbound” like Rachele, a median species between humans and demons, their damnation is just as intrinsic. After being forced to kill another person on penalty of death, they gain supernatural physical abilities at the cost of one day becoming a demon. Society, however, draws no distinction, legally or morally, between someone like Erec, who willingly killed his own brother for power, or Rachele, whom Erec enchanted during a sexual battery and then forced to kill her aunt out of mercy. A culture of silence even persists between the bloodbound themselves, one which the rich court attendants then use against Rachele to “find her *exotic*” in much the same way they find Armand holy (151).

Thus, both Armand and Rachele's bodies are rendered sites for contested definitions of normality. Over the course of the story, Rachele recognizes in Armand echoes of her own experiences of being exoticized by the court, sexualized by men who “only made catcalls at Rachele, unless they were cursing her,” and finally rendered voiceless by a system that nevertheless demands her labor (Hodge 105). As she

notes in annoyance, “People wanted the bloodbound to serve them or protect them, but they never, ever wanted to listen to them” (Hodge 57). Though Rachelle describes her and Armand as “uneasy allies,” their relationship eventually resolves on egalitarian ground (Hodge 433).

Rachelle is, after all, the only one of them to be cured. After killing the death god, Rachelle reverts back to conventional able-bodiedness, yet both she and Armand are robbed of their chance at justice against Erec, who kills himself when faced with the prospect of losing his power over Rachelle. But what does it mean for the Wolf to kill himself? Erec’s ambivalent fate reveals the conflicted subsumption of Red Riding Hood into the rest of the novel. Hodge’s adaptation of Little Red Riding Hood, especially of the moral in “Le Petit Chaperon Rouge,” emblemizes the book’s core issue: that by refusing to address her ideological forebears, Hodge comprises her otherwise overt attempts at subversion. As Yvonne Verdier notes, oral, pre-Perrault variants of the Red Riding Hood story emphasize the protagonist’s sexual development, positioning Red as having to choose between “the path of pins or the path of needles,” sexual innuendos based on the customs of rural families sending their teenage daughters out to apprentice as seamstresses and learn to “adorn” themselves (105–06). As Verdier explains,

When they reached age fifteen, both the winter with the seamstress and the ceremonial entry into the age group consecrated to St. Catherine signified their arrival at maidenhood . . . of which the pin seemed to be the symbol . . . As for the needle, threaded through its eye, in the folklore of seamstresses it refers to an emphatically sexual symbolism: the seamstresses who sew ‘run’ (*qui cousent ‘courent,’* that is, chase after men), they have the thread in the needle; ‘seamstress married, needle threaded’ (*‘couturière mariée, aiguille echassée’*) goes the saying. (106)

The esoteric nature of these innuendos, of course, renders them invisible to the majority of modern readers. In fact, *Crimson Bound*, alongside Bruno Bettelheim and even some of Verdier’s own sources, instead suggests that the choice is between easy-but-temporary or harder-but-permanent solutions, id versus superego. Regardless, the thematic emphasis rests upon maturity, which becomes sexual through the Wolf’s lecherous advances.

The intergenerational relationships between daughter, mother, and

grandmother are of greater importance in pre-Perrault Little Red Riding Hood tales, to the point that some stories collapse the latter two categories in on each other, cast Grandmother as Wolf, or title the story not after Little Red but the Grandmother herself. Another motif missing from Perrault's version and its imitators is the cannibalistic feast, wherein the Wolf offers Red a bit of her grandmother's flesh and a glass of her blood. A voice, usually that of some animal, comes to tell Red the true nature of her meal, but she misunderstands it and the Wolf throws a shoe to shoo the voice away. To Verdier, these missing motifs re-center the story "around two characters, the girl and her grandmother . . . the wolf is only going about his business as a wolf" (104). Furthermore, she concludes that "the girl must eat her predecessor in order to complete her journey into adulthood," her biological and social development only complete once she has carved herself a place out of the bodies of those who came before (Verdier 110).

While Erec, much like the Wolf in the older versions, "conducts the girl toward each stop in her feminine destiny," Rachelle does not stop him, neither by herself nor with the help of passing washer-women, who in the older tales retract the sheet-bridge Red has already crossed in order to drown the Wolf in a river (Verdier 112). Rather, Erec kills *himself*; without the guarantee of his power and supremacy over humans, Erec turns to look back at Death, like Lot's wife, and dissolves. Erec's desire for Rachelle, in comparison to Armand's forgiveness and empathy, literalizes what Hélène Cixous calls "the realm of the proper," which she defines as "the general cultural heterosocial establishment in which man's reign is held to be proper" (50). To Cixous, "proper" is "property" is "proximity," "that which is not separable from me" (50). After turning her into a bloodbound, Erec ties a magical red thread around Rachelle's finger which, ultimately, can track her beyond death, another reference to the older oral variants wherein the Wolf tries to tether Little Red to him with a string around her ankle. The string, despite being used only sparingly in the novel, is a perfect manifestation of how interrelated the concepts of "property" and "proximity" are. Erec's thread is not merely a thread, but a leash so omnipresent that both Rachelle and the reader are often forced to forget that it is even there. Because it is invisible to everyone but Rachelle, she is forced to endure its heavy burden alone, only able to watch it disappear into the crowd of feet, into the history of patriarchal domination. Although the demons, or "forestborn," are supposed to represent chaos, they still recognize a governing lord, and their past rule over Earth reveals that

they still intend to uphold a rigid class structure, only now one where the higher classes may freely prey upon the lower for flesh as well as profits. After all, when Rachelle feels “that hunger to become one of the forestborn” as she reads with Armand, she thinks of the hope his sainthood represents, a hope of improving one’s circumstances, transgressing the lines drawn between human and demon, and thus rendering firmly institutionalized distinctions unstable. Then she thinks: “[She] wanted to ruin him. She wanted to drag him into darkness and crush and rend and break him, until all the hope went out of his eyes and there was nothing, nothing, nothing left for anyone to hope” (Hodge 171). Though Hodge presents giving into Erec and the forestborn as Rachelle giving *up* her humanity, truly Rachelle is giving *into* that masochistic impulse to uphold the systems of exploitation of which she has grown comfortable. If the premier forestborn, Erec, then represents male violence writ large, one way to read his fate is as the revelation that such attitudes belie a fundamental cowardice. Erec, in both of his forms, never approaches Rachelle on equal footing; he always requires some kind of power or authority over her, and when she ruins his plans, he subjects himself to an eternity of suffering rather than face a world where a woman is no different than he is. To be masculine is revealed to be cowardly and paranoid of the constant imagined threat of effeminacy—at the cost of the woman having her final say. Moreover, nothing in this thematic gesture applies to The Maiden Without Hands, in part because Armand is not even present in Erec’s final scene. In contrast to the frequent killing of the Wolf, Maiden Without Hands tales, as priorly discussed, usually end with a reconciliation, sometimes even between the Maiden and her now-repentant incestuous family member. Without triumph or rectification for either of his victims, Erec’s suicide leaves an uneasy void that Armand and Rachelle can only fill with their pity.

Furthermore, while her relationships with other women are limited, Rachelle’s role as a Little Red caught in a schema of intergenerational aggression tracks rather well—Erec forces her to kill her aunt Léonie, the Grandmother-proxy, only because of her attempts to gain the knowledge her aunt had forbidden. Aunt Léonie, as it turns out, *has* all the magic and resources legends claim could save the world from the impending death god, yet guards this information from Rachelle to keep her locked permanently in adolescence. Much like in the folktales, Rachelle’s murder of her aunt ironically reveals itself necessary to gain the skills and wit required to realize her own destiny.

Yet at the end, with the death god defeated and the two figureheads

of the main oppressive systems—the ableist state, and the misogynistic, narcissistic demons—lying dead, what is there to complain about? Unfortunately, because of the uneven stitching with which Hodge combines these tales, alternate realities loom large over any critical investigation of her text. For a start, it is undeniable that Hodge altered the Maiden Without Hands to maintain an unchallenged heteronormativity. Not only has the Maiden’s gender flipped from her analogues in the folktales, but Rachelle’s own relationships to other women are minimal. Instead of digging deep into the rigid sexual structures of both stories and upending them, Hodge blinks; any queer potential the merging of these two tales could have had shrivels away. There is also the obvious question of why the Red Riding Hood and the Maiden were not simply the same character, a *disabled* action heroine challenging the idea that her very existence is a contradiction. Or what truly barred Armand from more open sexual expression, perhaps even some sections from his point-of-view, as a stronger challenge not only to the presumed sexlessness of disabled people, but also to the presumed wickedness of sexuality itself. As Patricia Dunker once wrote of *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter’s “amplification” of her sources’ structures and imagery simply confirmed “sado-masochistic arrangements [of femininity]” despite their more overt feminist pretenses, and unfortunately Hodge cannot help but twist her ankle in the same hole (Bacchilega 51). With no woodsmen to save her, Perrault’s Red is only a victim, a warning that one should be wary of the wolves “who pursue young women at home and in the streets” (Perrault). *Crimson Bound*, however divergent from Perrault’s plot, follows a similar conservative path, with carnal desires largely attributed to the power of the corrupting death god “casting shadows inside her” and filling Rachelle’s chest with “a cold hollow,” sexual arousal in lockstep with angst (Hodge 103, 195). Even Rachelle losing her virginity is merely a move born out of her own self-destructive spiral. If Armand’s sexuality is downplayed, Rachelle’s sexuality is but a weapon to wield against herself.

In the end, as much as *Crimson Bound* strains towards a happily ever after, it nevertheless remains defined by its ideological tensions: between female empowerment and the tales’ imported sexual conservatism; between marrying two fairytales about women and a staunchly heterosexual economy; between the centering of the disabled body and the desire for a conventionally attractive able-bodied heroine; and between wrapping up the loose plot threads and fully acknowledging the break in its world’s fundamental social structures. Much like Rachelle,

Hodge brings her flawed world to the cusp of oblivion and looks away. After Armand and Rachele vanquish the death god, they steal a moment alone in the woods outside the palace. Breaking days of silence, Armand says, “I spent so much time pretending to be a saint, I think I fooled myself as well,” to which Rachele replies, “It’s true now, isn’t it?” (Hodge 432) Rather than truly upending the societal structures that create compulsory able-bodiedness and sainthood, the latter is simply now “true” because it is based on merit. Hodge eschews addressing the core issues at the heart of this system to instead swap out the Bad King for a Good King and ameliorate the position of a *single* disabled person, much like how the folktales merely cure the Maiden and excise the Evil Stepmother. How could it be otherwise, when the people of *Crimson Bound* still worship statues and tokens of a demigod’s brutally dismembered body parts? With Armand’s sainthood only reinforced, the book promises no end or substantial change to his followers’ fetishistic treatment of him, other than that he can perhaps now correct them without fear of punishment.

As Judith Butler once said in an interview, “This failure to approximate the norm . . . is not the same as the subversion of the norm,” and there is no guarantee that subversion will follow from the failure to conform (McRuer 95). Thus, it is hard to not regard *Crimson Bound* as having accomplished only facile critiques of able-bodiedness. Any triumph in its failure to approximate able-bodied normativity crumbles when the book finds itself on the *cusp* of genuine subversion—the world’s governing existential threat suddenly ripped away, its foundational myths rendered irrelevant—and instead retreats back to cliché. Armand presents an explicit challenge not only to the idea that disabled people are unworthy of love, but also to the idea that disabled people being “inspirational” for abled people is not merely ableism in patronizing drag. In doing so, Hodge problematizes the ideological underpinnings of the original Maiden Without Hands folktales, revealing the disgust with disability that runs underneath their otherwise happy mixed-ability marriages. However, the restraints of the heterosexual romance genre, the novel’s adherence to Perrault’s original conservative message, and an unwillingness to engage with its world beyond the happily ever after undermine its subversive power, leaving behind a knot of contradictions. Armand is now positioned to *never* shed the title of living saint, a title that has only brought him physical and interpersonal suffering. Thus, his and the other Maidens’ endings are a gilded cage growing a little larger, a few birds being set free while the rest are

left to stew in their own waste. Whenever I think of the Maidens' or Armand's happy endings, I cannot help but also think of one of Rachele's earlier snide remarks: "There are plenty of beggars with missing hands . . ." she says, "but nobody calls *them* saints" (Hodge 89).

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NOTES

1. For more information, refer to Vladimir Propp's *The Morphology of the Folktale*.
2. The Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Tale Type Index, designed originally by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson and later revised by Hans-Jörg Uther, classifies folktales based on their narrative similarities, under the hypothesis that each type derives from a single "*ur-text*."

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Intertextuality, Aesthetics, and the Digital: Rediscovering Chekhov in Early British Modernism

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The intertextual links between Anton Chekhov and early modernist writers have proven difficult to assess. Many of these writers, including Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and DH Lawrence, all either published criticism of Chekhov, translated his works and letters, or drew on him in their own fiction. Scholarly work has most commonly focused on these hallmark modernists' imitation and veneration of Chekhov's thematic choices, unblinking realism, and his nonlinear and unresolved plots. Many of these writers, like Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, and Raymond Carver, have even been awarded monikers directly linking them to the Russian author within their own literary and national contexts as the English, Irish, or American Chekhov respectively (Butenina 27). Following the modernist era and into the 1970s and 80s, British performances of Chekhov's plays occurred so frequently that these were only outstripped by Shakespeare performances (le Fleming 55). Since Constance Garnett's early translations of Chekhov's stories and plays in the early 1920s, translations of Chekhov into English have grown "beyond calculation" (Kilmenko 122). Even today, contemporary poets and writers outside of Russia draw upon Chekov's texts in both overt and nearly undetectable ways.

This essay renews and extends the exploration of Chekhovian intertextuality within the early British modernist period (1900–25) beyond the rigid question of influence alone. In what follows, I first synthesize several previous critical examinations of intertextual networks between

Chekhov and other early modernist writers. This review of past scholarship informs a short theoretical reexamination of the concept of intertextuality generally, starting first with T. S. Eliot's landmark essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and then moving into current theory regarding literary aesthetics, postcritical hermeneutics, and the role of the digital humanities in identifying new intertextual networks. These theories lay the groundwork for conceptualizing intertextuality as multidirectional, showing that productive scholarly conversation can occur between texts that may not perfectly align along historical, contextual, or chronological lines. This alters the current order of operations often used in comparative literary analyses by using aesthetic, compositional, thematic, and linguistic elements as the foundation of intertextual analysis, with a shared historical and contextual periphery of texts supplementing and enriching these primary connections. Ultimately, the purpose of these analytical adjustments is to allow the impact of intertextuality to extend beyond the influence of one author upon another, showing that lack of complete overlap between textual contexts should not disqualify critical or creative co-production between texts. This theoretical section forms the foundation for the body of my article, wherein I conduct a comparative reading of a pair of short stories, one published by Chekhov and another by the modernist author, Katherine Mansfield. My reading blends traditional close reading with digital textual analysis, resulting in a more nuanced, multifaceted, and kaleidoscopic view of Chekhov within British modernism. This examination of the unique and complex relationship between Chekhov and the modernist writers ultimately opens the door for more flexible and ubiquitous dialog between texts of differing literary, national, and linguistic backgrounds.

INTERTEXTUALITY, AESTHETICS, AND THE DIGITAL

Due to the breadth of references and allusions to Chekhov in the literature and criticism that has followed in his wake, the doctor-turned-writer's intertextual presence continues to puzzle and fascinate scholars. This persistent yet diverse fascination arises primarily out of the multitude of critical approaches employed by scholars. Some, such as Svetlana Kilmenko, find the diverse scholarly commentary on the "remarkable quantity and quality of reincarnations of Chekhov in English" unproductive (121). She asserts that non-Russian writers, and consequently the scholars who study them, have identified allusions to a Chekhov work or proclaimed intertextuality between texts based on

a sense of misplaced nostalgia.¹ An unfortunate consequence of this argument would be to dismiss much of what scholars have assigned as “Chekhovian” in early twentieth-century English texts as intertextual invention rather than sincere instances of intentional and identifiable affinity. Other critics, like Claire Davison, have steered critical conversations on this subject towards a focus on the impact that translation holds upon these Anglo-Russian intertextual networks. Davison approaches these questions not “in terms of [shared] theme, motif or originality” of Chekhovian and British texts, but rather via “the poetics of translating,” claiming that the ability and willingness of British authors to engage in Chekhov’s texts in the original Russian facilitated these authors’ more masterful integration of Russian literary style into their own work, thus enabling them “to think across traditions, styles and genres” (7). However, if carried in the reverse, Davison’s argument also (perhaps inadvertently) implies that an author’s *inability* to translate between languages ultimately occludes the intertextual and allusive links that could be forged with foreign authors. Still, other critics, such as Kerry McSweeney, reject Kilmenko’s historic (or what Kilmenko may call nostalgic) lens and instead conduct comparative analyses of Chekhov and other authors synoptically.² McSweeney claims that critics who point toward Chekhovian influence in non-Chekhov texts via biographical, contextual, or historical modes alone overlook the vibrant aesthetic value of Chekhov’s stories. These aesthetic connections, according to McSweeney, provide more fruitful ground for discovering allusive material between texts, material which interpretative or subtextual readings of the stories alone cannot provide. He writes, “The kind of critical attention Chekhov’s stories invite is not exclusively or even primarily interpretative, but such attention needs to be informed by a sense of how [aesthetic] literary allusion works in a text” (*The Realist Short Story* 30). Therefore, aesthetics and affect, rather than context, form the basis of McSweeney’s examination of Chekhov’s ties to non-Russian writers.

At this point, we have arrived at a critical and methodological crossroads. Scholars exploring intertextual links to Chekhov must, it seems, choose between emphasizing the shared historical context of Chekhov and British writers, focusing on the effects of translation, or comparing the aesthetic and thematic elements of Anglo-Chekhov texts. To aid my own choice at this intersection, I will briefly step away from Chekhov and turn towards intertextuality in the broader, theoretical sense. Focusing broadly on intertextuality will not only synthesize

the aforementioned scholarship and the methods these scholars have employed, but also justify the critical and analytical method I employ in my own comparative readings between Chekhov and other British writers.

Much of the theoretical complexity and debate surrounding intertextuality lies in finding precise definitions of what constitutes intertextuality, which texts are suited for intertextual examinations, and the effect these links produce on our current understanding of texts. Thus, I turn first to T. S. Eliot's landmark essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), in which Eliot delivers his view of the relationship between poets and the literary tradition which preceded them. Eliot's essay fundamentally concerns itself with the question of intertextuality, though not in the historic or contextual sense. He quickly rejects the idea that critics should examine intertextual links to the past literary tradition as if they were "some pleasing archeological reconstruction" of allusions and quotations (Eliot 3). For Eliot, critical excavation of the historical strata of influence and intertextual indebtedness of one author to another does little to link authors together, but instead isolates them from each other. Because "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone," a "contrast and comparison" of the writer "among the dead" writers of the past constitute an essential part of literary criticism (Eliot 6). However, this critical valuation between past and present writers is not bound by any temporal or time-based criteria for Eliot, but is instead "a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism" (6). Intertextual time does not progress in a neat or linear fashion; successful poets, for Eliot at least, infuse their texts with both the past and the present, merging the aesthetics of their predecessors together into their own work. Eliot's essay supports the idea of intertextual multidirectionality and timeless literature, where "the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (7).

And yet, in the decades that have passed since Eliot's essay, criticism—intertextual or otherwise—has apparently moved on from Eliot, opting instead to plumb the depths of historic intertextuality and dig deeper and deeper into the layers of contextual sediment between authors. Critics seem to be saying that there is little point in comparing texts without any shared authorial or extra-textual justification, shared history, sociological subtext, or some other hidden and obscure commonality. However, some critics, such as Rita Felski, have recently pushed back against this notion. Felski laments that literary scholars have thus far achieved "little success in halting the tsunami of context-based criti-

cism” (152). Despite the years of analysis devoted to “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” critical inquiries into the intertextual nature of texts have, on the whole, adhered to “the prevailing picture of context as a kind of historical container in which individual texts are encased and held fast [in] what we call periods—each of which surrounds, sustains, and subsumes” a text (Felski 156). Such an approach has, for Felski, greatly inhibited the possibilities and power behind the discovery and description of intertextuality between seemingly disparate authors. She writes that historicism “serves as the equivalent of cultural relativism, quarantining difference, denying relatedness, and suspending—or less kindly, evading—the question of why past texts matter and how they speak to us now” (Felski 156). Ultimately, Felski calls for “models of textual mobility and transhistorical attachment” in criticism, granting text the ability to “attract allies, generate attachments, trigger translations, and inspire copies, spin-offs, and clones” beyond what their historic or contextual period may permit, (168–69, 158). This timeless nature of literary relationships and links ultimately reverses the commonly held order of operations in the critical comparison of texts.

By applying Felski and Eliot’s concepts, intertextual criticism can enrich its traditional, linear³ model with a new focus on aesthetics and affect. However, this does not mean that context, historic or biographical, goes thrown out of the window. Rather, my intent is to widen the view and processes which critics can employ in their evaluations of texts. Felski defends aesthetics as the preferable starting point for comparative criticism by claiming that aesthetics—formal devices, characters, plot, themes, diction, etc.—are not the result of historic connections between authors, but are “the very reason such [historic] connections are forged and sustained” in the first place (165). So, while a primary focus on shared aesthetic elements between texts does not preclude the examination of the social or historic periphery, this approach affords texts a “transtemporal liveliness,” an ability to create and co-construct with each other “without opposing thought to emotion or divorcing [the] intellectual rigor” of historic and contextual criticism from a scholarly examination of related writers (Felski 154).

With these new and exciting possibilities for intertextual networks, the potential that digital tools and technologies hold to further enhance and enlarge our explorations and comparisons of texts should not be overlooked. Many of the tools and techniques currently in use within the field of digital humanities align with Felski and Eliot. Franco Moretti has recently pointed out the ability of digital quantitative soft-

ware to quickly and accurately point out potential intertextual links between texts. He terms this concept “distant reading,” a way of performing traditional close readings across a wide spread of literary corpora (Moretti 55). Yet other scholars are using these digital tools in a more intimate way than Moretti suggests, turning instead to individual texts or specific pairings between texts. Julie Van Peteghem has noted how “within the digital framework,” tools that search across both “large text corpora” and individual texts “for the precise recurrence of words and phrases” produce accurate and fruitful “observations and interpretations of various aspects of text reuse” (43). Additionally, Neil Coffee et al. align themselves with Felski’s theory of aesthetics and extra-textual production, claiming that the use of digital resources in the study of literature not only builds stronger intertextual networks between texts, but also between the texts and their readers. They state that “digital detection” tools are able to “bring to prominence . . . features that have passed beneath the notice of critics, but which have nevertheless played a role in the poet’s production and reader’s experience” (418). Such a digitally aided and enhanced focus ultimately, in Coffee’s words, constructs “a more satisfying profile of the artistry of each poet and richer interpretations of their works” (418).

Why then does a multidirectional, aesthetic-based, digitally-aided model of intertextual analysis fit Chekhov? The aforementioned scholarship on Anglo-Chekhov intertextuality—each utilizing different methods, approaches, and viewpoints—all seem to place Chekhov on a different intertextual or influential point on the literary map. In answering this question, I find one characterization by Donald Rayfield, Chekhov’s primary biographer, particularly helpful. Rayfield proclaims Chekhov as “the most approachable and the least alien . . . of all the Russian ‘classics’ . . . to non-Russians especially,” but that “Chekhov’s approachability” in the English literary tradition “is inseparable from his elusiveness. It is very hard to say what he ‘meant,’ when he so rarely judges or expounds” (xv). Efforts, like those of Kilmenko, to steer criticism of Anglo-Chekhov connections toward context and historically motivated analyses may perhaps be due to the elusive and murky nature of Chekhov’s authorial presence in his own work. However, the quality of approachability in Chekhov cannot be so easily dismissed, for such a quality relates strongly to his stories’ aesthetic and formal attractiveness. McSweeney’s approach toward Chekhov is firmly based on this emphasis of Chekhov’s aesthetic hospitality: “[Chekhov’s] stories . . . are better read in terms of their aesthetic effects than their alleged

subtexts . . . [they] invite a different kind of critical attention—not interpretative problem-solving but correct construal and an articulate aesthetic response” (“Chekhov’s Stories” 43, 47). Chekhov’s stories, whether for their compositional inventiveness, their poignant themes, lively characters, or simply the words they contain, exude what Wai Chee Dimock calls “resonance,” or an ability to initiate newfound connections between literatures in unexpected places (1061). His literature manifests what Felski describes as a “dexterity in soliciting and sustaining attachments” with other authors and texts (166). But ultimately, Chekhov’s own description of his literature captures its enduring reliability and foreshadows the timeless and far-flung influence his work would produce on writers during and after his own time: “So I turn out a sort of patchwork quilt rather than literature. What can I do? I simply don’t know. I will simply depend on all-healing time” (Karlinsky, 273).

In the section that follows, I will perform a comparative reading, aided by software designed for digital textual analysis,⁴ of a Chekhov and a Mansfield story. Using these theoretical attitudes and models, I hope to provide interpretations of the stories that do not leave the impact of these intertextual pairs stranded within their own historic or aesthetic compartments; instead, as Felski says, I intend to step into “a coproduction between [textual] actors that brings new things to light” (174). Though I do examine instances of biographical concordance between the authors or direct contextual linkage between the texts themselves, I primarily focus on what the texts’ aesthetic and thematic qualities produce, question, and propose as they are brought into conversation with each other. These bi-textual productions will ultimately produce newfound appreciation not only for Chekhov’s work as they stand alone, but for what they have enabled in the wider world of literature since his career and into today.

RECONCEPTUALIZING MANSFIELD-CHEKHOVIAN INTERTEXTUALITY IN “DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE COLONEL” AND “A DREARY STORY”

Of the many scholarly comparisons of Chekhov and other early modernist writers, Mansfield garners perhaps the most attention and focus. Her open admiration of Chekhov’s stories, plays, literary methods, and biography is well-documented and well-researched, and comparative criticism and analyses of their literature and intertextual relationships are just as consistent and thorough.⁵ However, despite the frequency and ardency with which these two writers have been brought

together in both historical scholarship and literary criticism, more critical attention must be given to Mansfield's simultaneous dependence on and independence from Chekhov through new comparative pairings between each author's stories.

Previous analyses of the intertextual networks between Mansfield and Chekhov tend to split into two general areas. The first category centers on Mansfield's fascination with the biographical aspects of Chekhov's life. These studies often investigate her translation of a volume of Chekhov's correspondence—published in collaboration with Samuel Kotliansky, a Russian-born British translator and well-known literary friend of other writers such as Virginia Woolf and DH Lawrence—as well as her reviews and essays on Chekhov's literature, often published and circulated through her husband, John Middleton Murray (Diment 238–39). The second category of criticism focuses on the aesthetic and literary indebtedness that Mansfield's short stories apparently owe Chekhov. Much of this scholarship tends to bring a particular pair of stories into conversation with each other: Mansfield's early story, "The-Child-who-was-Tired," (1910) and Chekhov's story, "Спать Хочется" [Sleepy] (1888), with Mansfield's story often being read as an almost-plagiarized version of Chekhov's story. These literary studies tend to be more divisive than the historically based scholarship, either accusing Mansfield of blatantly imitating Chekhov or defending Mansfield's independent aesthetic and literary style from Chekhov's. Such polarized claims stem from the lack of variety in the pairings of different Chekhov and Mansfield stories. The dissonance within the scholarship, therefore, has tended to push these narrow comparisons of Mansfield and Chekhov towards one side or the other.

However, the goal of this section is not to debate from one particular end of this scholarly spectrum, nor is it to comment on previous pairings of Mansfield and Chekhov stories. Rather, the intention of this section is to bring a previously unconnected pair of stories into conversation with each other, which will illustrate the complex network between biography, context, and literary style at work in Chekhov and Mansfield. Despite the seemingly contradictory and disparate scholarly conclusions about these authors' intertextual relationship, my comparison of Mansfield's "Daughters of the Late Colonel" (1921) and Chekhov's "A Dreary Story" (1889) rethinks Mansfield's intertextual "indebtedness" to Chekhov. At first glance, the plot structure and themes of Mansfield's "Daughters" seem to imitate "A Dreary Story," much in the same fashion that has drawn attention to "The-Child-who-was-

Tired” and “Sleepy.” However, the stories contrast strongly in their narrative modes. These contrasts alter the final conclusion and meaning of the theme of death that each story presents to the reader. Despite the initial intertextual lineage between the stories, these formal and aesthetic differences demonstrate Mansfield’s and Chekhov’s individual and independent aesthetic and literary style. Ultimately, this comparison shows that the divided analyses—those which isolate Chekhov and Mansfield from each other and those which establish an intertextual line of credit between the authors—are not mutually exclusive. Rather, this comparison unfolds the multidimensional relationship that exists between Mansfield and Chekhov, a network of co-production that enriches and enlivens our understanding, appreciation, and application of their texts.

Beginning with the cursory similarities between the stories, the plot of Mansfield’s “Daughters” can be read as a continuation of the plot and events described in Chekhov’s “A Dreary Story.” Chekhov’s tale follows the physical, intellectual, and emotional downfall of a renowned professor of medicine, Nikolai Stepanovich. After being diagnosed with a degenerative illness, Nikolai becomes increasingly alienated, detached, and embittered towards his colleagues, friends, and family—specifically his wife, Varya, daughter, Liza, and foster daughter, Katya. The decay of these relationships only increases Nikolai’s suffering and ultimately “empties his life of meaning” (Flath 272). Mansfield continues “A Dreary Story” where Chekhov left off. “Daughters” begins further along the timeline of the plot, shifting focus onto Josephine and Constantia, daughters of an equally prestigious and alienated patriarch, and explores their navigation of the traumatic and spectral presence of their tyrannical and cantankerous father.

Details from some letters and correspondence provide firmer footing for the claim that Mansfield wrote “Daughters” as a type of continuation of “A Dreary Story.” Mansfield’s story was published three years after her own diagnosis with consumption in 1918. Her anxiety concerning her own death—as well as her journaling of these anxieties alongside meditations on Chekhov and his literature—parallels the emotions and reflections expressed by Nikolai Stepanovich in “A Dreary Story,” which Chekhov framed as if told from the professor’s diary. This diagnosis also prompted many ardent reflections about Chekhov in her own notebooks and journals as she struggled to balance her writing with the debilitating illness. In one notebook, Mansfield writes, “At four 30 today it [illness] did conquer me and I began, like the Tchekov

students, to ‘pace from corner to corner’ then up and down, up and down and the pain racked me like a curse and I could hardly breathe . . . I feel too ill to write” (*Letters*, 141). Such invocations of Chekhov align Mansfield’s own personal and existential anxieties with those of Nikolai Stepanovich in “A Dreary Story.”

“Daughters” emerges in part out of these biographical alignments. One particular instance of Mansfield’s musings on Chekhov from her many notebooks draws a direct link between “A Dreary Story” and “Daughters.” Mansfield writes: “I must start writing again . . . Ach, Tchekhov! Why are you dead! Why can’t I talk to you—in a big, darkish room—at late evening—where the light is green from the waving trees outside . . .” (*Letters*, 141). Mansfield’s descriptive, almost prayerful appeal to Chekhov mirrors the setting and mood of a pertinent scene in “Daughters” where Constantia and Josephine are briefly freed from their father’s phantom-like presence by the memories of their mother: “The sunlight pressed through the windows, thieved its way in, flashed its light over the furniture and the photographs . . . When it came to mother’s photograph . . . it lingered . . . The thieving sun touched Josephine gently. She lifted her face. She was drawn over to the window by gentle beams” (28–29). In one of the only moments in “Daughters” where natural light appears in the story, the sisters are able to momentarily break out of their fearful, apprehensive, and timid behaviors and shake off the influence of their father. Josephine is able to think and act clearly rather than “vaguely” for the first time in the story, and she recalls specific memories of the happier “other life” when her mother was living (Mansfield 29). The imagery in this moment of escape and relief from their father’s spectral presence and the responsibilities left to the sisters after his death parallels the setting described in Mansfield’s notebook. Both are described as places of ethereal, earthy light, with Mansfield freed from her anxiety of death and dying and able to converse with a ghostly Chekhov, much in the same way that Josephine and Constantia seem to interact with their deceased mother. Ultimately, the likeness of “Daughters” to “A Dreary Story” in terms of biographical context and plot reveals a vibrant intertextual correlation between the two stories. Such a correlation affirms many scholarly conclusions regarding Mansfield’s heavy reliance on Chekhov’s texts to inspire and propel her own stories.

And yet, “Daughters” simultaneously resists intertextual affinity with Chekhov’s “A Dreary Story” when considering the narrative modes of both stories. Their diverse registers not only differentiate

each author's individual and independent literary style, but also provide grounds for new and distinct interpretations of each story, despite their related plots, context, and themes. Carol Flath has pointed out that "A Dreary Story" is unique for Chekhov in its usage of the journal or diary-like mode of narration. This departs from the mode of many of Chekhov's other texts, which are famously celebrated for their innovative proto-modernist plotlessness. For Chekhov, this often meant beginning *in medias res* and using an omniscient, third-person narrator. However, "A Dreary Story," Flath says, is told "in the imperfect aspect, present tense," exhibiting Chekhov's less known though nonetheless ". . . skillful use of the first-person narrative" (272). Telling the story in this alternative register, while increasing the reader's access to Nikolai Stepanovich's intimate thoughts and feelings about his fading life, forces the reader to accept Nikolai's version of the story's events, which may or may not be true to the experience of those he writes about.

However, the narrative mode shifts abruptly at the end of the story as Nikolai Stepanovich switches into the past tense and perfective aspect rather than in the present imperfective.⁶ The final moment of the story demonstrates this shift in the verbal narration. As Katya abruptly leaves Nikolai's hotel room, never to see him again, he writes, "She knows that I am watching her go, and will probably look back when she reaches the corner. No, she didn't. I caught one last glimpse of her black dress, her steps faded away . . . Farewell, my treasure! (Chekhov 217)." In the first sentence, Nikolai continues his account in the imperfective present, using verbs such as "знает" [knows], "гляжу" [am watching], and "повороте оглянется" [look back]. However, the final two sentences of the quotation shift abruptly into the perfective past tense, with verbs such as "не оглянулась" [didn't look back], "мелькнуло" [caught], and "затихли" [faded]. This shift to the past tense and perfective aspect metaphorically signal the end of Nikolai's life. Thus, throughout the whole story, Chekhov's narrative mode, including these key shifts in verb tense, models the very process of dying. Readers are exposed to Nikolai's thoughts and emotions in the present, granting a more visceral and in-the-moment view of his decline. In these final moments, the reader is forced, like Nikolai Stepanovich, to acknowledge the end of life. Ultimately, "A Dreary Story" presents a vivid and poignant perspective on the process of dying.

Conversely, "Daughters" focuses on death conceptually rather than its process. The story does this through a different and characteristically Mansfieldian narrative mode. Mansfield captures the isolating

and estranging effects of death on the sisters by telling the majority of the story through third-person narration. Though Mansfield occasionally reveals the sister's first-person perspectives and thoughts, she does so far less frequently and overtly than Chekhov. Mansfield grants this access by blurring the narration with the interior thoughts of the sisters, sometimes omitting quotation marks around their thoughts or questions. One example of this occurs as the sisters are attempting to sort through their father's belongings:

She had the most extraordinary feeling that she had just escaped something simply awful. But how could she explain to Constantia that father was in the chest of drawers? He was in the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and neckties, or in the next with his shirts and pyjamas, or in the lowest of all with his suits. He was watching there, hidden away—just behind the door-handle—ready to spring. (Mansfield 21)

The ambiguity in whether the narrator or Josephine is sensing the old colonel's presence in the wardrobe clouds the sisters' emotional sensibilities, enhancing the reader's awareness of the trauma that these sisters are experiencing because of their father's passing.

Mansfield enriches the detached and distant mood which her narrative register generates through another of her well-known stylistic techniques: object-oriented interiority, or the opening of a character's inner thoughts and emotions based on surrounding objects. This technique achieves a similar estranging effect, channeling the sisters' normal human emotions towards objects rather than other people. This is evident in the passage quoted above where the sisters apprehend their father more strongly through his old "handkerchiefs . . . neckties . . . shirts . . . and pyjamas" than through any memory or experience with him (Mansfield 21). This object-oriented relationship between the father and his old possessions is shown in Figure 1 below, where the frequency of the term "father" drops into closer correlation and frequency with the objects described during segment five, the moment when both sisters attempt to sort through his effects.

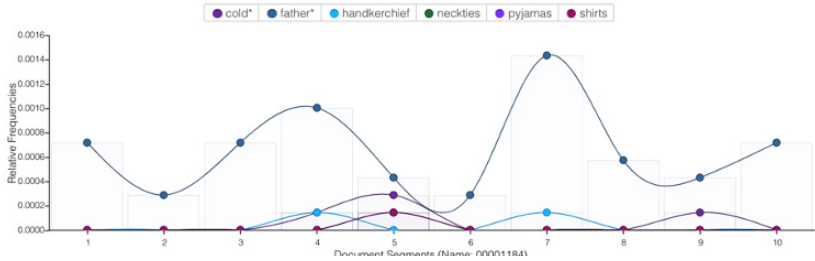


Fig. 1: Trends Graph. The x-axis progresses through each consecutive part of the story, while the y-axis gives the frequencies of the selected keywords in each segment.

Mansfield pairs this spectral, even predatorial aura surrounding their father’s clothing with a description of the study’s cold temperature: “Everything was covered” with a “coldness” and “whiteness” from which the sisters “expected a snowflake to fall” (20). This indicates that the sisters, in the wake of their father’s death, have become alienated and distant from their own lives. Mansfield’s unique narrative methods ultimately alter the story’s approach to the subject of death. Unlike “A Dreary Story,” “Daughters” concerns itself less with the process or experience of dying and more with the alienating effects of death on those still living.

And yet, though these contrasting narrative modes appear to put more intertextual distance between Chekhov and Mansfield, they do so only in terms of their literary styles. The individual and independent qualities and techniques of each writer do not cancel out the biographical and contextual ways in which these stories directly correlate to each other. Though this may seem paradoxical, this statement from Russian immigrant critic, D. S. Mirskii, puts this apparent riddle of Mansfield-Chekhovian intertextuality into clear, provocative terms: “[I]f Chekhov has had a genuine heir to the secrets of his art, it is in England, where Katherine Mansfield did what no Russian has done—learned from Chekhov without imitating him” (382–83). Mansfield’s admiration and knowledge of Chekhov is undeniably linked to many of the intertextualities between their texts. But each author’s literary style and methods are also undeniably their own. Ultimately, this comparison demonstrates the multi-layered nature of intertextuality, showing how texts and writers may align by one definition of intertextuality while simultaneously maintaining independence from each other.

REVISITING MODERNISM AND CHEKHOV'S INVITATIONS

What is now left to consider is how critical conceptions of literary modernism continue to change because of Chekhov. Scholars who have examined this area have often pointed towards the non-traditional narrative mode which Chekhov inspired writers to adopt as the world passed into modernity. Florence Goyet claims that Chekhov's short fiction called "into question the very idea of a stable, affirmative self and the superiority of one 'voice' over the others," ultimately subverting the pre-modern narrative tradition (8). Adrian Hunter credits Chekhov for allowing the short story to "distinguish itself as something other than a miniaturized novel," explaining the way in which his texts resist "novelistic strategies of continuity and identification, seeking an 'open' interrogative effect rather than a 'closed' declarative one" (73). Such praise of Chekhov's innovation and genius is widely felt and easily discernible, especially thanks to digital tools employed both in this article and in other scholarly work. However, this critical praise of the "interrogative" and "interior" effect also casts a vague persona around Chekhov. Critics of modernism revere him as a sort of absentee author—one who is always objective, constantly passing into the imperfect and biased minds of his characters, though never offering any subjective view or opinion of his own for the reader to consider. Modernist writers and contemporary critics admire him for his seemingly non-political, non-moral, and non-spiritual perspectives on the world. His evocative descriptions of society and humanity within the minds of his characters are applauded, but his own personal opinions and ideologies either appear murky or absent. Even Chekhov's descriptions of his own writing seemingly justify this view. In one letter to his brother, Chekhov writes, "To describe . . . you need . . . to free yourself from personal expression. . . . Subjectivity is a terrible thing" (Koteliansky).

I call this emphasis on Chekhov's narrative objectivity into question, specifically in regard to the "interrogative" persona cast on him by some critics. Hunter's aforementioned characterization of Chekhov as the detached interrogator and objective questioner of humanity separates Chekhov from both his texts and his readers, removing "the obligation to provide any interpretative content" in his stories (74). While Hunter justifiably attributes this freedom from interpretative obligations to later modernists, the characterization also discounts Chekhov's deep interest in steering his readers towards adopting new beliefs and attitudes about themselves and their worlds. Just because Chekhov's

texts do not provide overt or declarative interpretations of themselves does not mean that Chekhov is merely an uninvested interrogator.

With this in mind, I suggest that Chekhov's stories, despite their interpretative haziness and Chekhov's own admitted avoidance of subjectivity, do not only interrogate and cross-examine. His stories offer thoughtful "invitations" for readers, directing them towards possible answers and actions. Justification for my reconceptualization of Chekhov's influence in terms of an "invitation" instead of an interrogation stems from the linguistic nuances in the Russian word for invitation, "приглашение." The etymological root of the word is "глас" or "голос," meaning "voice," and bears the following figurative meaning: "высказываемое мнение" [an expressed opinion] (Тихонов 143). Furthermore, an invitation does not only suggest or give voice to the inviter's opinion; it also provides the choice of acceptance or rejection for the recipient. The great subtlety of Chekhov's works is that they offer subtly opinionated invitations to readers without sacrificing interpretative complexity and nuance. Thinking of Chekhov as an inviter rather than interrogator accounts for the wider-than-expected range of writers with whom Chekhov intersects. And though several of these writers were explored in the previous sections of this article, reconsidering Chekhov's stories as invitations ultimately offer scholars the promise of discovering many more intertextual links between Chekhov and other authors.

This concept of invitation not only adheres to Chekhov's own texts individually, but also links Chekhov to aspects of the modernist literary project. Rather than proclaiming a message, their aim was to observe, question, and invite. Katherine Mansfield, in a 1919 letter to Virginia Woolf, confirms this invitational characteristic of modernism and modernist literature. She writes, "what the writer does is not so much solve the question but . . . put the question. There must be the question put. That seems to me a very nice dividing line between the true and the false writer" (*Letters* 320). Invitation ultimately lies at the heart of what modernist writers intended to change about literature: bridging the divide between writer and reader, leading readers into the interior minds and thoughts of characters and inviting meaning and interpretation rather than declaring it. As scholars continue to investigate Chekhov's intertextual influence, his work will undoubtedly continue to support this mode of invitational literature within modernism.

Redefining the influence of Chekhov's texts on modernism as invitations rather than interrogations also parallels the method and attitude

in which I have performed my intertextual analysis. This article has demonstrated the way in which Chekhov's short fiction invites other texts of diverse contextual backgrounds and aesthetic qualities to combine and collide in fruitful ways. The bi-textual productions explicated in this article have, I intend, not only generated a newfound appreciation for Chekhov's work alone but also expanded the critical conversation surrounding British modernism, granting Chekhov a current and active role in shaping how we understand this period of literary history today.

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NOTES

1. Kilmenko's description of this nostalgic effect is as follows: "The English Chekhov . . . brings emphasis to the universal essence of nostalgia as longing away from the present . . . away from any determination at all of time or space . . . [his texts] demonstrate that people do not miss what is beautiful or glorious, but rather beautify and glorify what is missing" (132).

2. McSweeney defines this method as "an aesthetic critical model for more detailed considerations of the short stories" which "brings distinctive features of the work of each into sharp focus, facilitates making qualitative discriminations among stories, and provides a basis for assessing the profitability of other critical models" (*The Realist Short Story* x).

3. I use linear here to imply a general attitude in comparative literary criticism. I feel that the word captures both the instinct of needing to "dig deep" into social or contextual depths and to adhere to a proper chronological horizontality, or order of events (Felski 52).

4. Unless otherwise specified, I will be using the Voyant software, designed by Stefan Sinclair, McGill University and Geoffrey Rockwell, University of Alberta, which can be accessed for free at voyant-tools.org.

5. Some examples of well-known studies on intertextual links between Mansfield and Chekhov (see bibliography for full citations): Schneider, 1935; “The Times Literary Supplement” debate by post in 1951 (published by Tomalin, 1987); Sutherland, 1955; Alpers, 1980; Tomalin, 1987; New, 1999; McDonnell, 2010; Jones, 2011; Lelis, 2011; Glotova, 2014.

6. It is important to note that the shift in verb tense, especially between the perfective and imperfective aspect, is much more apparent in the original Russian. Verbs set in these different aspects are more quickly and readily identifiable due to the alternative spellings, prefixes, or suffix endings that differentiate perfective or imperfective verb sets.

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Femininity, Domestic Spaces, and “Bartleby, the Scrivener”

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On finishing “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” Herman Melville’s unsettling short story of a young man who, after being hired to work in a staid nineteenth-century law office, turns the office upside down by refusing to complete any of the work he was hired for, readers may be left wondering—What exactly would Bartleby prefer not to do? Literary critics have attempted to answer this question for years, so much so that potential explanations for the scrivener’s refusal to work range from the possibility of some sort of mental illness, such as schizophrenia, to the explanation that there is no explanation. Others are more interested in the narrator’s reaction to Bartleby. Why does the narrator, a self-proclaimed “eminently *safe* man” (Melville 1484), a lawyer of Wall Street, find his new employee so disturbing? Attempting to make sense of the narrator’s discomfort, critics have compared Bartleby to everything from a “figurative leper” (Zlogar 507) to Jesus Christ, but few so far have focused on the ways in which Bartleby, a man working in the aggressively masculine space of the law office, upsets this masculinity by establishing within it his own domestic, and therefore, feminine space.

This femininity extends far beyond the bounds of Bartleby’s domestic instincts. His refusal to behave or work as a man in his position ought, his passive resistance, and, finally, his quiet death, combine to throw the narrator’s impenetrably masculine world into utter chaos. Furthermore, Bartleby’s femininity is transformative, influencing the narrator to fully give in to his own feminine qualities, including a deep-

ly emotional compassion for the scrivener. This compassion, however, is soundly rejected by Bartleby who, at the end of his life, remains incapable of accepting the feminine empathy he has provoked. His story becomes a parable of both the porousness and rigidity of the traditional feminine and masculine spheres that entrap even those individuals who seem to exist outside of them.

The tensions between public and private, masculine and feminine spaces are a recurring theme in many of Melville's more famous works. *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Bud, Sailor* play out on the ostensibly masculine yet liminal decks of seafaring ships. The landbound short story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," published just two years after "Bartleby, the Scrivener," renders all the murky anxieties of the former story crystal-clear. "The Paradise" explores the dangers of mixing a public, masculine sphere with a private, feminine one through the plight of female mill-workers servicing factory machines "as the slave serves the Sultan" (Wadle 56). In bringing what is private—the implicitly sexual imagery of slave girls "servicing" the machines—into the public light of the workplace, and in linking what is private firmly to what is female, Melville implies that femininity in the workplace is indecent, even horrifying. Being male, Bartleby is spared from such a sexualized metaphor; his gradual domestic invasion is portrayed as both insidious and tragically sympathetic, but the fact that his story ends in tragedy hints at a similar indecency or at least at the impossibility of the boundaries between the two spheres ever fully dissolving. Melville works out a more nuanced parable through Bartleby, but it is, nevertheless, a parable that hinges on separation and exclusion.

This separation is clearly illustrated through Bartleby's introduction into the exclusively masculine space of the narrator's law office. Much has been made of this office's physical location—Wall Street—with critics such as Sanford Pinsker seeing this figurative wall as a metaphor for the narrator's inability to interact with his unusual employee. Pinsker states, "Walls are the central motif of Melville's story, extending from the Wall Street locale . . . through a maze of physical walls which separate one man from another . . . to those walls of language which make human understanding impossible" (17). Here, Pinsker makes an important point but misses another entirely. The largest wall standing between Bartleby and his employer has as much to do with gender as it does with language; this wall separates not only man from man but also man from woman, the public and aggressive display of masculinity from the private, domestic display of femininity. Bartleby is set apart

not mainly by language but by the way he presents himself. His quiet resistance simply does not fit into the world of the law office, which is dominated by the masculine sensibilities of the narrator and his three other employees.

These three employees are Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut, all nicknamed by the narrator, all male, and all characterized in distinct but stereotypically masculine ways. The oldest, Turkey, is an inconsistent worker but an aggressive one—so aggressive that the narrator opts to do nothing about his inability to produce unblotted copies after twelve o'clock. The narrator describes Turkey's aggression thusly: "At such times, too, his face flamed with augmented blazonry . . . in mending his pens, [he] impatiently split them to pieces, and threw them on the floor in a sudden passion" (Melville 1485). These "sudden passions" may prevent Turkey from being an effective worker, but they do not prevent him being an effectively masculine man. Aggression is often, if not always, viewed as a stereotypically masculine trait, and Turkey's is so pronounced that his own employer rarely confronts him about it, perhaps fearing that in doing so he will be proven the less aggressive and, therefore, less masculine man.

Aggression also dominates the personalities of Nippers and Ginger Nut. Nippers, "a rather piratical-looking young man," is "a neurotic . . . who brings his anal temperament to the scrivener's table" (Melville 1486, Pinsker 19). In other words, he is no more stellar an employee than Turkey, but his intimidating looks and neurotic aggression ensure that the narrator remains too apprehensive to fire him. Meanwhile Ginger Nut, the office errand boy, deems that "the whole noble science of the law [is] contained in a nut-shell" despite his father's wishes that Ginger Nut become a scrivener himself (Melville 1488). His aggressive and insolent refusal to learn the trade he was hired to learn also goes unchecked by the narrator.

The narrator's inability to confront or correct his employees springs from the unspoken fear that doing so will challenge his own masculinity. This fear also hints that the apparently masculine space of his office is already not wholly masculine. Nevertheless, the office functions as a space divorced from all associations with the domestic sphere. Nothing with even a whiff of the domestic enters the law office, where just about the only food consumed is ginger-nuts (fetched, appropriately, by Ginger Nut), bought "six or eight for a penny" from a public market vendor rather than brought from home (Melville 1488). Excluding the mention of Ginger Nut's father, there is no hint of the domestic lives the

narrator and his employees might lead outside the office. None of them appear to have wives or mothers; there are no women in the office and no traces of domesticity, even when it comes to food. Like everything and everyone that enters the law office, except, of course, Bartleby, the ginger-nuts are products of a masculine, industry-focused space, rather than of the domestic sphere.

From the moment Bartleby first enters the office, the narrator cannot help but be unsettled by him. This has as much to do with Bartleby's more feminine behavior as it does with his unusual, feminine-coded looks. When he first appears, Bartleby does not announce himself at all, appearing as a "motionless young man" on the narrator's threshold (Melville 1488). His motionlessness contrasts with the aggressive motion of the law office, where ink is constantly spilled and pens flung to the floor, and presents a change, even a threat, to this cloistered, exclusively male space. In describing his first impressions of the scrivener, the narrator reveals both Bartleby's feminine physicality and his own unease with it. Bartleby is "pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, and incurably forlorn" (Melville 1488). "Neat," "respectable," and "forlorn" are hardly adjectives the narrator would apply to his other employees, and they imply qualities more traditionally associated with femininity. For example, a traditional feminine domestic space would be neat and respectable, and while the law office might be respectable in its obvious masculinity, it is certainly not neat. Similarly, the adverbs "pallidly" and "pitiably" are neither positive nor especially masculine. The narrator's choice of words betrays a contemptuous pity for Bartleby that will soon blossom into horror at the scrivener's eccentric, feminized behavior.

In all fairness to the narrator, his horror is not entirely unfounded. After a brief period of productivity Bartleby quietly but steadfastly refuses to do anything at all, including leave the office. This passive resistance begins to transform the office into a domestic and feminine space. The narrator, turning up unexpectedly on a Sunday morning, is greeted by the revelation that Bartleby has "for an indefinite period . . . ate, dressed, and slept in [the] office" (Melville 1495). While much of the narrator's horror can be attributed to the fact that discovering an unwelcome guest in a supposedly secure space is never a pleasant experience, his horror also hinges on a fear of the domestic, specifically the ways in which, through Bartleby, the domestic has overstepped its bounds and invaded his masculine space.

Bartleby has muddied the boundaries between the masculine and

feminine spheres in threatening ways. The separation between work and home that emerged in industrial America “was particularly important in terms of gender” (Thompson 399), creating a binary wherein middle-class men proved themselves in the public sphere of the workplace and middle-class women confined themselves to the private sphere of the home, but such a separation does not seem to matter to Bartleby. The narrator’s observation that he has set up a “bachelor’s hall” in the office does nothing to mask the feminine implications of his actions. The presence of “a blanket . . . a blacking box and brush . . . a tin basin, with soap and a ragged towel” (Melville 1495), the personal items of private life, in the office represents a clear invasion. Bartleby is literally making a home, a domestic abode, out of a once-public space.

The narrator’s subsequent and unsuccessful attempts to evict Bartleby reveal how fragile the boundaries between the separate spheres are and thus emphasizes their importance to a rigidly dictated gender binary. After all, even before Bartleby arrived, the narrator was neither as authoritative nor as masculine as he would like to believe. Once the scrivener muddies a seemingly crystal-clear separation, the narrator cannot stop his own feminine qualities from overtaking his masculine persona. Already unable to force Bartleby to work as he was hired to, he cannot find it in himself to force Bartleby out of the office, either, feeling “something superstitious knocking at [his] heart, and forbidding [him] to carry out [his] purpose” (Melville 1497). Superstition, and any matter of the heart, have long been considered feminine vices. Bartleby’s mild but unbending insistence upon staying where he is and doing exactly what he prefers to do (no less and certainly no more) drives the narrator to a more open expression of *his* feminine vices. Unable to look on “the forlornest [*sic*] of mankind” with anything but pity (Melville 1497), the narrator has moved from the practical sphere of the workspace into the empathetic sphere of the home. Keeping Bartleby employed has no benefit from a business standpoint, nor does it further the narrator’s already tenuous reputation as an authoritative employer. When he surrenders to his emotion, the narrator reveals that the strict separation between the spheres was, perhaps, his only reason for not indulging in his more feminine qualities before. However unwillingly and unwittingly, the narrator crosses that boundary as soon as it is revealed to be permeable.

The narrator is not the only character impacted by Bartleby’s newly-transformed feminine environment. The powerful link between language and gender performance is demonstrated through Nippers and

Turkey, who fail to realize that Bartleby is subtly influencing their speech patterns with his circumspect, feminine style of communication. For example, Turkey claims that the scrivener's constant use of the word "prefer" is "queer" and claims he would "never use the word [himself]," only to immediately include it in his vocabulary: "But, sir, as I was saying, if he would but prefer—" Likewise, Nippers inquires whether the narrator "would prefer" his documents copied on blue or white paper (Melville 1498). Unwittingly, the two employees are changing not just their mode of communication through their concern over what Bartleby or the narrator would or would not prefer, but also the culture of the office, hinting at a grudging form of empathy that will soon alter their environment and their treatment of Bartleby. Nippers and Turkey have slipped into the emotional, domestic sphere. Language has become another method of overstepping gender boundaries within the text.

As his tale continues, Bartleby's passive refusal to move out of the office or do work of any kind drives the narrator and his employees to desperate measures. Rather than having Bartleby forcibly removed, the narrator decides to move his office into a different building, thus proving that Bartleby's stubborn femininity has overcome and infused the narrator's ineffectual masculinity. As he is still connected to Bartleby, the narrator's attempts to reconstruct his former, exclusively masculine workspace are unsuccessful. The scrivener continues to squat in the office space, prompting its new tenants to insist that the narrator return to the building to reason with Bartleby. Despite his insistence that "Bartleby was nothing to [him]" (Melville 1505), the narrator quickly disproves his own words, basing all of his appeals to Bartleby on emotion. He calls upon Bartleby's sense of empathy, informing him that he has been a "cause of great tribulation" (Melville 1505). But though Bartleby embodies feminine domesticity and resistance, he remains unmoved by the narrator's emotional appeals. Ironically, Bartleby has influenced the narrator to the point that he is now more feminine than Bartleby himself.

It is important, before delving into the story's inevitable and tragic conclusion, to discuss how Bartleby, despite his ties to the feminine and domestic sphere, is just as trapped by notions of masculinity and separate spheres as the narrator is. Bartleby's story is, as demonstrated, shaped by the boundaries between these spheres, and though those boundaries may prove porous and fragile, their true power lies in the unshakeable binaries they create in individuals' minds. This power is

demonstrated through Bartleby's refusal to accept the narrator's emotional appeals, as well as the scrivener's stubborn, lonely death.

As noted earlier, there is an abundance of possible explanations for Bartleby's state of mind. Critic Morris Beja offers up a well-researched, compelling argument for schizophrenia (564). Meanwhile, Stempel and Stilliams argue that Bartleby's fatalistic mindset is tied up with his author's: "Melville's personal circumstances perhaps made him more than usually susceptible to any pessimistic evaluation of life" (271). There are compelling elements to both arguments; like many mentally ill people, Bartleby seems to stubbornly cling to a version of reality accepted by nobody other than himself, and his eventual rejection of the narrator's freely-given compassion would not seem to indicate an especially optimistic worldview. However, both arguments fail to consider the divide between masculine and feminine spheres and how Bartleby ultimately fails to fit into either space. The scrivener does operate in a different version of reality—the domestic sphere is incompatible with the masculine sphere of the narrator's law office, but rather than leaving it behind, Bartleby carries it with him.

This, ironically, ensures that Bartleby is just as incapable of existing inside a traditional feminine space as he is inside a traditional masculine space. The facts of the scrivener's life outside of the office—such as it is—demonstrate a loneliness as profound as it is unsettling. Except the narrator, the text makes clear that Bartleby has nobody; otherwise he would hardly be squatting in an abandoned office, stubbornly making a home for himself in the most unsuitable of places. His penchant for creating a home out of his new workplace ensures that any space Bartleby does construct will be wildly untraditional by virtue of having him in it. Critic Ann V. Bliss's analysis of another famously unsettling nineteenth-century American short story, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," could easily apply to Bartleby: "Both childlessness and joblessness indicate the narrator's inability to meet biologically and culturally determined gender expectations" (97). Childless at his story's start and jobless by its middle, Bartleby's isolation only reaps more of the same. He stands apart as a man impossible to categorize, neither wholly aligned with the masculine sphere nor wholly aligned with the feminine sphere.

Bartleby's eventual end demonstrates the frustration and tragedy of being unable to fully conform to the standards of either sphere. Thanks to the way these deceptively fragile binaries have mapped themselves out in his mind, he refuses to—or is unable to—accept the narrator's

feminine offers of help and compassion. After finally being removed from the law office and locked in jail, Bartleby is again visited by the narrator, who begs him to see reason. The narrator takes on a maternal role towards Bartleby, ensuring that he will be given food. The scrivener neither appreciates nor allows himself to enjoy this kindness, as he dies soon afterwards, presumably from starvation. As the narrator learns, Bartleby is bent on carrying his passive resistance out to the bitter end; when he was removed from the office, he did not resist but “in his pale and unmoving way, silently acquiesced” (Melville 1506). Once again, the adverbs “pale” and “unmoving” are more typically applied to the actions of women—or the inaction of a corpse.

Bartleby’s quiet, anticlimactic death illustrates his inability to accept the feminine compassion he has provoked. Though his manner of resistance and desire for domesticity may be feminine, Bartleby’s rejection of the narrator’s pity and offers of help—and of the feminine sphere he himself introduced into the narrator’s world—stems from the same inability to accept the femininity that once burdened the narrator. His final rejection of “I know you . . . and I want nothing to do with you” (Melville 1507), could well be addressed to both the narrator and the feminine aspects of Bartleby’s own personality which he now sees reflected in the narrator. In the end, cut off from even the compromised and incomplete domestic space he has created for himself, Bartleby deliberately leaves himself with nowhere and no one to turn to. Instead, he dies passively cut off from the last person on earth willing to help him.

Both Bartleby’s death and resistance are inward rebellions that reap profound outward consequences and drive the narrator to depths of empathy and pain excluded from traditional masculinity. While Bartleby was ultimately unsuccessful in the creation of his own domestic sphere, he was successful in bringing out domestic and feminine qualities in the narrator. The tragedy of his story is that Bartleby cannot accept these qualities when they are directed towards him any more than the narrator at first could or any more than society can. The boundaries between the feminine and masculine spheres may be porous, even fragile, but Bartleby’s fate shows that the power these boundaries hold over human minds far outstrips their actual fragility. After all, even he, who hardly fits comfortably inside the masculine sphere and who has, in fact, consistently undermined it throughout his story, cannot fully commit to escaping from it.

“Bartleby, the Scrivener,” therefore, becomes a parable of the fra-

gility and insidious power of the boundaries between the feminine and masculine, public and private spheres, and of the ways these boundaries entrap even those who appear to exist outside of them. It conflates the equation of femininity with private life and the fear that private life will compromise the public workspace. Bartleby drags intimate, indecent details of life into the public light, and he is viewed as pitiable, even aberrant. Considering the culture of modern American workplaces, where disregard for the matters of private life and rigid gender expectations are so often still the norm, a discerning reader may be pushed to wonder whether Bartleby's stubborn nonconformity would be any more acceptable in today's law offices. Would Bartleby himself be any more accepting of sympathy and compassion? The scrivener wreaks havoc in his employer's office, in his mind and heart, even in his soul—"Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (Melville 1509)—but remains as resistant to this feminine empathy as the narrator himself once was. That Bartleby dies without allowing himself to experience the radical compassion he has provoked may well be the tragedy of his life, but the fact that Bartleby's nonconformity is as unacceptable today as it was more than a hundred years ago is the true tragedy of the scrivener's story.

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Rethinking the Cyborg: Posthuman Representations in *WALL-E*

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The 2008 film *WALL-E* portrays a society where technology reigns. Seven hundred years after the Earth becomes inhospitable, humans live aboard a spaceship called the *Axiom*. The technology on-board caters to every need of the passengers, even allowing them to forego walking in favor of remaining in personal hovercrafts. Human existence is reliant on the technology the ship possesses, making this technology an integral part of the human identity and the continuance of humanity itself. Such a large technological presence blurs the lines between human and machine and emphasizes humanity's dependence on technology. It is only through the introduction of WALL-E, a robot created to clean the Earth, that the humans aboard the *Axiom* realize the unfulfilling nature of their dependent state and develop a desire for a more functional and independent lifestyle. *WALL-E* depicts a society governed by the laws of posthumanity, warning against complete dependence on technology while outlining the ways humans benefit from and are hurt by the technological advancement of contemporary society. The posthuman society portrayed in the film establishes a new form of human identity that is reliant on the presence of technology, asserting that it is impossible to be solely human in a technologically diverse world and calling into question the boundaries of humanity itself even while arguing there is no way to reverse these changes to the human identity.

Within *WALL-E*, technology has been incorporated into the human identity, affecting the way humans live and interact with one another. Aboard the *Axiom*, humans enjoy every form of comfort imaginable.

They live sedentary lives, using technology to move instead of exerting themselves physically. With screens in front of them at all times, they favor virtual communication over human connection, choosing to live their lives cut off from others. This type of lifestyle strips away many of the characteristics that are considered human, showcasing the effect of seven hundred years in space on the human identity. Due to their complete dependence on technology, the humans function more as machines, following endless patterns and structures produced by their consumer-based lifestyle. They can arguably be viewed as cyborgs—posthuman beings that are a combination of humanity and technology. This classification is fitting because their technological dependence has created a new form of human identity that defies traditional distinctions between humans and machines. In the article “Flip the Switch: Virtue, Programming, and the Prospect of Automatic Agency in *WALL-E*,” Adam J. Gaffey describes the state of humanity in the film and how the humans’ cyborg status affects the ways in which they interact. In quoting Stanton and Reardon, the writers of *WALL-E*’s screenplay, Gaffey states, “Initially people are seen ‘cocooned in virtual words,’ and speaking to one another yet ‘totally unaware of the other’s presence’” (46–47). This idea of isolation is seen vividly in the humans at the beginning of the film. Cut off from others and all forms of meaningful connection for generations, they have no desires beyond satisfying their immediate needs. This leaves the passengers with a fundamental misunderstanding of humanity and the importance of human connection, resulting in individuals that do not place value in the species as a whole.

While the technology of the *Axiom* allows the humans to survive, it supports a form of human identity that has dire consequences for their ability to function independently. The automated lifestyle the humans enjoy has become so extreme that most of them are incapable of functioning without technological help. In the article “*WALL-E* on the Problem of Technology,” Sean Mattie describes the technological state of the film and its effects on humans: “On the *Axiom*, all work is performed by robot specialists, not humans. Indeed, the ship’s technology has liberated or separated each person from the strain of labor, though not its products” (16). While this was originally seen as a benefit that allowed humans to live without worry or struggle, it eventually stripped the passengers of their ability to care for themselves. The separation from the strain of labor took its toll on the passengers, weakening them to the point of rendering them physically helpless. Any movement

they experience exists within the bounds of their hovercrafts, making passengers reliant on their presence for transportation and support. The passengers spend the majority of the film confined to their hovercrafts, never voluntarily leaving them. However, the end of the film demonstrates the consequences of separation from a hovercraft. When the captain of the *Axiom* finally decides to stand against the auto pilot and take control of the ship, many of the humans are knocked out of their personal hovercrafts. They are then trapped on the floor, struggling to use their legs. Only a few are able to stand, showcasing the effects of a lifetime of disuse on their ability to move freely. By choosing to move using automated systems, humans sacrifice a fundamental characteristic of humanity, leaving them at the mercy of the technology guiding their every action.

WALL-E is able to reintroduce aspects of humanity that the passengers of the *Axiom* have lost because of his own development of human-like characteristics, something that signifies his ability to function beyond his programming. We learn early on in the film that WALL-E is not the only robot created to clean the Earth. Though many other robots like him are seen, none of them are functional. The WALL-E units were built with solar panels that allow them to recharge, but this charging is not automatic. The panels must be opened by the robot itself. One of the marvels of WALL-E is his ability to remain functional after seven hundred years on Earth, signifying a difference in him that does not extend to the rest of the identical robots created. In discussing this functional difference in WALL-E, Mattie states, “as he carries out his directive, WALL-E attends to his own good, recognizing the provisions that nature—his own and that of his surroundings—has made available for use” (14). Mattie goes on to discuss how WALL-E recognizes the cycle of sunrise and sundown, stopping his work in the evening and preserving enough power to initiate his recharge when the sun rises in the morning (14). Because the robots were created to work, it is likely that many of the others continued on into the night, running down their batteries until they were not able to recharge themselves at sunrise. In contrast, WALL-E takes the evenings to rest, examine his collection of items that he differentiates from the trash covering the Earth, and watch the musical *Hello, Dolly!* These differences allow WALL-E to remain functional and set him apart fundamentally from the others of his kind.

Because of WALL-E’s ability to function beyond the scope of his programming, he develops the capability to display human emotions. This capacity showcases his complete evolution from his original pro-

gramming and classifies WALL-E as a cyborg being. In the beginning of the film, WALL-E exhibits characteristics and actions associated with human beings. He plays a music recording while he works, sometimes humming along. On most days he is accompanied by a cockroach that he treats like a pet. He also distinguishes between trash and unique items, taking some home to his collection of trinkets. These acts establish that WALL-E devotes time to his own interests, occasionally ignoring his work in order to accomplish his goals. In his article "Life, Love, and Programming: The Culture and Politics of *WALL-E* and Pixar Computer Animation," Eric Herhuth discusses WALL-E's varied interests and his ability to prioritize them over his work. Herhuth states that WALL-E possesses "the capacity for an array of desires and an ability to change his desires in response to changes in his environment" (59). The capacity for desire sets him apart from other forms of technology, allowing him an existence based on personal need rather than on programmed directives. Herhuth goes on to say that as the years wore on, it is as if "[WALL-E] realized that no one was watching him and with that knowledge, his motivation for following his directive ceased, and new directives and desires emerged" (59). This ability to formulate new directives, or new goals, is characteristically human and suggests that WALL-E has some level of human-like functioning. This classifies WALL-E as a cyborg being, demonstrating that humanity can be incorporated into a technological identity. WALL-E's cyborg identity sets him apart from the other robots of his kind, allowing him to form meaningful connections with the humans aboard the *Axiom* and alter the state of humanity in which they exist.

Eve, the robot WALL-E becomes infatuated with, also functions beyond her directive, gradually changing her focus in order to evolve into a cyborg being by developing a personality of her own. When her ship leaves Earth and Eve thinks she is alone, she begins to fly around simply for enjoyment, ignoring her task of searching for plant life on Earth in order to enjoy her first taste of freedom. Later on, Eve ignores her directive again in order to care for WALL-E, casting away the plant the pair discovered on Earth. With this act, Eve relinquishes the last traces of her obedience in favor of adopting her own cyborg state of being with human characteristics and emotions. These instances show Eve's gradual evolution into a cyborg, choosing her happiness over the job she was instructed to do. By examining Eve's evolution throughout the movie, we can assume that WALL-E went through a similar change in his seven hundred years alone on Earth. This reinforces the claim

that WALL-E and Eve are cyborgs capable of governing themselves and creating their own characteristics out of their programmed directives. Their identities are not the result of human programming, but rather the development of humanity in unlikely places.

WALL-E's presence onboard the *Axiom* detaches some of the passengers from the overbearing presence of technology and encourages the reversal of their technologically dependent identities. In doing so, WALL-E reveals that humanity has a natural desire for personal fulfillment that technology is capable of suppressing. During WALL-E's time on the *Axiom*, he has direct contact with two humans named Mary and John. Because he does not follow the set patterns of the other robots aboard the *Axiom*, WALL-E's contact with Mary and John separates them from the technology of the ship and ultimately brings the two together. WALL-E does not spend much time with either John or Mary before continuing to search for Eve on the ship, but the brief separation from technology is enough to spark an interest for a more meaningful life. The two humans meet one another while WALL-E is in space with Eve and bond over their shared friendship with him. As they watch WALL-E and Eve dance through space, John and Mary's hands accidentally touch. They are both shocked by the feeling of human connection and awakened to a desire for life beyond the restraints of dependence on technology. They proceed to spend their time exploring the ship together, ignoring the directions of the robots and enjoying their lives seemingly for the first time. In examining the structure of the film and the humans' change in outlook, Herhuth states: "[The narrative] structure presupposes a formal difference between WALL-E the robot and the humans aboard the *Axiom*, that is, the humans have forgotten a vital part of their humanity that WALL-E restores" (56). That vital part is the desire for connection, fulfillment, and independence. As the passengers of the *Axiom* became more reliant on technology, it gradually suppressed their desires for these things, causing them to substitute comfort and ease of living instead. WALL-E's influence reintroduces the pieces of humanity the humans lack, inspiring them to take the first steps toward more fulfilling, independent lives.

WALL-E and Eve's cyborg identities extend to other robots in the film, proving that humanity can exist outside of the human race. Alongside their influence on the passengers, WALL-E and Eve have a unique effect on the other robots aboard the *Axiom*. The two of them inspire many of the robots to follow along as they fight back against the autopilot of the ship and its plan to keep the humans in space in-

definitely. Several of the robots mimic WALL-E's humming. Others fight off the *Axiom's* security robots, completely going against their programming to protect WALL-E and Eve and help them deliver the plant to the holo-detector. All of the robots showcase human characteristics, demonstrating that humanity—the essence of being human—is capable of existing in beings outside of the human race. In “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna J. Haraway discusses the state of machines in modern societies, showcasing the difficulty in separating them from human characteristics:

machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert. (152)

WALL-E and the other emerging-cyborgs exhibit these ambiguous identities, showcasing that distinctions between man and machine are not easily made when technology becomes exceptionally advanced. The cyborgs exist between the boundaries of humanity and technology, demonstrating the ultimate form of the ambiguous machines Haraway describes. Existing as both natural and artificial, both externally designed and self-developing, WALL-E and the others bridge the gap between the essence of humanity and technology, asserting that the two can coexist in a new form of cyborg being that incorporates humanity into technology itself. The refiguring of the cyborg identity establishes multiple forms of cyborg beings, eliminating divisions and expanding the boundaries of humanity.

As machines develop human characteristics, it becomes increasingly more difficult to separate humanity and technology. The end of the film shows the *Axiom* returning to Earth, Eve saving WALL-E, and the humans replanting the first plant on Earth in over seven hundred years. The film then shows a montage of the results of caring for the Earth. Plants begin to flourish even as the background is littered with trash. As the credits roll, several small animations depict humanity's efforts

to re-establish life on Earth with the help of WALL-E, Eve, and the other cyborgs. WALL-E makes fire while Eve assists in digging a well. Other cyborgs are used for tilling soil, fishing, or building. While these acts benefit the humans in their attempt to recolonize Earth, one thing is made clear: humans will never exist without some form of technology. After being dependent on technology for so long and integrating it into the human identity, the humans are incapable of existing without it. In discussing the state of humanity after reaching Earth, Gaffey describes the credits sequence and its implications:

While this sequence suggests that former Axiom passengers use robots in a primarily assistive—not dependent—role, this telling of cultural development further reinforces *WALL-E*'s message of agency in that actions reinforce a pattern of general uniformity. Lost in this telling is any sense that after 800 years of hedonistic leisure, civilization might develop differently from what came before. (50)

After reestablishing themselves on Earth, the humans exhibit the same type of behavioral patterns that made their ancestors dependent on technology. They use the cyborgs for difficult tasks, choosing where their abilities will benefit the humans the most. They use them to build cities even as the ones littered with trash linger in the distance. These acts showcase that once a certain point of technological dependence is reached, there is no undoing the damage done to the human identity.

Contemporary culture supports a form of human identity that *WALL-E* warns against, one that heavily incorporates technology. Haraway argues that we have already reached a point of no return for our human identity:

Insofar as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example, the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. . . . There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. (177–78)

As a society, we have already reached a point where it is difficult to separate ourselves from technology. *WALL-E* warns against the extreme form of this identity, one that diminishes human characteristics

in favor of adopting machine-like functions. However, having already reached a point where technology is inescapable in everyday life, it is difficult to predict the state of humanity after another hundred years of technological advancement. While there are clear benefits to the presence of technology in society, we have already reached a point where it is impossible to be solely human. No one is beyond the reach of technological advancement and its repercussions. This state could have drastic effects on the human identity, forever changing the way we live and interact with one another.

The film *WALL-E* showcases the extreme state of a society that became dependent on technology. After seven hundred years aboard a spaceship named the *Axiom*, humans return to Earth and begin the process of recolonizing. While aboard the ship, the humans enjoyed every comfort and lived in a state that required no effort, relying on technology for their everyday functions. Upon their return, humans continue to use technology in ways that benefit them, demonstrating their inability to separate themselves from technology after incorporating it into their identity. WALL-E, Eve, and the other cyborgs break down the boundaries between humanity and technology further, existing alongside the humans as a mixture of human characteristics and technological functioning. The multiple cyborg identities the film displays showcase the extreme consequences of technological dependence, demonstrate the impossibility of being solely human in a technologically dominated world, and assert that humanity can exist outside of humans themselves, forever changing the way society perceives technology and its effects on the human race.

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Boys Will Be Boys: Toxic Masculinity and Conditioned Heroism in “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds”

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The Táin, a legendary epic from medieval Ireland, features the heroic Cúchulainn and his supposed masculine qualities. Cúchulainn’s character is thought to have existed orally as early as the first century and has since featured in many tales and adaptations, including Thomas Kinsella’s 1969 translation of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Regardless, long before the tale existed in any print, Cúchulainn serves as a staple in early Irish literature. Cúchulainn’s character is praised and, in many ways, envied by those living in Ireland during the Middle Ages because of his ability as a warrior; Cúchulainn is presumably the ideal hero. Section IV of Kinsella’s *The Táin*, “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds,” provides the backstory of Cúchulainn’s youth, exposing his seemingly heroic traits from the stunning young age of seven. The characteristics that deem Cúchulainn as heroic in “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds,” however, are problematic and reveal toxic masculinity, not only in his character but also in the culture’s acceptance and admiration of his behavior. Toxic masculinity speaks to the conditioned traits considered masculine, yet often cause harm to oneself or others. Cúchulainn is arrogant, deceptive, destructive, and entitled. Despite this, he receives praise for his heroic achievements without being held accountable for his defiance. Cúchulainn’s qualities are not qualities one should aspire to mimic; yet, this does not mean “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds” should be thrown out but, rather, approached in a modernized outlook. Celtic folklore is a unique genre that deservingly continues to be read

and discussed; however, in an era of breaking molds through analysis of cultural norms, this tale should construe the unrealistic, troubling, and damaging gender roles imposed on male youth— not in admiration of the fearless hero. “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds” exemplifies toxic masculinity and conditioned heroic culture as a unit; moreover, Cúchulainn’s elders condone the toxicity, further contributing to the “boys will be boys” phenomenon.

Folklore’s original intention, *per se*, differs from current day readings and interpretations, making it essential to understand cultural and historical contexts relevant to “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds.” When analyzing such concepts, it is important to recognize, according to Vito Carrassi, that folklore highlights, “among other things, a conception of it as a cultural performance historically and socially situated, as an actual expression of a human belief, ability, practice, more than as a potential item fixed in a text” (34). The early Irish perceived folklore as a cultural representation, including the qualities of characters and themes within the stories. Not only does folklore shed light on medieval heroism, but it also speaks to the idea of conditioned heroism through the upper classes as the folklore “[was] consciously ‘performed’ by the official culture, which employed them in politics, education, literature, etc.” (Carrassi 32). Here, Carrassi suggests that those in power held the authority to inform through folklore, exposing lore’s power and potential biases on a widescale. Jennifer Dukes-Knight gives credit to the Irish’s ability to convey Cúchulainn as a questionable character rather than an undeniable role-model: “Yet early Irish literature can demonstrate great sophistication regarding complex social issues, and a self-conscious examination of the nature of heroic masculinity seems equally plausible” (Dukes-Knight 121). Dukes-Knight suggests hints of warnings in the tale; however, one must approach the tale under the right lenses to come to this realization. Thus, the speaker holds the freedom to portray the story as they wish. If the speaker teaches “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds” as a cautionary tale, it can promote the prevention of these toxic qualities. The speaker can manipulate the tale through oral adaptations: “it is as much pertinent to see how this performance and its performer(s) are watched and evaluated by those who, subsequently, will convey their experience as audience into a textual item” (Carrassi 34). The lack of a tangible document allows room for various interpretations often influenced by both the storyteller and the audience; still, Cúchulainn’s character commits hypermasculine acts and receives praise, not only in the folklore, but in the early Irish

culture's idolatry of Cúchulainn's premature masculinity. Angela Goff speaks to the lore's influence:

Cú Chulainn is one of the most legendary figures to emerge from ancient Irish saga-literature and his heroic exploits feature in several tales that make up *The Tain*. This literary corpus has had a definite socio-cultural influence across the creative arts as the tales reflect several social and cultural perspectives. (Goff 55)

Here, Goff recognizes Cúchulainn as a prevalent character in medieval Ireland. Although some may perceive Cúchulainn or the underlying message of his story differently, he is presumably a fair representation of heroic culture within medieval Ireland due to his popularity and glory as a heroic figure. Not only does Goff highlight both Cúchulainn's impact and relevance in medieval Irish literature, she comments on the vast impressions Cúchulainn provokes both in the early Irish and for today's readers. Literature has always and will always influence social and cultural outlooks. "Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds," whether intentionally or unintentionally, feeds into the idea that toxic masculinity and heroism coincide.

"Cúchulainn Boyhood Deeds" serves as a flashback to Cúchulainn's youth, highlighting Cúchulainn's heroic yet barbaric actions that his people commend, especially considering his age. Because of his fearless acts as a seven-year-old, characters in the folklore believe Cúchulainn must be a capable warrior at seventeen. For example, Fergus, Cúchulainn's foster-father, comments on Cúchulainn's accomplishments before the beginning of "Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds:" "You'll find no harder warrior against you—no point more sharp, more swift, more slashing; no raven more flesh-ravenous, no hand more deft, no fighter more fierce, no one of his own age one third as good" (*The Táin* 74). Fergus's praise regarding Cúchulainn uncovers immense representations of toxic masculinity, shedding light on the problematic heroic culture. Interestingly, Fergus compares Cúchulainn to a raven. Ravens represent both war and death in medieval literature and are known to feed off dead bodies post-battle; however, Fergus speaks positively, complimenting Cúchulainn's success in battle rather than his savagery. In this light, heroism corresponds with not just violence but unwarranted aggression. Fergus's bizarre yet optimistic metaphor claims Cúchulainn is more flesh hungry than a raven, pointing to unhealthy

expectations within heroic culture that allude to the idea that unnecessary violence is just as acceptable as defensive violence. Not only is it dangerous, but it is careless to promote such brutality in young boys. In Jonathan Salisbury's research from 1996 on adolescent boys, he states, "Young boys and men are growing up today in a culture of aggressive manliness. Their everyday worlds are bombarded by the superficially thrilling macho imagery of the Incredible Hulk, video games, Slasher films, [and] fast car fantasies" (140). While this research is over a thousand years post-Cúchulainn, Salisbury reveals similar problems remain in today's Western culture. The overwhelming influence of violence in the media and, more specifically, in children's comics, television, and games promotes destructiveness from an early age. Adolescent boys, whether consciously or subconsciously, not only adopt but crave aggressive personas because of how the media depicts these "role models," further encouraging and romanticizing problematic gender roles. Medieval literature is no exception and, unfortunately, current day heroes often align with Cúchulainn's toxic flaws. Cúchulainn is more than just a warrior: he is bloodthirsty, as a hero is expected to be.

Furthermore, Fergus's description of Cúchulainn evokes overconfidence in the community through exaggerations of his fierceness and great accomplishments, thus exposing toxic masculinity within heroism that conditions Cúchulainn. In addition to unwarranted bloodshed, Cúchulainn is recognized for a slew of other characteristics. Fergus continues to say:

You will find no one there to measure against him—for youth or vigour; for apparel, horror or eloquence; for splendour, fame or form; for voice or strength or sternness; for cleverness, courage or blows in battle; for fire or fury, victory, doom or turmoil; for stalking, scheming or slaughter in the hunt; for swiftness, alertness or wildness; and no one with the battle-feat 'nine men on each point'—none like Cúchulainn. (*The Táin* 74)

Arguably, Fergus highlights the most toxic trait in conditioned heroic culture: arrogance. Cúchulainn's entourage believe they are invincible due to Cúchulainn's greatness, which ultimately demonstrates the mindset Cúchulainn is expected to maintain. Overconfidence, in a sense, is an additional part of armor that is anticipated from heroes and shared among the Irish community. The emphasis placed on boldness speaks to the expectation of tough skin and taking what one wants by

whatever means necessary. According to these criteria, Cúchulainn is successful. The portrayal of conceit consequently sets a standard for heroism and remains a trait that young boys strive towards even centuries later; therefore, perceiving Cúchulainn as unconquerable due to his callousness creates and spreads toxicity. This idea suggests that unapologetic barbaric acts and self-centeredness result in praise and victory, aligning masculinity with brutality and arrogance—an idea that should be refuted.

After Fergus lists why Cúchulainn not only meets but exceeds the expectations of heroism, he comments on Cúchulainn's macho achievements during his youth, neglecting to consider the differences between a man and a boy. Fergus ends section III of *The Táin* by stating, "It would be nothing strange for him to do mighty deeds at this point. When he was younger his acts were already manly" (74). Due to his success in attacking the long-term enemies, Cúchulainn receives a masculine label at seven years old. Fergus seems to forget the disrespect Cúchulainn exhibits as he simultaneously defeats the enemy and defies his elders; Fergus only recognizes Cúchulainn for victory and violence, further blurring the line between adolescents and adults. The lack of discipline evokes the idea that Cúchulainn's status has progressed from child to man; therefore, Cúchulainn does not learn accountability. Goff comments on the portrayal of Cúchulainn: "Cúchulainn's god-like status typically features a romantic idealisation of the mythical hero" (50). The characterization of Cúchulainn contradicts the section title's indication of "boyhood deeds" and depicts an iconic, yet troubling heroic trope. Cúchulainn dazzles his audience with power, shifting the attention to his positive characteristics or achievements rather than his troubling ones. Fergus explicitly comments on the acts of the seven-year-old boy as "manly," seemingly because many intertwine heroism and masculinity as the same concept. Through this mindset, Cúchulainn elevates himself to the role of a man. His heroic features appear inevitable, because if he can accomplish such deeds as a boy, he must be skilled as a man; however, attempting such dangerous deeds should be condemned rather than praised in adolescents.

As a child, Cúchulainn is cunning but hides behind the mask of childhood innocence, speaking to the notion that "boys will be boys" and overlooking the damaging effects of incorrect behavior. "Boys will be boys" is an expression used to excuse the toxic behaviors that male adolescents manifest and, additionally, undermines the seriousness of their actions, thus, contributing to the cycle of toxic masculinity. At a

young age, Cúchulainn seemingly knows how to avoid punishment by claiming blamelessness when it best benefits him to do so, even under the eye of King Conchobar, his uncle. Cúchulainn alters the truth to claim his weapons by stating it was under Cathbad's instruction, when, truthfully, Cúchulainn overheard Cathbad announce a vision to his students: "if a warrior took up arms for the first time that day his name would endure in Ireland as a word signifying mighty acts, and stories about him would last forever" (*The Táin* 79). Hearing this proclamation, Cúchulainn is intrigued and knowingly deceives his uncle for his own agenda for fame. Conchobar does confront Cúchulainn but does not respond to Cúchulainn's witty response: "It was no lie, king of warriors . . . I happened to hear him instructing his pupils this morning . . . I came to you then" (*The Táin* 79). Neither Conchobar nor Cathbad holds Cúchulainn accountable for fibbing—although he did not lie about Cathbad's vision of greatness and armor, he tells his uncle it was under Cathbad's order that he bare weapons. Cathbad makes it clear that this is not the case, yet Cúchulainn keeps the weapons and Conchobar does not further address the lie. Conveniently, Conchobar dismisses this as Cúchulainn's trivialness and brushes off his exaggeration as a misunderstanding; in reality, Cúchulainn bends the truth to work in his favor. The mindset that "boys will be boys" allows trivial acts of defiance to go unnoticed and unpunished, leading to negative consequences. The relationship between child and elder shifts here. Conchobar feeds conditioned heroism and toxic masculinity by overlooking his nephew's cunningness and allowing him to overstep boundaries.

Cúchulainn's performances are destructive and defiant, further demonstrating the concept of "boys will be boys." The text indicates Cúchulainn's damaging nature: "He clapped his hand to the chariot between the shafts, and the frame broke at his touch. In the same way he broke twelve chariots. At last they gave him Conchobar's chariot and that survived him" (*The Táin* 79). Not only does Cúchulainn show no respect for King Conchobar, but he is also purposely destructive for the sake of destruction or to achieve his needs. He continues to be careless because he is not held accountable for his wrongful actions; therefore, Cúchulainn recognizes this power and utilizes it. After receiving a multitude of chariots, Cúchulainn demonstrates his entitlement even further: "'You can get out of the chariot now,' the charioteer said. 'You think your horses are precious,' Cúchulainn said, 'but so am I, my friend'" (*The Táin* 79). Cúchulainn exhibits conditioned arrogance and a general disrespect for others, speaking to his physical and

verbal destructiveness. His community and upbringing fuels said toxic behaviors; thus the tale exemplifies the notion “boys will be boys” by neglecting to address defiant mischief.

The final scene in “Cúchulainn’s Boyhood Deeds” emphasizes the marriage between toxic masculinity and conditioned heroism culture. As Cúchulainn approaches the congregation of allies, a guard declares, “[Cúchulainn]’ll spill the blood of the whole court unless you see to him and send naked women to meet him” (*The Táin* 83). Due to Cúchulainn’s savage nature, the congregation is simultaneously frightened and in awe of him. Interestingly, the guard’s observation alludes to the idea that Cúchulainn has given an ultimatum, speaking to the authority and power he already holds as a seven-year-old: “Cu Chulainn returns to his people unable to control the masculine energy that he has aroused and presents a great threat to them” (Dukes-Knight 114). Cúchulainn cannot manage his own aggression, speaking to the inappropriateness of his age. Providing his request condones adolescent defiance and fuels the misplaced power. Here, Cúchulainn establishes himself as a man by demanding his sexuality:

boys throw themselves vigorously into earnest proclamations of their ruggedness as a defence against being tainted with any unmasculine and therefore homosexual traits. The fear of unmanliness provokes many boys to constantly affirm themselves as members of the male club. (Salisbury 42)

Due to his great success at battle, Cúchulainn comes back to demonstrate his masculinity through means of sexual desire—another expectation of a heroic man. Cúchulainn conveys that his achievements are not equivalent to that of a child and therefore must demonstrate his manliness. Because the congregation seemingly uses women as a calming agent for Cúchulainn so that he may not cause harm, some scholars read the naked women from a maternal standpoint. Although there is merit to interpreting the women as such due to Cúchulainn’s youth and the focus on breasts rather than full-nudity, considering the light in which Cúchulainn presents himself and portrays himself to others, this reads more like a sexual celebration for his achievements as a masculine hero. Significantly, multiple women are sent to “strip their breasts” at Cúchulainn, rather than just one, further contributing to Cúchulainn’s sexual desire. The women are not only a macho reward, but a distraction to avoid any unorthodox slaughter resulting

from Cúchulainn's erratic behavior. Additionally, Cúchulainn's command is met immediately, and, upon arrival, he is treated like royalty and recognized for his many accomplishments rather than disciplined like a child: "The text seems to send the consistent message that Cu Chulainn moves into masculine activities that age has not yet prepared him for. It is very important to the message of the tale that Cu Chulainn is a boy who does a man's deeds" (Dukes-Knight 115). Because Cúchulainn has slain the enemy, he is treated as a hero regardless of age or rebellion. Cúchulainn's community allows him to escape blame and reap rewards suitable for a man and not a child.

On the throne, Cúchulainn sits on Conchobor's lap as a reward for his rebellious deeds and exhibiting his significance as a hero. This is no coincidence—Cúchulainn began scheming his ascension to the throne when he first heard the druid's vision of fame and ran to bare his weapons; Cúchulainn values his reputation above all else. Despite his deceitfulness and disobedience, he sits on the Conchobor's lap, symbolizing honor and the fruition of the druid's vision: "And he sat on Conchobor's knee, and that was his seat ever after" (*The Táin* 83). The folklore comments on Cúchulainn's seat and its relation to the vision, suggesting that Cúchulainn achieved his legendary status on that day. Speaking to the culture of early medieval Ireland, Thornton states: "Celtic-speaking lands were dominated by hierarchies of polities which can be described loosely as kingdoms and whose rulers therefore claimed royal status" (Thornton 32). Cúchulainn's actions align with the heroism of Celtic history and the idea of claiming what one wants, a characteristic that is continually admired. The elders' neglect to reign in Cúchulainn's rebelliousness helps Cúchulainn achieve his desired heroism and power. "Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds" demonstrates toxic masculinity through supporting, condoning, and rewarding resistance in adolescent males; moreover, symbolically placing Cúchulainn in power by allowing him to sit on the throne, yet on Conchobor's knee to draw attention to Cúchulainn's youth.

Cúchulainn is essential to medieval Irish literature, the focal point in many parts of *The Táin*, and many other works of Irish folklore. His character is engraved in Irish culture and worth reflecting for a plethora of reasons. When reading a character like Cúchulainn, it is essential that readers recognize when a role model romanticizes toxic masculinity; therefore, it is imperative to consider the depictions of such heroic characters, how they signify heroism and masculinity, and implications of admiration associated with toxic qualities. "Cúchu-

lainn's Boyhood Deeds" highlights numerous startling characteristics of heroism. Cúchulainn is arrogant, power hungry, destructive, defiant, and entitled. Despite this, he escapes all blame and his toxicity is either praised or overlooked. Idolizing a character like this conveys the idea that Cúchulainn's lifestyle, mindset, and behavior is desirable. More than this, it subconsciously tells young boys that they must adhere to certain performances of adolescence, setting unrealistic expectations and stunting true expression in young boys. In either case, romanticizing Cúchulainn creates a mindset that is harmful to oneself and others. Yet, Cúchulainn's elders show no effort in preventing his defiance, but shrug it off as "boys will be boys"—a seemingly invisible problem that is exceedingly prevalent today. While this potential toxicity affects a multitude of people, it affects the once-young boys who turn into struggling adults, coping with neglect, confusion, conditioning, and conclusively contributing back to the vicious cycle. Cúchulainn serves as a representation for conditioned heroism while demonstrating toxic masculinity's prevalence within the culture of early medieval Ireland carried on into today's Westernized world.

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“Domestic Imperialism” and the Landed Gentry in *Pride and Prejudice*

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“It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen chose to ignore the decisive historic events of her time,” writes critic Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (113). Indeed, *Pride and Prejudice* seems to exist in a universe absent of the strife that marked early nineteenth-century England. Dashes serve as substitutes for certain location names and generals in the regimental militia, and the families described within the text appear to carry on with their lives without external concerns. This leaves *Pride and Prejudice* mostly bereft of “the real current of history” (Williams 113), but it would be a mistake to read the novel as being completely separate from Jane Austen’s England. Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* in the midst of rapid socioeconomic changes that altered the attitudes of the landowning aristocracy towards those of lower social standing, a domestic parallel to the burgeoning British Empire’s efforts to colonize those perceived as “savage” throughout the world. Through the overbearing elitism and pedantry of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Austen criticizes the landed gentry’s newfound penchant for “domestic imperialism,” offering Fitzwilliam Darcy as a flawed but preferable alternative in the mold of past generations of landlords, capable of appreciating character over class.

The relationship between members of the landed gentry and the property they owned shifted dramatically in early nineteenth-century

Britain, with the wealthy relying on hired wage laborers instead of personally managing their farmland, thus becoming more distant from the affairs of lower classes. The pamphleteer and journalist William Cobbett, in *Rural Rides* (1830), famously drew attention to

the difference between a resident *native* gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from their childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practicing hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country-delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits, and relying for influence, not upon the good will of the vicinage, but upon the dread of their power. (38)

Three decades prior, Cobbett had become fascinated by the rapidly increasing price of bread, a staple of poorer people's diets, which had gone up by about a third between 1760 and 1800. He left London in 1804 to "investigate the social effects of taxation, the funding system, the national debt, and paper money" in the English countryside (Dyck 71), writing travelogues that would eventually be compiled into *Rural Rides*.

The shift in landlords' behavior described by Cobbett arose from a confluence of social and economic factors. The Napoleonic Wars between England and France, which commenced in 1803, brought new prosperity to rural landowners who suddenly had large local militias to feed. These regimental militias, such as that of Mr. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, were an omnipresent feature of the early nineteenth-century British countryside, as "the traditional English fear of a standing army had dissolved in the face of the French menace" (Fulford 157). Whereas prior to the Napoleonic Wars the countryside had been generally populated by a gentry that had a close, hereditary connection to its land and the laborers who farmed it, the war effort created a new "pseudo-gentry" class of landlords: "generals, admirals, governors, commissaries, contractors, pensioners, sinecurists, commissioners, loan-jobbers, lottery-dealers, bankers, [and] stock-jobbers" (Cobbett 38). In other words, Britain's growing middle class, wealthy not by

virtue of hereditary land ownership but as a result of engagement in “genteel trades” such as law and finance (Downie 72), saw an investment opportunity in the countryside and jumped at it.

The presence of soldiers in England’s rural areas, coupled with the advent of paper money in lieu of gold and silver coinage as a means of funding the war effort, created a new economy of “rural capitalism” (Williams 113), where newly-affluent urban investors snapped up farmland to cultivate for profit. Whereas tenants occupying this land were previously compensated for their labor with room and board, the new wage system meant that workers were paid in cash. This switch resulted in an “open antagonism between labourers and ‘new-fashioned’ farmers” stemming from “the contrast between the farmers’ wartime wealth and the labourers’ experiences with pauperism and low real wages” (Dyck 188). No longer expected to provide housing and sustenance in exchange for work, landowners became increasingly detached from the affairs of their tenants.

Rural landlords’ growing distance from their land, coupled with a pseudo-gentry eager to assert its newfound social stature, altered how the landowning aristocracy viewed those of lower social standing. Cobbett wistfully lauds the “resident *native* gentry” of the eighteenth century for “frequently mixing with [laborers] in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost,” and decries the new pseudo-gentry, which “only now-and-then reside[s] at all,” for being “distant and haughty in their behavior” (38). To Cobbett’s dismay, this elitism soon spread to the resident native gentry of old; by 1815, Cobbett had concluded that all landlords, native or otherwise, “belonged to one class, the laborers to another” (Dyck 188-89). In criticizing these new attitudes of elitism brought forth by the changing demographics of the rural population, Cobbett expressed nostalgia for what he perceived as a rapidly-disappearing class of landowners who were close to their land and cared comparatively little about clear-cut class divisions.

Cobbett’s decidedly local focus misses the complete picture, however: the new tendency of the aristocracy to “look upon their labourers as a distinct and degraded caste of people” was a domestic variant of attitudes towards imperialism that were percolating throughout Britain at the same time (Dyck 189). The new landlords of Austen’s England, despite being “below the quality” of the older resident gentry, occupied “a comfortable eminence from which to patronize the vulgar” (Downie 72), forcing their beliefs and preferences on the lower and middling classes. Edward Said, who in his seminal book *Culture and Imperial-*

ism wrote extensively about imperialist attitudes as manifested in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, remarks that "Austen . . . synchronizes domestic with international authority, making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law, and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over and possession" of property (81). Landowners thus brought to the domestic sphere the same imperialistic outlook Said describes, validating their "own preferences" while simultaneously "[devaluing] other worlds." (81). Cobbett's "gentry . . . only now-and-then residing at all" can be said, then, to exhibit a sort of "domestic imperialism" towards those of lesser social stature, a clear contrast with the resident gentry of old, the members of which freely mingled with laborers and were relatively blind to "artificial distinctions" of rank (38).

Austen critiques aristocratic landlords' new tendency to "patronize the vulgar" through the character of Lady Catherine (Downie 72), who exhibits precisely the negative traits Cobbett suggests were spread by the pseudo-gentry increasingly overrunning the countryside. Lady Catherine's patronship of William Collins, the bumbling rector of her parish, is particularly illuminating with respect to this point. Cobbett remarks that the landlords he met in the course of his rural rides used "the dread of their power" to control those in their employ (38). Such "dread" is precisely how Lady Catherine enters and takes charge of even the most menial aspects of Mr. Collins's life, all to support her goal of preserving "the distinction of rank" (Austen 124). During his failed marriage proposal to Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Collins remarks, "You will find [Lady Catherine's] manners beyond anything I can describe; and your wit and vivacity, I think, must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably excite" (Austen 81). This "silence and respect," spurred by Lady Catherine's power and wealth, is exactly what she seeks from those of lower social status.

Lady Catherine wields power over Mr. Collins to spread her own views of a "proper" British identity, which is marked by clear and non-negotiable class divisions. The manner in which Lady Catherine suggests Mr. Collins seek out a wife illustrates her views well. Mr. Collins explains to Elizabeth, "Twice has [Lady Catherine] condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject; and it was but the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford . . . that she said, 'Mr. Collins . . . A clergyman like you must marry'" (Austen 81). Lady Catherine's "opinion" has a clear motive; in guiding Mr. Collins as he considers

marriage, she advises him, “Choose properly, choose a gentlewoman for *my* sake; and for your *own*, [and] let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way” (Austen 81). By effectively mandating that Mr. Collins limit his search to someone “not brought up high,” and stating that Mr. Collins is to marry for her sake first, and his second, Lady Catherine seeks first and foremost to uphold those distinctions of class that endow her with power. (Austen 81). Due to the unequivocal respect Mr. Collins has for her wealth and status, he follows her wishes blindly.

Unlike Mr. Collins, Elizabeth does not allow herself to be subjugated by Lady Catherine’s condescension. Lady Catherine’s anger at this provides further insight into the uncompromising nature of her elitism. For instance, as she and Elizabeth discuss education, Lady Catherine asserts, “if I had known your mother, I should have advised her most strenuously to engage [a governess]” (Austen 127). Lady Catherine categorically rejects all viewpoints but her own by continuing that Elizabeth “must have been neglected” without a governess, and that “nothing is to be done in education without steady and regular instruction, and nobody but a governess can give it” (Austen 127). In ignoring Elizabeth’s opinion—and not letting her speak at all—Lady Catherine uses her power and authority to try and impose her views, noting, “It is wonderful how many families I have been the means of supplying in that way. I am always glad to get a young person well placed out” (Austen 127). Said points out that “almost all colonial schemes begin with an assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, ‘equal,’ and fit” (80), which is the perspective with which Lady Catherine approaches Elizabeth in the domestic sphere.

Unsurprisingly, considered in light of Cobbett’s observations, Lady Catherine’s suffocating condescension is inextricably linked to her status as the landowner of a large estate: Rosings. While at dinner with the Bennets, Mr. Collins notes that Lady Catherine “had once paid him a visit in his humble parsonage, where she had perfectly approved all the alterations he had been making, and had even vouchsafed to suggest some herself,—some shelves in the closets up stairs” (Austen 50). Despite residing in the extravagant Rosings, Lady Catherine still deems it appropriate on a first visit to Mr. Collins’s humble cottage to suggest improvements that embody her notion of how someone of his rank should live.

Lady Catherine voices similar opinions when she travels to Longbourne to admonish Elizabeth to not marry Mr. Darcy, condescending-

ly stating, “You have a very small park here,” and slightly later, “This must be a most inconvenient sitting room for the evening, in summer; the windows are full west” (Austen 269). She sees these critiques as justified, despite Elizabeth stating, “I am a gentleman’s daughter; so far we are equal,” Lady Catherine points out, “You *are* a gentleman’s daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition” (Austen 272). The implication of these questions is that the Bennets, despite being landowning gentry, are “lesser” because Edward Gardiner, Mrs. Bennet’s brother, is a salaried lawyer, thus merely a member of a “genteel trade” as opposed to being what Cobbett might call a “resident *native*” landowner (Downie 72). Lady Catherine has an easier time condescending to Mr. Collins because he does not threaten her rank; when Elizabeth does, Lady Catherine takes pains to ensure its preservation. With her penchant for “domestic imperialism,” then, Lady Catherine represents the negative attitudes Cobbett decries—“distinct and haughty . . . despising [the lower classes] and their pursuits” (Cobbett 38)—that originated with the pseudo-gentry and eventually spread throughout the landowning aristocracy at large in the early-nineteenth century.

In the character of Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, Austen recalls the comparatively kind, vanishing gentry of the eighteenth century for which Cobbett is nostalgic: a gentry capable of valuing character over class. Mr. Darcy is loved by his servants; Mrs. Reynolds, the housekeeper at Pemberley, tells Elizabeth, “He is the best landlord, and the best master . . . that ever lived; not like the wild young men nowadays, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but will give him a good name” (Austen 188). Williams notes that Mr. Darcy “is a landowner established for ‘many generations’” (114), but so is Lady Catherine; where Mr. Darcy stands apart from “the wild young men nowadays” is in his kindness towards the laborers he employs and his closeness to the land he owns, the very things Cobbett remarks are qualities exhibited by the landlords of old (Austen 188).

Mr. Darcy’s almost anachronistic outlook can be attributed to his father, who he describes to Elizabeth as “all that was benevolent and amiable” (Austen 282). It is no coincidence that Mr. Darcy’s father is of the same era of landowners lauded by Cobbett, thus providing his son a positive example of the “resident *native* gentry” attached to the land and sympathetic to the condition of one’s tenants and laborers (38). Mrs. Reynolds confirms that Mr. Darcy developed his positive quali-

ties at a young age, telling Elizabeth that “they who are good-natured when children, are good-natured when they grow up; and [Mr. Darcy] was always the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world” (Austen 188). Indeed, despite criticizing the haughty elitism of the landlords around him, Cobbett acknowledged that a small number of them maintained their decency, even continuing later in his life to “[pay] his respects to benevolent members of the old landed gentry” (Dyck 189). In suggesting that Mr. Darcy was brought up with an eye towards “those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost” (Cobbett 38), Austen, too, seems to suggest that the landlords of old are not wholly extinct.

Like Cobbett, Austen agrees that the defining feature of such landlords is the belief that the quality of one’s character is defined by conduct rather than rank. As Mr. Darcy’s treatment of his servants implies, he shares this focus on behavior over class. Williams, who notes that Austen was frequently concerned with how class manifested within “the personal conduct” of her characters, comes to the same conclusion (113). Mr. Darcy’s opinion about Mr. Gardiner’s occupation as a lawyer provides a stark and revealing contrast with Lady Catherine’s screed about the lowly “condition” of Elizabeth’s aunts and uncles (Austen 272). Writing to Elizabeth after his rejected first proposal, Mr. Darcy explains, “the situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by [Mrs. Bennet and Elizabeth’s younger sisters]” (Austen 152). While Mr. Darcy admits that the familial “situation” decried by Lady Catherine is problematic, he reveals that he took greater issue with the individual behavior of her family members. In that same letter, Mr. Darcy details his motivations for discouraging Charles Bingley to marry Jane Bennet: not due to her familial situation but rather “to preserve [his] friend from what [he] esteemed a most unhappy connection” (Austen 152). Mr. Darcy’s outlook is echoed in his later kindness towards Mr. Gardiner; he invites the lawyer to “fish [at Pemberley] as often as he chose while he continued in the neighbourhood,” even offering “to supply him with fishing tackle,” irrespective of his profession (Austen 193). Despite acknowledging the difference in rank between himself and the Bennets, then, Mr. Darcy pays the most attention to comportment rather than social stature.

Mr. Darcy’s disdain for Lady Catherine particularly underscores the difference between their respective ways of viewing those of lower social standing. When Lady Catherine interrupts Mr. Darcy’s conversa-

tion with Elizabeth about music at Rosings, he responds “when no longer able to avoid a reply” (Austen 133), recognizing that she will immediately seek to impose her own views on the subject. Mr. Darcy then replies to Lady Catherine’s “advice” to his sister Georgiana about practicing piano by telling her that “[Georgiana] does not need such advice” (Austen 113), a remark that implicitly rejects Lady Catherine’s opinions despite her status and would have been taken as insolent should it have come from anyone less than her nephew. Mr. Darcy’s distaste for Lady Catherine’s elitism continues throughout the scene. Shortly after interrupting Mr. Darcy, Lady Catherine offers Charlotte Lucas a piano on which to practice in the servant’s quarters, telling Charlotte that she “would be in nobody’s way . . . in that part of the house” (Austen 133). Austen writes that upon hearing this, Mr. Darcy “looked a little ashamed of his aunt’s ill-breeding, and made no answer” (Austen 133). The use of the term “ill-breeding” to describe Lady Catherine is crucial, as Lady Catherine criticizes others’ “breeding” throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. To name one example, when Elizabeth rebuffs Lady Catherine’s last-ditch efforts to convince her not to marry Mr. Darcy, an agitated Lady Catherine tells her, “I send no compliments to your mother. You deserve no such attention” (Austen 274). By considering his aunt’s “ill-breeding” in the drawing room at Rosings, Mr. Darcy suggests that Lady Catherine, her social stature notwithstanding, is vulnerable to the same criticisms that she levels on Elizabeth and those around her.

Admittedly, Mr. Darcy is imperfect; he too carries elements of an imperious mentality that, like Lady Catherine, expresses what Said calls an “assumption of native backwardness” (81). When conversing with Sir William Lucas, for instance, Mr. Darcy explains he dislikes dancing due to the fact that it “has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance” (Austen 18). This is a far cry from Cobbett’s description of the gentry that “frequently mix[es] with [those of lower classes] in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost” (38). The essential distinction between Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine, however, is that Mr. Darcy at his core is “good-hearted” (Austen 188), and, despite having moments of elitism, realizes the error of his outlook and endeavors to improve. Mr. Darcy admits as much to Elizabeth, noting, “I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit . . . I was spoilt by my parents, who, though good themselves . . . allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing” (Austen 282). Lady Catherine, unlike her nephew, remains hopelessly mired

in her own self-importance. Cobbett warns that such a perspective invariably leads to “abject ruin” (Williams 113), and it is therefore no surprise that Lady Catherine finds her plot to marry Mr. Darcy off to her daughter foiled in lieu of Mr. Darcy’s happy marriage to Elizabeth.

Ultimately, it is unfair to assess *Pride and Prejudice* as being wholly disconnected from the historical events of Jane Austen’s time. Through Lady Catherine and Mr. Darcy, Austen draws attention to the landowning aristocracy’s changing treatment of tenants, workers, and others of “lesser” social standing in early-nineteenth century Britain. Riding through the countryside while Austen was at the height of her career, William Cobbett observed that landlords were growing increasingly elitist and concerned with maintaining divisions of rank. This shift, catalyzed by the Napoleonic Wars, arose from an influx of middle-class pseudo-gentry who saw farmland as an opportunity for profit rather than feeling an inherent, intimate connection to the land and those who worked it. In Lady Catherine’s haughty, overbearing arrogance and Mr. Darcy’s flawed but persistent benevolence, Austen contrasts these new and old ways of viewing the lower classes. While both characters, to some extent, reflect an imperious mentality that places the British aristocracy above all else, Lady Catherine responds to the changing society described by Cobbett through trying to impose her views on those she perceives as inferior. This frames Mr. Darcy, who tends to value character over social stature, in a positive light reminiscent of the “resident *native* gentry” that Cobbett nostalgically recalls from decades past (38). *Pride and Prejudice* concludes with Lady Catherine’s desires thwarted and Mr. Darcy marrying Elizabeth; her demise and his success are contextualized by their respective identities as landowners in Austen’s changing England.

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Grotesque Wives: Female Monstrosity in Medieval Texts

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From discarded bond wives and sea witches to bigamists and adulterous women, medieval literature depicts rebellious women as monstrous in a variety of texts ranging throughout the early and later parts of the Middle Ages. From elegies and epic poems to Romance poems and fabliaux, despite their unique forms these narratives all revolve around the othering of women who rebel against the societal constructs of womanhood in each respective time period. “The Wife’s Lament” from *The Exeter Book Elegies*, *Beowulf*, Marie de France’s “Bisclavret,” and Chaucer’s “The Miller’s Tale” all share similar themes of how gender connects to monstrosity by portraying the struggles of female characters with restriction, rage, and the resulting rebellion against their respective societies. Each medieval text brands the rebellious women as “monstrous” for rebelling against traditional gender roles and lashing out against the patriarchal constructs controlling female narratives, bodies, and agency, thus revealing how medieval society perpetuates problematic, gendered respectability politics, and restrictive gender expectations.

In the elegy “The Wife’s Lament,” the unnamed wife’s exile is due to her adopted society branding her as a monstrous body simply because she is a foreign bride. Her status as a bond bride is a catalyst for her husband’s and his people’s desire to restrict her potency as a foreigner in their society by exiling her from her new homeland. The bond wife’s adopted society goes from accepting her to eradicating her due to societal fears and anxieties over her alien status. She remarks that her

husband leaves her among his people and her husband's retainers and kinsmen "began to think / in secret that they would separate us" (11–12). It is during the time that the husband is away that the scheming against the wife begins since she does not have the power of protection through coverture in his absence. It is here, too, that the wife's adopted society views her as monstrous due to the society's fears of her foreign status being infectious and threatening to their own culture. The wife and her husband swear an unequivocal oath to one another early on in their marriage that only "death could ever divide" (22) them, but her status as a foreign woman and not a true member of her husband's society, this oath cannot be upheld due to his society's xenophobic ideologies surrounding the idea that a foreign body will infect their society. The wife even remarks that her husband's "kinsmen began to think / in secret that they would separate us" (11–12). The kinsman conspiring in "secret" implies that the men are uniting as a patriarchal entity with the darker intentions to eradicate the wife whom they view as a threat. The kinsmen fear the potency of the wife bringing in a new culture that carries with it traditions and ideas that might challenge their own established constructs. Marilyn Desmond remarks that the wife's "gender essentially excluded her from occupying equally with men the central positions of power within the heroic world of the comitatus. As a subordinate member of her society, the Anglo-Saxon woman, of any rank, was constructed as 'other'" (585). The connection between gender and monstrosity is apparent with the male collusion to eradicate the foreign female from their society. The wife is othered simply due to her status as an immigrant and a woman exchanged between men for either war or riches. The unnamed wife goes on to lament her exile by revealing that her "lord" commanded her to live away from both her native and adopted society (15). The word "lord" implies a dual meaning of her husband's status over his men as well as over her as the patriarchal leader in both society and the domestic space. Desmond also states that the wife uses the duality of the word "lord" to "represent her position as a retainer to her husband/lord. Such language expresses the subordinate position of a married woman in the intimate, domestic, public, and social context of her world" (586). The wife's remark that her "lord commanded [her] to live here [in exile]" (15) reveal important information about early medieval society basing the subordinate position of women on the ideas of the lord and retainer power dynamics.

The wife's banishment reinforces her monstrosity with the language describing her exiled landscape as barren as well as using lan-

guage to express her rage with gnomic phrases functioning as curses towards her unfaithful husband. The wife describes her place of banishment as a “forrest grove, / under an oak tree in an earthen cave” and that she dwelled in what she calls an “earth-hall” (27–29). Her place of exile is depicted as both a yonic and witch like. Her exile of living in a forest and dwelling in a cave is directly tied to the yonic symbolism attached to her othered body while she simultaneously mocks her adopted society’s culture by calling her cave an “earth-hall” to show her isolation from society. The wife’s exile in a barren landscape creates an environment where her rage festers because of her restriction from both her homeland and her adopted culture. The wife’s exile results in her feelings of sorrow at her circumstances to fester into feminine rage, which she turns into a weapon by speaking and writing the injustices inflicted against her into a poem. The wife expresses feminine rage at the end of her elegy when she uses gnomic phrases to curse her husband for abandoning her when she chants:

May the young man always be sad-minded
 With hard-heart thoughts, yet let him have
 A smiling face along with his heartache
 A crowd of constant sorrows. Let to himself
 All his worldly joys belong! Let him be outlawed
 In a far distant land . . . (42–47)

The gnomic phrases here show her outrage at her husband, and her desire for him to experience the same pain that she has in her exile. She does not want her husband to die, but desires for revenge rights—an eye for an eye—equal treatment that she, branded as a monstrous female body, has been denied.

The wife rebels against her husband’s society through the elegy medium, which allows her to speak and validate her gendered experiences. “The Wife’s Lament” is one of the few female narrative elegies found in the *Exeter Book Elegies*, which limits the understanding of womanhood in the early Middle Ages, since few resources incorporate dominant female voices in literature. Desmond suggests that the wife’s role as speaker of the poem shows how she “construct[s] a linguistic representation of the world from which she has been exiled. Yet her language defines her as a subordinate if not marginal member of her culture, a cultural exile whose very expressions define the cultural reality of her marginality and her otherness” (587). The wife expresses

her rebellion against society branding and treating her as a monstrous body by using language as a weapon that refuses to let her female voice remain silenced. The wife's mimicking of the poetic structures of an elegy, which has primarily been a space for patriarchal expression of exile, subverts them by inserting her voice among the male voices found in poems like "The Wanderer" or "The Seafarer." Society punishes the wife by restricting and removing her from society, which enrages and allows her to reclaim her voice with her rebellion and to embrace her status as a monstrous woman who has the power to challenge the patriarchal constructs that controlled womanhood.

In the epic poem *Beowulf*, written at some point between the eighth and eleventh century, Hrothgar's society brands Grendel's mother as a monstrous body due to patriarchal anxiety and fear over her lineage and physical power. Grendel's mother first faces female restriction in two forms because of her lineage and her resistance to established gender roles. Grendel's mother lives on the outskirts of Hrothgar's society as an exile with her son, Grendel. While not much is known about how Grendel's mother lived amongst her own kin, one can see through Hrothgar and Beowulf's interactions how Grendel's mother threatens the established constructs of patriarchal power. Since Grendel's father is unmentioned and never seen in the epic poem, it is possible that Grendel's mother is the matriarchal leader in the world of the exiled, which would further her monstrosity as one who rejects patriarchal dominance. Grendel and his mother are also depicted as being a part of a "tribe" (2006), which implies how Beowulf views the outcasts as more barbarous and uncivilized than his own society. When the narrator first introduces Grendel's mother, he describes her as monstrous due to her lineage that challenges the Christian ideologies and prejudices:

Grendel's mother,
monstrous woman, remembered her misery,
she who dwelt in those dreadful waters,
. . . ever since Cain
Killed with his blade his only brother,
His father's kin; he fled bloodstained,
Marked for murder, left the joys of men,
Dwelled in the wasteland. (1255–65)

Upon Grendel's mother's entrance after her son's death, the speaker immediately brands her as a "monstrous woman" due to her status as

a foreign woman with a Biblical lineage. It appears the speaker judges Grendel's mother as more monstrous than her son because of her gender and her rejection of the traditional constructs of womanhood in Hrothgar's society. By focusing on Grendel's mother's monstrosity and lineage, the narrator also suggests that the real patriarchal anxieties and fears are of her potential to breed more "monsters" into the world. The description of Grendel's mother's lineage stemming back to Cain is intentional on the speaker's part to further dehumanize her by pointing to her murderous ancestry as a sign of deviance. One must also note here how Grendel's mother and her people are the original inhabitants to the land that Hrothgar has claimed and colonized when the narrator remarks that Grendel's mother "dwelt in those dreadful waters, / the cold streams, ever since Cain" (1260–61), which shows how long she as one of Cain's descendants has lived exiled since Cain "left the joys of men" (1264) and now inhabits "the wasteland," (1265). Grendel's mother and her exclusion from the rest of mankind mirrors the exile of the wife in the elegy "The Wife's Lament."

Hrothgar's society brands Grendel's mother as a monster for her justifiable rage and retaliation for the death of her son, which she carries out through revenge rights that are recognized in Hrothgar and Beowulf's societies with men, but not women. Her evocation of revenge rights cements the patriarchal desire to deem her a monstrous body and gives them an excuse to destroy her out of fear of her physical power. Grendel's mother is enraged at the death of her son, and the speaker describes her as "greedy, / grim-minded—still want[ing] to go / on her sad journey to avenge her son's death" (1276–78). Here, the speaker unwittingly reveals that Grendel's mother has a right to "avenge" her son's death. While murdering someone out of retaliation is not a good thing, Grendel's mother only kills one man and chooses not to slaughter the rest of the lords and retainers (1295). If Grendel's mother were a man, this revenge right would have been honored by Hrothgar and Beowulf's society. Unfortunately for her, she is a foreigner branded as a monster by her lineage and gender. Grendel's mother murdering the nobleman gives Hrothgar and Beowulf the excuse they need to eradicate the woman who defies their customs of womanhood. Beowulf is sent to slay Grendel's mother which leads to a massive battle between man versus woman. Beowulf struggles against Grendel's mother during this fight, and she is shown to be more powerful than the epic hero. The narrator remarks when Beowulf attempts to kill her:

the battle-flame would not bite,
or wound her fatally—but the edge failed
the man in his need . . . It was the first time
that the fam of that precious treasure had failed. (1523–28)

Here the battle between Grendel's mother and Beowulf is sexualized with Beowulf's "legendary" sword working as an innuendo and phallic symbol that cannot penetrate Grendel's mother. Her body resists his attempts to dominate and destroy her. It is also important to note how the battle between Grendel's mother and Beowulf is not a fair fight with the use of a sword on his behalf. Beowulf is shown here to not honor the battle between himself and Grendel's mother nearly as much as he did with fighting Grendel, with Beowulf's using swords against the mother and not the son (677–80). Beowulf and Hrothgar cannot allow a woman who shames them physically to live, thus revealing why Beowulf decides to fight her unfairly due to fear of actually losing to her in an even match. The fight escalates sexually when the speaker remarks that Grendel's mother "grappled him to her" (1542). The fight scene portrays a sexual battle for dominance, and in this moment Grendel's mother has the advantage over Beowulf. Grendel's mother is empowered by her rage, and according to Gwendolyn Morgan, "the poet equates the aggression of Grendel's Mother to sexual invitation which, unless he resists the temptation, will consume the male" (58–59). Thus Grendel's mother becomes even more monstrous with the threatening power of her sexuality. Grendel's mother fights Beowulf out of a desire for self-preservation at the intrusion of the patriarchal presence into her matriarchal space in her submerged hall. Unfortunately, Grendel's mother has transgressed in her rebellion and must be punished for her monstrosity by death. Beowulf wins the battle through trickery, stealing her sword from her hall (1564) and cutting off her head. By removing her head, Beowulf removes her monstrous female identity. Beowulf does not honor the fight with Grendel's mother by not taking her head as a trophy, which contrasts his taking Grendel's severed head as a prize (1590). Beowulf's refusal to honor Grendel's mother reveals the fears that revolve around acknowledging a womanhood that challenges patriarchal power and lineage with the reduction of her character to only the status of "mother" instead of a revolutionary woman with a name not connected to any man.

In Marie de France's romance poem written during the twelfth century, "Bisclavret," the poet brands Bisclavret's unnamed wife as a

monstrous woman before her physical mutilation for bucking against marital restriction. Bisclavret neglecting to tell his wife about his werewolf identity before their marriage provokes her into rebelling against her role as a wife. In the poem, Bisclavret's wife rebels against her restrictive marriage to Bisclavret when she realizes that her husband disappears every month and refuses to tell her where he goes until she questions him. The narrator of the poem remarks that "many times she asked him" (59) to not keep secrets from her. Now, like many other romance poetry and fairy tales, Bisclavret's wife is meant to be read as a type of Eve figure whose womanly curiosity is her downfall. Like Eve, Bisclavret's wife commits a crime of womanly rebellion against the patriarchy to sate her desire for knowledge and truth. Once Bisclavret finally reveals his true nature to her as a monster, she grows afraid of him and "thought hard concerning her situation, / how she could get away; / she did not want to lie beside him any more" (99–102). Bisclavret's wife transforms into the antagonist of the text despite how she is simply a woman trapped in a marriage that she no longer wants since it was built on the omission of important information. In this pivotal moment the narrator of the poem morphs Bisclavret's wife into a monstrous woman for desiring an escape from her captivity in marriage.

The poet's narrator brands Bisclavret's wife as a monstrous woman through her rage expressed in her manipulative seduction of the knight who she uses to keep Bisclavret in his wolf form. Bisclavret's wife's rebelling against playing her role as a submissive, unquestioning wife represents her bucking against gender norms, which prods the patriarchal society to punish her by physically mutilating her, exiling her from her homeland, and divine interference placing a multi-generational curse on her female descendants for her deviance. Bisclavret's wife, in order to secure her freedom from restriction in marriage, seduces a knight that she does not love (107). Her decision to escape marriage through an affair adds to her monstrosity with her unfaithfulness to her husband, which is solidified in the act of her bigamy (133) and the evil deed of hiding Bisclavret's clothes in order to remove Bisclavret from her life without technically murdering him, but rather incapacitating his humanity. Bisclavret's wife's rebellion against performing the role of a submissive wife is portrayed as more monstrous than a husband's treachery and bestial nature. Bisclavret's wife's betrayal comes to a head when, several years later, she returns to court, and Bisclavret, in wolf-form, runs "toward her as though he were mad" and "avenge[s] himself" by tearing "the nose from her face!" (231–35). The nose being

forcefully removed is symbolic of how her humanity and womanhood are mutilated to reflect her inner ugliness. In this moment, the patriarchy punishes Bisclavret's wife by mutilating her body, thus rendering her into the image of grotesque womanhood to reflect her internal deviance. The poem's narrator genders Bisclavret's wife's punishment with the quip, "What worse could he have done to her?" (235). With this remark, the narrator reveals how womanhood is valued only if it conforms to standards of beauty and "good behavior." The narrator fails to acknowledge how death is the worst thing that Bisclavret could do to her, or one could make the argument that the further punishment that Bisclavret's wife receives is, in fact, a worse fate than having her nose ripped off. Bisclavret's wife is not only physically maimed, but also tortured (264) and exiled from the kingdom without any of her belongings (303–05). Even fate punishes Bisclavret's wife when the narrator remarks that she:

Had a number of children by him [the knight], . . .
many women of that line,
in truth, were born without noses
and lived like that, noseless. (309–14)

Bisclavret's wife in her desire to escape an undesired marriage accidentally places a gendered and generational curse on her female descendants. The punishment functions like a mark of Cain with a physical sign of monstrosity and otherness forcefully branding the women of her line. The generational punishment of nose deformities is also an unfair one since it perpetuates the punishment of women who are innocent of their ancestor's crimes, much like how Grendel's mother is associated with being monstrous due to her predecessor's crimes. It is ironic that Bisclavret is allowed to thrive as a monstrous male, yet he transforms his wife into a monster for her deviant nature. Bisclavret's wife bucking against a restrictive and unequal marriage, her rage over her situation, and her rebellion by choosing her own sexual partner marks her as a monstrous woman in not just character, but also in body.

In Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale," written in 1392, Alison represents monstrous womanhood through the animalistic and hyper-sexualized descriptions of her body by the Miller. Immediately in the fabliau, the Miller portrays the restrictive and animalistic aspects of John and Alison's relationship. The Miller depicts Alison as a woman trapped in a restrictive marriage to an older man. The narrator de-

scribes Alison's husband, John, as "jalous he was and heeld hire narwe in cage" [jealous was he and held her closely in a cage] (116). Alison's being held in a "cage" is the first instance of the odd animalization the Miller applies to both her character and body. The Miller's animalization of Alison's body is a technique of dehumanizing her gender and transforming her into a monstrous body with her bestial nature as a reflection for her base needs and desires. The narrator only describes Alison, her clothes, and body at great length, but does not list the descriptions of the other male characters other than to say they are old or handsome. The hyper-focus on the female body reveals how Chaucer's and the Miller's society objectify and sexualize womanhood. The narrator describes Alison in animalist details such as comparing her body to a "wezele" [weasel] (126), her voice to a "swalwe" [swallow] (149), her playfulness to a "kyde" [baby goat] (152) and a "calf" (152), and her skittishness to a "colt" (155). Here, one can see how the Miller fluctuates between describing Alison's animalistic monstrosity between her body and her character, descriptions that reflect how men like Chaucer during the later Middle Ages viewed women as more animalistic than men. It is interesting to note that, later on, when Nicholas approaches and sexually molests her by grabbing her genitals (168), the speaker blends the animalistic body and bestial character together in Alison when she reacts to Nicholas's assault with her: "sproong as a colt dooth in the / trave" [And she sprang as a colt does in the stall] (173-74). Alison is not only captive in marriage to a jealous old man, but also by her tenant with the speaker's describing her as a colt trapped in a "trave" or stall. Alison's rage against Nicholas is short-lived due to her position as a woman surrounded by men who desire to exploit her sexually for their own gratification. Alison chooses Nicholas as her lover in order to express bodily agency but displaces her anger at her circumstances by lashing out on another potential lover, Absalom.

Alison's embracing of her monstrosity with the merging of her bestial nature into her body allows her to express female rage and retaliation against unsolicited romantic and sexual attention from Absalom. Once Nicholas and Alison begin their affair, Alison is shown to embrace her bestial nature and desire for base needs, such as sexual gratification that she apparently does not get from John, her elderly husband. Once Absalom enters the fabliau, he attempts to romance Alison by comparing her to a "bryd" [bird] (591). Alison grows enraged and calls him a "Jakke fool," telling him that she "wool caste a ston" [will cast a stone] (600-04) if he does not leave her alone. Alison's justifiable rage

towards Absalom attempting to seduce her seems to also be her redirecting her anger onto his body rather than reacting this way towards Nicholas, who unlike Absalom's wooing by saying enticing little phrases, "romanced" Alison by groping her vagina. When Absalom refuses to leave without gaining a sexual favor in the form of a kiss, Alison uses her rage and her body as a weapon against him. Alison tricks Absalom into kissing her buttock with the speaker describing the scene as her "at the window out she pitte hir hole" and that Absalom:

with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
ful savourly er he was war of this.
Abak he stirte and thoughte it was
 Amys,
For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd.
He felte a thyng al rough and longe yherd.

[with his mouth he kissed her naked ass
With relish er he was aware of this.
Backwards he jumped and thought something was
 amiss,
For he knew well a woman has no beard.] (624–30)

Alison utilizes her womanhood and transforms her body—something that Absalom wishes to exploit—into a weapon as the means of her rebellion against his expectation of her submitting to him sexually. The speaker describes Alison's butt as having a "berd" [beard] that is "longe yherd" [long-haired] which seems to suggest that perhaps Absalom or the Miller does not understand female genitalia with the confusion over whether or not he kissed her buttock or vagina. Louise Bishop remarks that the Miller's Tale plays with

concepts of bodily knowledge by alluding to divine genitalia. Combining confused orifices—holes—and the desire to 'know' in its varied intellectual and bodily meanings with purposeful punning on 'secret' and 'private parts' leads to a blasphemous conclusion—or purposeful lack of conclusion—about God's private parts. Alison's escape from injury in the Tale forms part of this complex of meaning. (Bishop 231)

Bishop points out the difference between knowing about the female

body and *knowing* the female body. The male disconnect shared between Absalom and Nicholas over how to approach Alison reveals how men in this society are confused with how to approach womanhood. Both Nicholas and Absalom are just as equally confused with how to actually romance someone without objectifying or groping them sexually. While Alison's prank on Absalom is viewed as a monstrous act of womanhood, she is the only woman who is not punished for her rage and rebellion in the selected medieval texts. In fact, the reader is invited to laugh at her bestial behavior, thus rendering her a spectacle of womanhood. The lack of punishment for Alison's monstrosity with an animalistic and sexualized nature reveals how Chaucer's society sees women as sex objects who are not punishable by the law if they are first and foremost, animals.

The elegy "The Wife's Lament" and the epic poem *Beowulf* represent the early parts of the Middle Ages and how patriarchal fear and anxiety brand foreign, physically powerful women as monstrous female bodies for their rage and rebellion against being controlled. The Romance poem "Bisclavret" and fabliau "The Miller's Tale" represent the later parts of the Middle Ages and show how patriarchal fear and anxiety brand sexual and animalistic womanhood as monstrous. The later Middle Ages depict how the transition of female monstrosity goes from being blatant in physical deviance into something harder to separate from the appearance of womanhood with the nature of womanhood. The medieval fascination with monstrous women across all genres connects to our contemporary moment where we still perpetuate and embrace antiquated ideas of monstrosity by fearing foreignness, lineage, power, physical appearance, and sexuality. Women today are still restricted by patriarchal constructs that fear the power of womanhood. Women today, unlike in the Middle Ages, are able to express their justifiable rage at the restriction of our bodies politically by voicing their rage more widely and thus rebel against the constraints that have lingered since the Middle Ages, although not without consequences.

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Shifting Culture: A Study of the Post-Civil War Contention Between Freedom and Conformity in Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

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“[Tom] told me what [his plan] was and I see in a minute it was fifteen of mine for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides. So I was satisfied . . .” (Twain 150).

In Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the two main characters, Huck and Jim, raft down the Mississippi and run into trouble along the way. Near the end of the novel, they are tricked by a couple of crooks, and Jim is sold back into slavery. Huck discovers Jim's whereabouts at the Phelps' farm, runs into Tom Sawyer, and the two boys resolve to free Jim. Though Tom knows that Jim is already a free man, he persists in manipulating both Huck and Jim as toys, and this opportunity becomes a game of devising the most elaborate plan possible to free Jim. Tom stands by the “right” and “proper” way of freeing a prisoner and insists Huck and Jim complete meaningless tasks for Tom's enjoyment. Tom's endless and meticulous scheme of freeing Jim is known by critics as the “evasion” and incorporates interesting conclusions and parallels to prevalent social struggles in American culture (McCoy 1). Twain's use of the evasion at the close of the novel functions as an allegory of the post-Civil War struggle between conformity and freedom, and specifically explores how this societal struggle is evidenced in the fight for civil freedom among the African-American people.

In nineteenth-century America, one of the greatest areas of contention affecting social power and authority was race relations. However, public perception of race played the most important role in defining and sustaining this dynamic. The “construct of whiteness” is a theoretical concept that remains widely explored in race and class studies. Robert Parker, in his cultural theory criticism, presents the concept that “whiteness is a [social] position of power masked as a position of biology” (320). This is distinctly evident throughout Twain’s work and is used to overturn common perceptions of power and social acceptance. The construct of blackness is of equal importance and is also prevalent throughout Twain’s novel. If whiteness signifies power, authority, and knowledge, blackness represents ignorance and inferiority. Twain specifically identifies Jim with qualities of both opposite constructs to develop a character-reader power dynamic. While white characters within the story maintain socially constructed authority, Jim gains real-life influence by eliciting sympathy from the reader. By previously establishing Jim’s identity as a kind and respectable character, Twain inspires a sympathetic response from readers in his tedious depiction of the evasion at the close of the novel. This places Jim in a position of literary power, like that of a white character, despite culturally assigned inferiority due to his blackness. Reading a text that explores the antebellum construct of race in a post-Civil War society would have inspired Twain’s audience to consider the continued relevance of antebellum struggles for civic and social freedom in the context of their contemporary world.

In her study of African-American identity in Twain’s work, Jennifer Hildebrand comments on Twain’s possible inspiration for Jim. She explains, “[Twain] proclaimed frequently his love for whites-in-blackface minstrelsy, suggesting that some of his inspiration came from the false image of black culture that he saw on the minstrel stage” (151). The possibility of Twain gleaning foundational qualities for Jim by tapping into the stereotyped African-American depictions in a minstrel shows could have significant implications. During Jim’s time being owned by Miss Watson, Twain intentionally portrays him as a stereotypical and even caricatured version of a southern slave. In the beginning of the story, Huck and Tom sneak past a sleeping Jim, trick him, and lead him to believe he was visited by witches (Twain 4). Here, Jim embraces superstition, embellishes the boys’ story, and fits snugly into the ignorant and superstitious stereotype of African Americans. Illustrating Jim within the social construct of blackness establishes a commonly

accepted yet degrading perception of the southern African American (similar to that of the minstrel show representation) and distinguishes Jim as representative of any and all African Americans. By initially generalizing Jim's character, Twain strips him of personal identity and designates dominant white characters, such as Miss Watson, Tom, and even Pap, as holders of cultural power.

While Twain first illustrates Jim as a comfortably stereotyped southern slave, Jim is a dynamic character. As the novel progresses, Twain develops his identity as a kind-hearted, loyal friend to Huck, driven by shared ideals of freedom and individualism, which are foundational to American culture. As Huck and Jim live in their own world on the raft, disconnected from civilization, Jim's kind-heartedness and intellect become more evident and he begins to demand respect from Huck. One night on the river, Huck and Jim get separated in a dense fog. Once Huck makes it back to the raft, he tries to trick Jim (like he and Tom Sawyer did in the beginning of the story) making Jim believe he was dreaming and that his vivid dream is a sign. While Jim initially falls for the trick, he quickly realizes that he is being fooled. Jim then reprimands Huck, reinstating his humanity in the eyes of the boy who had fallen back into viewing him as the rest of society would:

When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back agin, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could a got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is TRASH; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed. (Twain 55)

Here, Jim directly confronts Huck for treating him as a toy and explicitly calls him trash. This brash honesty and confidence is certainly not characteristic of the typical southern slave and signifies a distinct shift in the character of Jim from being defined by socially inferior "blackness" to adopting qualities of power associated with cultural "whiteness." By physically separating Jim from cultural standards and gradually offering him personal identity and morals, Twain removes him from the common African-American stereotype with which he was initially associated and creates rapport between his reader and the

runaway slave. By the time Huck and Tom are devising their plan, the character of Jim has been granted influence over his audience, arousing their sympathy.

In a post-Civil War culture of powerful racial constructs where a single drop of African-American blood renders one socially powerless, Jim is represented as an empowered individual within a character-reader relationship. This dynamic essentially blinds the audience to Jim's race and places him in a role of influence, which would be more commonly filled by a white character of social prestige. Referring back to Hildebrand's analysis of Twain's African-American inspiration, a character in a minstrel show was not only stereotyped and mocked, but the role would have been filled by a white actor painted black. Following this illustration, it seems that Jim is portrayed as an actor on the minstrel stage of the south truly possessing the qualities of a "white" character yet, while among "sivilization [*sic*]," remaining "painted" in black. By shaping Jim into an individualistic character who possesses qualities typically associated with whiteness, Twain narrows the vast racial divide, reversing the construct of whiteness and making Jim's story an influential tool in a post-Civil War society.

Similarly, the character of Huckleberry Finn undergoes a distinct transformation throughout the novel. While this change seems to be an inverted shift of power as Huck forgoes his entitlements as a white individual, he finds personal significance though rejecting the social code for race-relations. In the opening of the novel, Huck is portrayed as a boy in a position with uncommon social privilege. Not only is he white and in school, but he also has \$6,000 in the bank; Huck seems to possess all the external, social qualifications of prestige. While most individuals would have welcomed this good fortune and privileged life, Huck feels confined by these social labels and expectations. Early in the novel, Pap kidnaps Huck and takes him to live in the woods. Though Huck wants to run away from Pap due to a history of physical abuse, he also, interestingly, does not want to return to the kind Widow Douglas: "I didn't see how I'd ever got to like it so well at the widow's, where you had to wash, and eat on a plate, and comb up, and go to bed and get up regular, and be forever bothering over a book, and have old Miss Watson pecking at you all the time. I didn't want to go back no more" (Twain 15). When Huck finally runs away, he is not only fleeing his father, but also a controlled life with Widow Douglas. He makes a conscious choice to give up his privileged, yet confining, life among society and sets out in search of his own personal freedom. By the end

of the novel, Huck has no home, no education, and assumes Pap has taken his \$6,000. Huck's choices seem to be the exact opposite of what might be culturally expected. Essentially, he rejects the social power that "whiteness" grants to him.

Not only does Huck renounce the racial standards of his own southern upbringing, but he also inadvertently adopts qualities of the African-American lifestyle. In her essay, *Was Huck Black?*, Shelley Fisher-Fishkin investigates African-American identity in Twain's work and provides compelling evidence that a young African American boy, Jimmy, served as Twain's inspiration behind one of America's most beloved characters. She states,

Twain's "revelation" [mentioned in a personal letter] involved his recognition of the potential of a "bright, simple, guileless . . . wide-eyed, observant" child as narrator. I suggest that the voice of Jimmy, the "most artless, sociable, and exhaustless talker" Twain had ever come across, became a model for the voice with which Twain would change the shape of American literature. (Fishkin 15)

Fisher suggests that, whether intentional or not, Jimmy's pleasant nature distinctly shaped the language Twain uses to characterize Huckleberry Finn. In addition, Huck's journey very closely emulates that of a runaway slave narrative, the only difference being that he is physically traveling south. Like an African-American slave, Huck is controlled and manipulated by white characters of power. Early on, Twain communicates the lack of autonomy Huck feels as Pap and the Widow Douglas squabble for control over him. Huck seems to be jerked back and forth between these two figures of authority who feel either a responsibility or a right to raise the young boy. Finally, Huck flees from the control of both characters and leaves behind the white-dominated world of schooling and stiff new clothes, even hiding his identity from those with whom he comes in contact. Like Jim, Huck is searching for freedom and individuality, and, as the story progresses, he is portrayed as subject to the power of white men such as the Duke, the Dauphin, and even Tom Sawyer.

By presenting Huck as socially powerless but in search of freedom, Twain portrays the runaway slave and the young white boy as equal. In the context of the evasion (Chapters 32–43), this equality accentuates the hypocrisy and injustice of imprisoning Jim and of Tom drag-

ging out his escape with frivolous “rules” of sophistry. This depiction leads readers to ask the questions, “why Jim?” and “how can a ‘structured’ and ‘civilized’ culture allow such oppression?” When read in a post-Civil War culture riddled with racism and strong political opinions, Huck’s character would have been considered radical, not only in his equal identification with Jim, but also in his willingness to break social standards and follow his conscience. This reversal of whiteness has left Huck powerless in the eyes of society, yet he has found freedom in his self-removal from social structures and expectations. In a divided post-Civil War culture, which either loathes the slave or loathes the institution of slavery, Huck’s choices imply that choosing a life of inferiority and oppression parallel to that of the lowest member of society is preferred to living a comfortable life amidst social confinement and hypocrisy.

A study of the specific evasion plot at the end of Twain’s novel reveals interesting parallels and, perhaps, even a distinct allegory to the plight of the post-Civil War African American. First, it is necessary to point out the significance Twain places on the evasion. The entire novel has been a slow progression of Huck and Jim’s journey down the river. They encounter interesting people and places and run into trouble along the way. Nearing the end of the novel, the entire story—setting, significant characters, and plot—shifts, and the long arduous process of freeing (or re-freeing) Jim begins. This literary halt and change of pace seem intentional, and its inclusion indicates some stark similarities to the struggles of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century African Americans. Though the reader is unaware of it until the end, Jim has been a free man all along. This represents the initial liberation of slaves following the Civil War. In post-Civil War society, however, a different kind of slavery was emerging. African Americans were confined by societal standards established typically by white men of power. Though legally free, they were oppressed by conformist ideas of those holding on to the binding tradition of the past. Similarly, Jim is legally free but forced back into slavery by white men of power, initially the Duke and Dauphin. This nomenclature is significant considering Twain could have chosen any names for these two con-artists, yet chooses “Duke” and “Dauphin,” which denote unearned political power could very well be representative of white, patriarchal power within the American political system.

In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America, social perception was not the only factor “re-enslaving” African Americans. In

1865, the Black Codes were passed. In his study on race during the Reconstruction, Eric Foner describes these laws and their significant cultural impact: “These measures granted former slaves virtually no civil rights and made it a crime for black workers to refuse to sign coercive labor contracts. To Republicans, the Black Codes seemed designed to use the power of the state to restore slavery in all but name” (45). This legislation sanctioned the social and political invalidation of the African-American people, creating a new kind of civil slavery. While these laws were eventually overturned by the Civil Rights Act, social animosity toward African Americans remained prevalent throughout the South, and the Black Codes were later reinforced under the Grandfather Clause and Jim Crow laws. Tom’s trivial and unjust plan to “free” Jim correlates with this political reality. His elaborate scheme is based on the particular details of the “right way” and “regular way” of freeing a prisoner, which he derives from swashbuckling European adventure stories (Twain 157). Tom views these ancient traditional stories as a cultural authority and guide for how they should free Jim. He pressures Huck and Jim into following petty and senseless rules such as keeping animals in Jim’s bed, digging a tunnel with case knives, and making a useless rope ladder, which are all steeped in what Tom sees as tradition of stories of the past (Twain 150–58). The only purpose of these “rules” is Tom’s enjoyment, and he uses Huck and Jim as pawns in his game. Like Tom, powerful white men in positions of governmental authority enacted these laws to withhold freedom from the newly emancipated African-American people.

The last distinct parallel in Twain’s evasion is the dichotomous relationship between Huck and Tom. Tom could not have been illustrated as a more opposite character from Huck, and this seemingly intentional contrast indicates larger issues of social conformity and freedom that Twain is exploring. Following the abrupt plot shift of his novel, Twain re-introduces Huck’s best friend, Tom, who the reader had most likely all but forgotten. As Tom enters Twain’s evasion plot, he embodies ideals of social conformity and tradition. In an article that explores the relationships between characters in the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Sharon McCoy shares her perspective on the purpose of Tom’s “return”:

While many readers have caviled at Tom Sawyer’s return in the novel’s final section, that return tests everything Huck has learned or thought he has learned about himself, friendship,

society, integrity, and community. Tom's secure sense of self within society's hierarchy exposes Huck's and Jim's tenuous positions and disrupts their fragile, insular, and domestically based friendship. (McCoy 1)

As McCoy asserts, the incorporation of Tom Sawyer into the end of the story re-introduces society and culture into Huck's narrative and challenges his socially unacceptable friendship with Jim. This tension is evident in Tom's condescending behavior toward Huck, as Twain writes of their search for a saw to aid them in Jim's escape: "'Tom, if it ain't unregular and irreligious to sejest it . . . there's an old rusty saw-blade around yonder' . . . He [Tom] looked kind of weary and discouraged-like and says: 'It ain't no use to try to learn you nothing, Huck. Run along and try to smouch the knives—three of them.' So I done it" (158). While Huck's suggestion is entirely logical, Tom doesn't consider it and uses condescension to have Huck acquiesce to his authority, utilizing language like that of a parent as he tells Huck to "run along." Viewing this disproportionate relationship in light of Tom's representation of social structure suggests the irrationality yet authority of "rules" instituted by society and culture. Tom's reinstatement into the evasion plot challenges the freedom and individuality Huck attained while on the river with Jim, isolated by the regulations of social order. Tom dominates this section of the story, leaving hardly any room for Huck to make his own decisions, and certainly no room for Jim to have a voice. He asserts control every chance he gets to the point that Huck and Jim do everything according to his nonsensical plan.

For Huckleberry Finn, this journey down the Mississippi has been one of transformation from conformity to personal freedom. As presented before, when analyzing Huck's journey as parallel to a slave narrative, the novel begins with Huck being confined by social construct and expectation. He is forced to attend school, wear proper clothing, and "fit in" with his society. However, he never accepts conforming to this mold. On the very first page of the novel, Twain reveals Huck's perspective on his own "regular and decent" life:

The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I . . . was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted

me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back. (Twain 1)

This passage portrays Huck's desire for freedom, his rejection of "civilization [*sic*]," and the basic function of Tom's character to control Huck and conform him to society. By the evasion, Huck has fully rejected social conformity along with many "good" and "pure" values he has been raised to believe. When relating his plans to steal Jim out of slavery, Huck tells Tom, "You'll say it's dirty low-down business; but what if it is? I'm low-down; and I'm a-going to steal him" (Twain 145). This assertion of Huck's newfound moral identity refers back to the boy's climactic decision to reject social ethics. After debating to turn Jim in, deciding not to, then writing a letter to Mrs. Watson to inform her of Jim's whereabouts, Huck finally makes a decision,

I took it [the letter] up and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right then, I'll go to hell'—and tore it up...and never thought no more about reforming. (Twain 137–38)

The unmistakable transformation in Huck's values regarding race-relations results from his search for and acquisition of personal morality and authority and his rejection of standards set by society and tradition. Throughout the evasion, Huck, unlike Tom, wants to free Jim the fastest and easiest way possible because his purpose is Jim's freedom, and hanging in the balance is Jim's life.

What would have been the significance of Huck and Tom's clear dichotomy between social conformity and freedom for a post-Civil War reader? Following the devastation of the American Civil War, Reconstruction policies were implemented to rebuild not only the economic infrastructure, but the cultural framework of the United States. In this social context, some individuals and groups rejected Reconstruction, holding on or "con-forming" to the past rather than "re-forming" to a new social structure. They maintained traditional, socially-constituted ideals of morality, which would have starkly contrasted with Huck's personal acquisition of moral authority. These social conformists often mistreated African Americans and, like Tom's treatment of Jim in spite

of his legal freedom, forced them into a new civil slavery. However, slavery and civil rights were not the only areas being pressed for reform as Gregory Garvey points out in his book, *Creating the Culture of Reform*; matters such as women's rights, temperance, and religious reform were also being addressed during this time period (3–4). Garvey also describes the larger connection of these reform movements (specifically, antislavery and women's rights) to the ideals and mentality of a changing culture: "The relationships that these reform movements created not only redefined Americans' understanding of citizenship and equality; they also created a culture of reform through which people debated moral and ethical questions" (1). Garvey maintains that these movements shaped the social structure "redefining" equality, but that they further created a mindset of reform by which Americans questioned moral standards of tradition and conformity. Corresponding with Twain's work, the very practical insinuation of the evasion plot, and essentially the novel, is a pro-civil rights criticism. However, Huck's deeper transformation from conventionality to a personal moral and social authority reflects the deeper cultural transformation from traditional to progressive freedom and individuality in post-Civil War America. Further, the distinction between the characters of Huck and Tom depicted throughout the evasion conveys the deeper moral tension behind the politics of slavery and civil rights.

Unfortunately for readers, the ending of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is as controversial (and perhaps, more so) as the rest of the story. Huck, Tom, and Jim decide they want to go for some "howling adventures amongst the injuns, over in the territory" and Twain concludes the long novel with this statement from Huck: "But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before" (Twain 188). Historically and metaphorically, heading west signifies a new world where individuals can be free and independent. Was Twain suggesting, as the characters "light out for the territory," that there is hope in American culture for the slave to be free, and for the average man to live apart from the dictates of society? Considering his portrayal of American culture, standards, and personal independence, it is likely that Twain had another message in mind. As Huck and Jim lived on the raft, they isolated themselves from social and cultural expectations. Here, their world is a kind of utopia where slave and free man are equal; here, foundational and ideal qualities of American culture become a reality. However, as soon as Huck and Jim step off

the raft and find themselves back in society (at the Phelps' farm), their ideal world of equality dissipates. By the end of the novel, Jim has been enslaved, freed, re-enslaved, re-freed, re-enslaved, and re-freed again. It seems that American culture and society on the shore holds no hope for true freedom, equality or independence. "[L]ight[ing] out for the territories" at the end of the novel signifies fleeing an oppressive society where, it seems, freedom and personal independence will never be achievable. The ending of this novel was not intended to be a "happily ever after" where the characters frolic into the sunset with a new hope. On the contrary, this contentious ending indicates an ongoing problem of hypocritical American society, which Twain seeks to address to his contemporary readers. However, for the modern reader, these controversial themes are no less relevant than they were for the post-Civil War reader. Through *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain transcends time and takes readers back to examine the historical bases of these social concerns through the innocent perspective of a child.

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Atlanta's Gentrification Crisis: How Affluent Whites Harm Their Black and Queer Neighbors

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The Greater Atlanta Area, one of the most diverse metropolitan locales in both Georgia and the United States as a whole, is facing a crisis as it deals with the implications of a growing white and upper-class interest in the region. Atlanta is being forced to look into current gentrification trends to determine the next steps for action against further homogeneity (Markley 608). Gentrification, the process of renovating, redeveloping, and “beautifying” neighborhoods or other residential and commercial zones, is being used to modernize and effectively raise the standards of living in the Atlanta area.

However, gentrification has been used throughout the area’s history as a weapon against marginalized groups, including people of color and the city’s sizable LGBTQ community (Doan and Higgins 11). In “A Letter to My Nephew,” James Baldwin writes, “the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star,” but current gentrification trends in Atlanta prove that “the black man” may not be as “fixed” anymore due to relocation caused by gentrification. As more affluent whites move into minority spaces, current residents are made to either conform to the new living standards that may be adopted as a result of new development or leave entirely, simply because they can no longer afford rent or utilities. The white, wealthy class has historically been most likely to push gentrification, as people of color have almost always been the ones to feel the actual effects of it. While the rich and white are today’s primary gentrifiers, LGBTQ people, at one point, held that role in Atlanta. However, since these roles have switched,

Atlanta's queer community has also become a target of the same type of gentrification. In the case of the Greater Atlanta Area, gentrification does more to harm minority communities than to help them.

Gentrification techniques may be government-backed or the result of an individual or small group's "awareness of structures of power" that they wish to fix (Hankins and Walter 1516). The implementation of a TIF system, or tax increment financing, by the Atlanta city government is just one example of the city's efforts to back gentrification. According to Jennifer Fine, the Vice President of Planning and Strategic Initiatives at Invest Atlanta, an organized effort to "[build] vibrant communities" in Atlanta, beginning in 2005, the city of Atlanta has been split into six different TIF districts in which residents of each district pay specific taxes on funding development within the district. The largest district, the BeltLine, contains a mixture of wealthy white neighborhoods in the north and poor black ones in the south. Because "[Atlanta] has become the U.S. metropolitan area with the highest rate of income inequality" across races, district-specific taxes are more likely to harm low-income communities, which are mostly communities of racial minorities in the BeltLine (Markley and Sharma 60). Funds that have been allocated to the BeltLine as the result of the TIF system have typically been used "to stimulate private development," which has been attributed to about a fifteen percent decrease in the district's black population, and which correlates with a nearly equal increase in its white population (Immergluck 1730; Carnathan 7). Funds from the BeltLine's taxes are also more likely to be used for development in the north than the south, which increases the gap between the wealthy and the poor in Atlanta by leaving the city's poor communities behind as rich ones flourish. Considering the South's racist past, though, it is unsurprising to note that communities of color have consistently been the victims of gentrification plans that are disguised as methods to help Atlanta's inhabitants.

Unlike the government-backed TIF system, most gentrification efforts proposed or executed by individuals or small groups do not pose a great threat to minority communities in Atlanta. For example, "'relocation' involves the movement of the faith-motivated middle-class Christians to the inner city to offer their help" to poor minority communities (Hankins and Walter 1508). While it is questionable as to whether or not these people truly know how to handle the issues faced by poor minorities, many come simply to expand their businesses or to help the community through the formation of community initiatives.

Racial minorities, however, are not the only groups that are faced with the detriments of gentrification in their communities. The neighborhood of Midtown in Atlanta and the city of Decatur, just outside of the city limits, have been hubs for queer people since the 1970s, but they are fleeing due to the influx of affluent whites into these areas. The gentrification of queer neighborhoods in Atlanta poses great threats to the residents' feelings of security and the success of LGBTQ-run businesses. While the state of Georgia has not done much to protect its LGBTQ citizens, the city of Atlanta was the first in the state to adopt an anti-discrimination ordinance specifically aimed to end discrimination against queer individuals, which have seemingly had very little impact on slowing the process of gentrification in the city's queer hubs, and the city's newly-formed Mayor's LGBTQ Advisory Board continues to search for the best methods to end anti-LGBTQ sentiment to this day, but all action taken comes as a direct result of local electoral politics (Doan and Higgins 15).

The wealthy's generally more conservative leanings and their growing interest in Atlanta's queer neighborhoods for their potential business opportunities as well as their architecture put protections for Atlanta's LGBTQ community at risk because "[The Voting Rights Act] does not ameliorate gays' and lesbians' chronic minority status," which means that the formation and preservation of population-proportionate LGBTQ electoral districts is not a legal requirement (Blank and Rosen-Zvi 994). With the city government allowing and promoting initiatives that work to push well-off, white heterosexuals into well-established queer neighborhoods, the interests and voices of the community in politics risk being lost entirely. New city ordinances that strengthen business regulations also disproportionately harm adult businesses, which are largely queer-run in Atlanta, and "such regulation disparately impacts gays, due to the fact that for many gays—mostly closeted or married to women—such venues are the primary outlet for social and sexual activity and are thus viewed by the gay community as socially acceptable" (Blank and Rosen-Zvi 987). In an interview hosted by Petra Doan and Harrison Higgins, a lifelong gay resident of Midtown takes note of the development of the area into a family-friendly setting, stating that "it used to be that a tranny prostitute was part of the local color; now it is a reason to call 911," demonstrating that the gentrification of Atlanta's queer communities has had a noticeable effect on the areas' atmospheres (16). The heterosexual desire to gentrify queer space in Atlanta into family-friendly destinations is done at the expense

of LGBTQ business, culture, and safety.

When considering gentrification against Atlanta's LGBTQ community, it is also important to note that white queer people have been the gentrifiers in the past. From "the early 1970s onward gays and lesbians began moving into older in-town Atlanta neighborhoods to rehabilitate the properties," and these neighborhoods were oftentimes majority-minority (Doan and Higgins 10). By "rehabilitating" properties, they effectively raised the property value, which forced many people of color out of their original neighborhoods. In Decatur, a city situated just outside of Atlanta, a similar phenomenon caused by a twentieth-century decrease in home prices "attracted young feminists and lesbians looking to create community," also driving poor black and brown people from their neighborhoods (Doan and Higgins 11). While the gentrification of spaces by the queer community was vital to ensure that the LGBTQ community had reliably safe districts, it was at the expense of the safety and housing of many communities of color.

While the white LGBTQ community contributed to much of the early gentrification of modern Atlanta, the role of the gentrifier has been overtaken by wealthy heterosexual and cisgender whites taking an interest in the inner-city architecture and business prospects. However, the trend in Atlanta's racial shift from vastly majority black to almost equally white can be most simply viewed as "black flight" from the city (Carnathan 4). James Baldwin describes the implications of whites invading minority spaces in his letter, stating that "there is no basis . . . for [white people's] impertinent assumption that they must accept you," meaning that, while one may feel pressure to conform to white standards, there is no reason to believe that white people will respect that minority status. Minorities lose pieces of their identity when they are faced with the challenge of meeting or exceeding the predominant standards of Atlanta's new class of gentrifiers: wealthy, heterosexual, cisgender white people; however, this is not such a simple choice when looking at gentrification, since the choice is oftentimes between adopting a new cultural identity or losing housing, access to quality education, or a reliable income.

Even when considering that for many years, communities of color were rapidly expanding and moving into white spaces in Atlanta, the rich-white-versus-minority power balance is "designed to maintain a race and class balance leaning toward the White and affluent" (Markley 612). This "chronic minority status" cannot be cured by minorities creating communities of their own when it is almost certain that the rich

and white will soon find a reason to invade these communities; these reasons include exploitation for their own gain as seen with whites invading majority-minority neighborhoods to begin private development or to buy out cheap apartments to increase their wealth by becoming landlords (Blank and Rosen-Zvi 994). Due to pressure from majority, invading cultures, entire minority communities may be abandoned after being stripped of their cultures.

Whether the gentrification comes as a part of Atlanta's TIF plan or the influx of wealthy whites, gentrification works against minorities by enabling rich, heterosexual whites to move into areas that have been safe havens for minorities in the past. While the intentions may not be entirely malicious, it is unfair to conclude that the relocation of minorities is necessary to benefit the area. When rich, white people move into spaces, it is important to consider the current residents and the impacts that a surge in land value, increased interest in private development, or desire to create a family-friendly community could have on them.

The business interests of upper-class white individuals should not outweigh the desires of minorities to form safe, accepting environments. While property in Atlanta's black and queer neighborhoods may be attractive due to their relatively low prices or architectural features, the effects of developing and renovating land, thus causing an increase in surrounding property value, are detrimental to the city's minorities who rely on low-cost land and housing to maintain their livelihoods. Without fair access to housing, entire communities are obstructed and forced to disperse.

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Lost in Translation: Examining the Manipulation of Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*

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“I vouchsafe that I did see all the things I have writ.”

—Bartolomé de Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*

In 1552, Spanish writer and colonist Bartolomé de Las Casas published his most significant work, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, a twenty-four-section account of Spain's mistreatment of the indigenous populations of the Americas. Prior to its publication, Las Casas journeyed to the Indies, where the *encomienda* system and massacre of Amerindians, both often carried out in the name of Christianity, led him to become troubled (Gustafson 66). In the *relación*, like other works from his over fifty-year long opposition to New World conquest, Las Casas methodically uses historical facts and eyewitness accounts, addressing both royal and religious authorities. Due to Las Casas's expansive worldview—encompassing economics, politics, anthropology, and theology—and his horrific descriptions, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* became incredibly popular upon publication and solidified Las Casas's status as early modern Europe's greatest advocate for Native American rights. In the centuries following, Las Casas's work has managed to constantly regain relevancy as a result of numerous translations and retranslations. This renewed attention within academia and the general public, however, has come at a considerable cost. Like many non-English texts, the *relación* has been

appropriated by each translation, delivering a modified narrative that communicates the objectives of the translator and his or her political context (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 846). In particular, three of the *relación*’s translations illustrate how Las Casas’s original language and intentions have been repeatedly distorted over time: John Phillips’s *Tears of the Indians* (1656), J. Boller’s *Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba* (1898), and Penguin Classic’s *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1992). By examining each of these versions alongside their source text and one another, readers can see both the political and iterative nature of translations and retranslations.

In order to understand the changes present in the various versions of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, one should understand several concepts present in translation studies. Integral to the study is grasping why retranslations may exist. Dr. Sehnaz Tahir Gürçaglar defines retranslation as “the act of translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language” (233). While a translation and its retranslation share a common language, the two are often published for entirely different audiences with vastly different attitudes and needs (Susam-Sarajeva 138). Retranslations come into existence due to evolving language, political ideologies, beliefs and value systems. As a society’s ideological framework constantly changes, new versions of texts are released, each manipulating the source text for its unique goals. Dr. Roberto Valdeón explains, “manipulation has social and cognitive roots and involves not only power, but also the abuse of power and, consequently, domination” (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 845). The goal of the manipulator, who in this case is the translator, is making others believe or do what they desire. Unlike a person swayed by legitimate persuasion, victims of manipulation are typically blind to the intentions of the manipulator (Van Dijk 361). This certainly holds true with translations and retranslations, as translators manipulating a source text such as the *relación* present their works as authentic representations of the source text.

Manipulation of the source text can come in many forms: repositioning, reframing, relabeling, and casual employment. Repositioning involves removing text from its original context and placing it in a new environment with new readers and objectives in mind. An instance of repositioning could involve addressing a new audience in the introduction, effectively altering the narrative by inserting new participants (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 846). In reframing the translator makes distinct textual changes in order to articulate a very different

narrative. Dr. Roberto Valdeón explains, “[R]eframing [is] a strategy that allows the translator to instill his own bias as well as reposition the role of the original author” (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 847). This is often seen in translated titles of the *relación* that include elements not present in the original title. Also present in translated titles, as well as the main body of text, relabeling is a strategy that involves the addition or replacement of words in order to evoke a slightly different response. For example, in some versions of the *relación*, the word “Spaniard” replaces “Christian” in order to specify the subjects of the work (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 848). The final major technique is casual emplotment, which is the elimination of ambiguities from a work to give the text a definitive meaning (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 851). Since narrative events typically make sense as part of larger sequences that the audience must interpret, removing ambiguity often aids translators in pushing a particular reading of their work (Baker 67). Aside from these linguistic choices, translators may also alter visual representation by introducing new illustrations or modifying typography. Often seen in translations of the *relación*, the casual emplotment technique allows the translator to place emphasis on certain areas of their works (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 849). Altogether, these strategies work synergistically to aid the translator in delivering the particular narrative he or she desires.

John Phillips’s 1656 translation of the *relación* stands out as perhaps the most influential translation of the text. Titled *The Tears of the Indians*, this edition serves as a “perfect example of the ideological manipulation of a foreign text for purposes of self-justification” (Valdeón, “Translation and the Spanish Empire” 160). *The Tears of the Indians* was published at a time when the British Empire in the Americas was struggling to forge its identity. English colonists compared their endeavor to both prior and contemporary empires such as the Spanish colonization of the Americas (Bumas 107). *The Tears of the Indians* quickly became a bestseller in England and throughout Protestant Europe. While it may seem odd that a text written by Las Casas, a Catholic bishop, would be so popular in this environment, the text serves as a convenient means of demonizing the Spanish Empire and placing the British Colonial Empire on a moral pedestal. The British viewed the Spanish Empire’s mistreatment of indigenous populations as a result of the Spanish Empire’s predominantly Catholic faith, which was deemed to be a lack of religion entirely (Bumas 108). Fueled by this hatred, protestants looked to Las Casas as a means of justifying their own con-

quest, which they considered more noble. Phillips's 1656 translation of Las Casas's *relación* directly contributes to this protestant view of Spain. Author Shaskan E. Bumaz goes as far as to argue that *Tears of Indians* "may indirectly be the origin of the Black Legend," a term referring to the negative portrayal of Spaniards in many non-Spanish works (108). Present in the work is an important aspect of the Black Legend: the depiction of "the Spaniard himself as lecherous, deceitful, and cruel" (Maltby 3). John Phillips's *Tears of the Indians*, which he presents as an accurate translation of Las Casas's text, strips Las Casas of his Spanish and Catholic background in order to fuel Phillips's protestant agenda.

John Phillips's manipulation of Las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* is first apparent upon further examination of the translation's title. While often shortened to *Tears of the Indians*, John Phillips's full adaptation of the original title is much longer:

The Tears of the Indians: Being An Historical and true Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of above Twenty Millions of Innocent People Committed by the Spaniards In the Lands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, & c.: As also in the Continent of Mexico, Peru and other places of the West-Indies, To the total destruction of those Countries. (The Tears of the Indians 2)

John Phillips's full title is an example of relabeling, containing a number of labels not present in the source text. While the source text features "Destrucción" as its only word with a negative connotation, the translation contains several: "Tears," "Massacres," "Cruel," "Slaughter," and "destruction" (*The Tears of the Indians 2*). Phillips also emphasizes the scope of the violence that took place by noting a long list of locations where the Spanish committed the acts Las Casas describes. The summation of negative labels helps Phillips "enforce the negative narrative from the offset" (Valdeón, "John Phillips' Version" 847). Readers of Phillips's translation develop a negative image of the Spanish Empire prior to reading even a single page of the work's main body.

Before beginning the main body of his text, Phillips includes a shortened adaptation of his work's title: *Tears of the Indies, or Inquisition for Bloud: being the Relation of the Spanish Massacre there (The Tears of the Indians 28)*. Here, Phillips uses words such as "Tears," "Inquisition," "Bloud," and "Massacre" in order to emphasize the negative im-

age of Spain he establishes in his full title. This shortened title further manipulates the source text by reframing. By inserting the phrase “Inquisition for Blood,” an element not present in the title of the original work, Phillips begins constructing a new narrative depicting the Spanish as bloodthirsty. Dr. Roberto Valdeón explains that the phrase “resonates in readers’ minds,” and “is neither fortuitous nor naïve” (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 847). The insertion of the phrase suggests that the text will aim to do more than denounce conquest.

Alongside the title page, *The Tears of the Indians* includes four images depicting the Spaniards as butchers. These four images, created by engraver Theodor de Bry, are the most substantial visual element in Phillips’s translation and are not present in Las Casas’s original *relación*. Using these images, John Phillips associates the events reported by Las Casas with “unreliable representations included to make the terror appear even more reprehensible” (Bumas 121). Furthermore, de Bry’s illustrations also gave Protestant Europe’s illiterate population access to Phillips’s anti-Spanish propaganda (Valdeón, “The 1992 English retranslation” 3). Now more accessible and viscosly detailed through these representations, the anti-Spanish sentiment in Great Britain was exacerbated. Integral to *The Tears of the Indians*’s reception, the engravings become a highly influential component of Phillips’s translation. Translators continue using de Bry’s engravings, making Phillips’s addition inseparable from the *relación* despite not appearing in the original work.

Following these disturbing images, Phillips uses his introduction to reposition Las Casas’s text. The text, in which Las Casas originally addresses Crown Prince Phillip, is now dedicated to Lord Protector of England Oliver Cromwell and “To all true Englishmen” (*The Tears of the Indians* 10). By addressing an entirely new audience in this dedicatory, John Phillips entirely removes Las Casas’s original intent behind the *relación*. Phillips’s dedicatory brings together elements of politics, economics, and religion in order to justify his feelings towards Spain—a country he views as “proud, deceitful, cruel and treacherous” (Valdeón, “John Phillips’ Version” 847). By addressing Prince Philip II in the *relación*, Las Casas hoped to convince the future king to end Spanish mistreatment of the Indigenous and instead convert and protect Spain’s new subjects (Bumas 107). Phillips’s dedication, in contrast, warrants intervention against Spain and empowers anyone who shares his mentality. By examining each introduction alongside the other, one can see how this repositioning completely alters the goals of the text

that follows.

Following the introduction, *The Tears of Indians*'s main body of text continues to portray events in a manner that supports Phillips's ideological stance. In the chapter "Del reino del Yucatan" from the original text, for example, Las Casas describes five Catholic friars meeting a group of natives and informing them that the Spanish King wishes no harm. Phillips removes most of this chapter from his version because it contradicts his depiction of the Spanish as tyrants (Valdeón, "John Phillips' Version" 850). Similarly, by replacing the term "Christian" throughout the text with labels such as "*Spaniards*" and "*Catholick*," Phillips emphasizes the dispute between the "old Catholic country and a new Protestant nation" (Valdeón, "John Phillips' Version" 849). Phillips often italicizes these labels in order to make them stand out. These techniques ultimately display instances of casual emplotment. Phillips removes ambiguity from his narrative in order to force his interpretation of the facts.

As perhaps the all-time best-selling version of the *relación*, *The Tears of the Indians* has become deeply intertwined with the seemingly perennial influence of Las Casas's text. While influencing the wave of Black Legend ideology in the political and literary world at the time, *The Tears of the Indians* also had many long-term consequences. It is not uncommon to find scholarly works within the last century referencing Phillips's translation (Valdeón, "John Phillips' Version" 854). Similarly, many translations published after 1656 borrow elements from Phillips' text, especially de Bry's illustrations. These illustrations have been reproduced as if "they were an integral part of the original text itself" (Valdeón, "John Phillips' Version" 854). Along with including these illustrations, many later translations share a similar ideology of using Las Casas's *relación* to push their unique anti-Spanish agendas.

In more recent history, Las Casas's *relación* experienced a resurgence in popularity as a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898. The war, which erupted after three years of fighting by Cuban revolutionaries seeking independence from Spain, would ultimately end Spain's colonial rule in the Western Hemisphere ("The Spanish American War 1898"). While information surrounding Las Casas's entry into the conflict's propaganda effort remains sparse, a translation published the same year as the war supports a narrative of anti-Spanish hatred similar to that of prior translations such as *The Tears of the Indians* (Valdeón, "Las Casas and the Spanish-American War" 371). Titled *Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba, A Historical and True*

Account of the Massacre and Slaughter of 20,000,000 People in the West Indies by the Spaniards, the text was translated by J. Boller from a 1620 French edition of the *relación* (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 373). Because of its extreme deviations from its source text, the work has been recognized as “one of the most violent appropriations of an original text by means of a so-called translation” (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 380). Despite being nearly unrecognizable as a translation, this 1898 United States Edition gained popularity at a rapid rate.

Unlike John Phillips’s version, which Boller takes inspiration from, the 1898 U.S. version is a short summary of the original text (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 373). Upon first examination of *Horrible Atrocities*, readers familiar with Phillips’s translation may recognize Boller’s similar relabeling of the *relación*’s title. Valdeón explains that the title is clearly not a translation of the original title, but “may have been inspired by previous English and French versions” (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 374). Words such as “Horrible,” “atrocities,” “massacre,” and “slaughter,” are similar to the labels present in the title of *Tears of the Indians*, supporting the claim that Boller borrowed the negative connotations present in the works that came before his.

When reading *Horrible Atrocities*, one may notice that much of the source text’s content has been appropriated or removed entirely due to translation’s shortened form factor. “In this version, Las Casas’s lengthy descriptions of the lands are gone, and the calls for regal intervention to defend the natives are omitted,” Valdeón explains (“Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 373). Rather than focusing on Las Casas’s original call for Amerindian protection, Boller focuses on a new anti-Spanish narrative. Boller manipulates Las Casas’s work severely as seen in an opening paragraph that sets the tone for the text:

In the year 1492 the West Indies were discovered, and in the following year they were visited by the Spaniards. The islands were inhabited by an indefinite multitude of people who were without fraud, without subtlety or malice, and faithful and obedient to their Princes. To this quiet and peace loving people, the Spaniards came like tigers, wolves and lions enraged with hunger. (*Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba* 4)

Boller uses simile, comparing the Spaniards to carnivorous animals and

beginning the recurring motif of cannibalism in his translation. Boller bases the ideas in his shortened translation heavily on the de Bry illustrations present in his work—originally appearing in John Phillips’ *The Tears of the Indians*. Alongside these descriptions of the Spaniards, Boller’s version of the *relación* also explains that Indigenous populations were driven to cannibalism as a result of the Spanish depriving them of food (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 374). Relying on reframing and altered visual representation, Boller makes these arguments in his translation—despite the lack of similar arguments in Las Casas’s *relación*.

Along with the de Bry illustrations, visual representation is also altered through a number of other engravings included in *Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba*. The most extreme twist Boller includes is a page containing a blank illustration. The image is left with the inscription: “This plate is withdrawn by the publisher, it being too horrible to print” (*Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba*). Together, the ten images present in the translation are lumped with little description. Missing entirely is any mention that the images were not present in the original text. By excluding this important detail, Boller presents these images as if placed by Las Casas (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 374). Instead of being consistent with Las Casas’s focus on Amerindian humanity, however, the images overshadow any actual translation and promote an anti-Spanish discourse.

Only featuring four pages of translation, the seventeen-page booklet is succinct. Using casual emplotment, the booklet leaves little to interpretation with its images and straight forward descriptions. It combines translation with journalistic style reports of contemporary atrocities carried out by Spain (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 375). With all of these details, the booklet essentially becomes an introduction to support the justification of the war against Spain (Valdeón, “Las Casas and the Spanish-American War” 375). Perhaps the largest disservice committed by the booklet is the use of Las Casas’s name on the cover. By claiming that the Spaniard authored the booklet, Boller posthumously declares Las Casas’s approval of the manipulated source-text, images, and additional acts of violence present in *Horrible Atrocities of the Spaniards in Cuba*. Like Phillips, Boller makes Las Casas an ally to his cause.

In modern times, contemporary translations of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* have approached the text with an academic mindset (Valdeón, “The 1992 English retranslation” 6). As a

result, these texts often attempt to separate themselves from the anti-Spanish rhetoric present in the classical translations. These contemporary translations typically prioritize accuracy to the source text. For example, they value the importance of following spelling and grammar conventions of the time. While these texts emphasize Las Casas's anti-colonial discourse rather than engaging in anti-Spanish propaganda, most of these translations still deviate from the source text.

Penguin Classic's 1992 translation of the *relación*, titled *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, displays some of the efforts made in contemporary translations to produce an accurate narrative, while also making some of the issues present in these works apparent. Translated by Nigel Griffin, this version begins with a lengthy "introduction" and "note on editions and on this translation" (xiii–xlii). Griffin makes clear that his translation is based on the "first [1552] printed edition which appeared at Seville" (xliv). Griffin, in an effort to distance his work from his anti-Spanish predecessors, does not engage in much dialogue regarding previous translations aside from mentioning their various successes. "Griffin's introduction, by contrast [to its predecessors], suggests that he does not have a political axe to grind," explains Valdeón (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 6). Griffin's title similarly suggests this, as he does not relabel: *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* is an accurate translation of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. The anti-Spanish sentiment in previous titles does not appear here.

When translating the source text, Griffin follows the trend of many contemporary translations and uses deliberate language conventions for his target audience. The language differences between his translation and Phillips's can be seen and appreciated:

In the year, 1511. They went over into the Island of Cuba, which extends as far in length as it is from Valladolid to Rome . . . (*The Tears of Indians* 21)

In 1511, the Spanish set foot on Cuba, this island, which, as we have said, stretched for a distance as great as that which separates Valladolid from Rome . . . (*A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* 27)

When comparing these translations with Las Casas's original text, readers can see how Griffin preserves Las Casas's ideas while bringing

clarity to his text that makes it accessible for the contemporary reader. This trend of preservation continues throughout the text as Griffin avoids drastically manipulating the source material.

By delivering a fairly accurate rendition of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, Griffin helps transplant Las Casas's human rights contributions into the modern world. In doing so, Griffin "acts as a mediator between Spanish history and contemporary anglophone readers" (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 7). Despite having a similar ideological stance as the source text, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* and other contemporary translations are not perfect. By placing the text in a contemporary western academic environment, these translations often sacrifice accuracy to attain political correctness. Griffin, for example, often replaces the word "Spaniards" with "Europeans" (*A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*). This relabeling can cause subtle changes in readers' understanding of the work as the narrative somewhat shifts to a critique of European colonialism as a whole (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 8). One could argue that Las Casas would support this more politically correct approach, but the fact remains that it results in less accuracy.

Contemporary academic translations of Las Casas's work also typically contain paratexts such as informational introductions and footnotes. These serve to clear up inaccuracies in Las Casas's statistics or to provide historical background for certain events within the work. While useful, especially as a means of promoting discussion and further research, these paratexts introduce new participants and outside contexts that Las Casas never intended for his audience (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 10). Reading a translation alongside paratexts, which are included in many definitive versions of literature in academia, results in an alternative reading to that of the source text and previous translations.

Along with the changes that come as a result of western academia, contemporary translations often still contain traces from their anti-Spanish predecessors. The most common form of this is the use of illustrations. *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, for example, contains images of Spaniards not present in the original *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. While these images are not the same ones present in earlier translations, they are still works of Theodor de Bry—the same artist featured in *The Tears of the Indians* and *Horrible Atrocities*. By introducing these images without Las Casas's approval, contemporary translators manipulate the source text whether

they intend to or not. The practice of including illustrations inherently manipulates a work because images each have unique ideological views that differ from the text they accompany. Furthermore, contemporary translations that include de Bry's work specifically are calling back to the anti-Spanish translations that are laden with political biases (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 11). While contemporary translations typically present an accurate representation of Las Casas's ideology, these changes to the *relación* illustrate that they are not without numerous flaws that affect the intended reading of the work.

Since its publication in 1552 *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, a text that Bartolomé de Las Casas hoped would promote justice, has been employed for numerous causes bearing no similarities to his own. By examining the original text alongside translations and retranslations such as the 1656 work *Tears of the Indians*, 1898 booklet *Horrible Atrocities of Spaniards in Cuba*, and the 1992 translation *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, readers should become aware of the importance of questioning the purpose and reliability of translations. Each piece, created by a unique translator for a specific audience, exists with its own peculiarities—historical, cultural, linguistic, and ideological—that depart from the source text's intentions (Valdeón, "The 1992 English retranslation" 11). As seen by the *relación*'s relevancy in present-day American studies, retranslations often restore widespread interest in a work—further increasing the necessity for readers to judge translations and prevent the spread of misinformation about the source text's intentions. Illustrated by the de Bry engravings originally present in *The Tears of the Indians*, when a popular translation is not assessed carefully, the appropriations present within it inevitably appear in subsequent translations. In order to fully understand a work, one should compare the source text and its translations, paying attention to how they iterate on one another and the political contexts in which each came about.

While once easy to ignore the full history of non-English translated works, contemporary Internet affordances allow for easy access to historical information and multiple translations. With these recent innovations, which were not present at the time of the Penguin Classics publication in 1992, it will be interesting to see how future translations respond. Perhaps the accessibility of information will leave translators more wary, paying closer attention to authenticity. On the contrary, technology may lead to an increase in the spread of inaccurate translations. Whatever the case may be, as new translations and retranslations

emerge it is important for readers to remain critical and attentive, only then can sentiments such as the Black Legend be avoided in modern times.

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The Significance of the Floral Motif in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* has been a staple of feminist science fiction since its publication in 1985. Although the novel has been the subject of extensive literary critique and analysis, the profuse floral symbolism within the novel has been largely unappreciated in academic writing, with only two literary scholars (Deborah Hooker, 2006 and Elizabeth Peloso, 2002) having examined the importance of flowers in the novel to date. William Hannon and C. Hugh Holman's reference book, *A Handbook to Literature*, defines a literary motif as "a recurrent repetition of some word, phrase, situation, or idea, such as tends to unify a work through its power to recall earlier occurrences" (288). Thus, the floral motif, a repeatedly occurring and sometimes contradictory symbol throughout Atwood's novel, is not a coincidence. Rather, Offred's careful detailing of the floral imagery within her narrative is a unifying thread that ties together her experiences (Peloso 1), indicating that flowers, as a motif, are significant to the development of her experience of oppression in terms of communication, sexuality, hope, and resistance. Ultimately, the nuances of Atwood's floral motif reflect the paradoxical nature of women's status under patriarchy, where, under the guise of being highly valued, they are at the same time chivalrously protected and also denied their fundamental human rights.

The flower garden offers a form of communication for the women in Gilead, likening back to the Victorian practice of floriography (or the "language of flowers"). This floral language, which was primarily

practiced by women, was a system that assigned various meanings to different plants and flowers and provided a way by which the prudish Victorians could communicate about taboo subjects without uttering a word (Pătrașcu 96). Floriography is said to have originated in the early nineteenth century within harems of women in Asia, some of whom took part in secret lesbian affairs and communicated with each other via flowers (Hooker 295). This feminized, and therefore frivolous and discredited, form of communication was thus “under the radar” of the men in power, allowing women in sexual slavery to communicate with one another and thereby exercise sexual agency (Engelhardt 346; Hooker 288).

Similarly, flowers become a method by which Offred and Serena Joy can express themselves. Although these two women embody very different roles, all women in Gilead occupy inferior positions, being forbidden to read, write, or communicate with one another. Offred occupies a more blatantly subordinate position, exploited solely for her purposes in “breeding” an heir for the Commander, yet Serena Joy, as the Commander’s wife, is also objectified and denied basic human rights, as she is confined to her home and subjected to witnessing her husband’s sexual relations with their Handmaid (Atwood 106–09). According to traditional Victorian gender roles (to which Gilead has returned), the garden is an extension of the household domain of the woman (Atwood 13; Engelhardt 347). The garden thereby offers a location where secret communication between the two women can occur unbeknownst to the Commander (Atwood 235–38). Early in the book, Offred hears the plumage of the willow tree in the garden whisper the word “*rendezvous*,” a foreshadowing of the expediency of this location for communication with Serena Joy (Atwood 176). Thus, the two women use this prescribed feminine domain to their advantage in order to exercise some agency by plotting against the Commander and those in power, arranging an alternative method by which Offred could become pregnant (Atwood 237).

As Hooker points out in her essay “(Fl)orality, Gender, and the Environmental Ethos of Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*,” Atwood also uses the floral motif to signify female sexuality (285), something that has been severely stifled, if not altogether outlawed, in Gilead. “There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us,” Offred says of women’s repressed sexuality, “no room to be permitted for the *flowering* of secret lusts . . . we are two-legged wombs, that’s all” (Atwood 157, emphasis mine), demonstrating the connection between floral imagery

and sexual attraction. Molly Engelhardt confirms the implicit sexual connotations conjured by the floral motif, writing that “flower petals touch each other and are touched by the queens of the garden assigned the role of tending them, replicating the tactile component of female sexuality” (358). Similarly, flowers conjure thoughts of sexuality for Offred and are one of the only outlets from which she derives pleasure. “I once had a garden,” Offred muses, “I can remember the smell of the turned earth, the plump shapes of the bulbs held in the hands, fullness, the dry rustle of seeds through the fingers” (Atwood 13). The way Offred describes the flowers—especially those with bulbs, which are round and womanly in shape—is sensual (Hooker 280). Offred describes Serena Joy’s garden as heavy, languid, with heat rising up and causing her to feel a “liquid ripeness” (Atwood 176), a direct retaliation against her role as a young woman (breeder) in Gilead, which is purely functional and decidedly un-sensual (Atwood 157). The full, round bulbs in Offred’s hands and the yearning she has for her old garden symbolizes her yearning to express her own sexuality with her husband and to once again possess control over her own life, both of which are forbidden under Gilead’s regime.

While flowers do signify hope, resistance, and un-repressed female sexuality for Offred, they are also charged with patriarchal language and ideology concerning women, and therefore Offred has a mixed relationship with the floral imagery she encounters. This tension indicates that the floral motif is nuanced and should not be over-simplified; flowers often conjure conflicting symbolic meanings, thus serving a dual purpose within the story. The idea that flowers are vulnerable and can be easily crushed, for example, likens back to Victorian-era notions about women’s frailty (Hooker 285; Engelhardt 345). The Republic of Gilead reinstates this stereotype of femininity as fragile and vulnerable, vowing to chivalrously protect women (Atwood 27). This is evidenced by Aunt Lydia’s stress on women having *freedom from* making their own choices (rather than *freedom to* make their own choices), which is portrayed as a privilege afforded to women by the men who benevolently hold power over them (Atwood 28).

The general parallels between the breeding and cutting of flowers for temporary amusement, and the use of women as breeders who have only temporary fertility and then “wither” are also immediately apparent. Indeed, Hooker writes that Offred’s description of floral imagery draws on a “range of sexually polarized concepts that have become staples of Western literary tradition” (Hooker 285). For example, Offred

often equates the Handmaids to tulips, which she describes as “winecups” and “chalices,” comparing women to hollow vessels to be filled with the “semen and babies” of the elite men of Gilead (Atwood 49, 224). Tulips are also a relatively transient flower, budding in the spring and withering after only a few weeks (Atwood 175), which is suggestive of the vulnerable and temporary position of Handmaids, based solely upon their ebbing fertility (Peloso 5). Similarly, Offred compares barren, “useless” women like Serena Joy to “withered” flowers, evocative of the patriarchal belief that a woman’s worth is dependent upon her ability to bear children (Atwood 92; Peloso 6). Serena Joy spends hours cutting the seed pods (fruit) from the red tulips, a parallel with her role as a barren woman who will appropriate the child of her assigned Handmaid (Atwood 175). Offred also describes the Commander’s ceremonial rape as “[like] a bee is to a flower” (Atwood 185), and makes it clear that flowers are quite literally the “genital organs of plants” (Atwood 92), all of these textual examples ultimately evoking the patriarchal notion that female sexuality is merely a passive receptacle for male expressions of sexuality.

The red color of the tulips is also symbolic of Gilead’s patriarchal oppression of women. Offred even remarks that, as women clothed in robes of red, the “colour of blood defines us” (Atwood 8). Indeed, the red tulips often symbolize blood in the novel; for example, when Offred sees the hanged men on the wall, she remarks that “the red of the [hanged man’s] smile is the same as the red of the tulips in Serena Joy’s garden” (Atwood 38), drawing a parallel between the blood and flowers. The color red also signifies patriarchal defeat for Offred, who waits for her menstruation fearfully each month (Atwood 84), the State having all but criminalized the natural process of menstruation, as Handmaids who fail to bear children are considered “unwomen,” and are shipped off to “the Colonies” (Atwood 146). Thus, the color of the robe that she is forced to wear, as a parallel of the red cloak of the tulip, is a continual reminder to Offred of her deficiency as a woman who has not yet produced a baby for her assigned couple, and whose time to do so is quickly running out (Atwood 230). Recognizing this parallel between the blood-red robe and crimson tulips gives new meaning to Offred’s musing that “the tulips are red, a darker crimson towards the stem, as if they had been cut and are beginning to heal there” (Atwood 13). The fruitful tulips, as a symbol of the Handmaids, have been “cut” and gathered as possessions of the men in Gilead, only valuable as long as their vibrant red color endures—or in the case of the Handmaids, as

long as their fertile blood flows (Atwood 8).

Inasmuch as flowers signify female sexuality, they also signify female resistance to patriarchal oppression. Offred remarks that the bleeding heart flowers are “so female in shape it was a surprise they’d not long since been rooted out” (Atwood 176), demonstrating the flower’s intrinsically antithetical nature to everything Gilead represents (Hooker 287). The natural occurrence of the female shape of these flowers parallels the naturalness of the human female body and sexuality, something that, whatever the State of Gilead tries to suppress, can never be completely erased: as Offred remarks earlier in the story, “[women’s] bodies, like unruly children, can get up to [all kinds of mischief]” (Atwood 11). This is demonstrated in Serena Joy’s garden, where Offred remarks, “There is something subversive about this garden . . . a sense of buried things bursting upwards, wordlessly, into the light, as if to point, to say: whatever is silenced will clamour to be heard, though silently” (Atwood 176). Although women have been literally concealed and silenced in Gilead, they are not without resistance. Just as the natural occurrence of the female-shaped flowers grows silently despite the suppression of women, the Handmaids “get up to all kinds of mischief” by silently communicating with one another (through scratching “*no-lite te bastardes carborundorum*” on the cupboard, for instance), and plotting an escape from Gilead on their daily walks (Atwood 258).

The flowers also provide a way by which Offred finds hope in her daily routine, helping her survive as a Handmaid. Indeed, Peloso writes, “For Offred, flowers are the only familiarity she has left, and she clings to them all the harder for it” (8). Near the end of the novel, for example, Offred apologizes for the heaviness of her story, saying “I’ve tried to put some of the good things in as well. Flowers, for instance, because where would we be without them?” (Atwood 307). Indeed, Offred not only describes the flowers she encounters to lighten her narrative for the audience, but she also relies upon tracking the growth of the flowers on her daily walks with Ofglen to give her hope. She describes the life-cycle of the tulips, irises, and daisies, which bloom at different times of the year, affording her a method to measure the passing of time and something to look forward to day to day (Atwood 49, 175, 311). Thus, through her deliberate description of the flowers, Offred is able to exercise some agency and find purpose throughout her narrative.

However, Offred also describes the flowers as a coping mechanism to disassociate from the trauma she experiences, again demonstrating the underlying tension between the dual imagery of flowers as both a

symbol of feminine agency and a symbol of patriarchal control. For example, before the Commander reads from the Bible on “ceremony night,” Offred describes the flowers on Serena Joy’s mantlepiece and rug (Atwood 90), during the actual “ceremony,” she looks up at the pattern of foliage and describes the flowers on the ceiling (Atwood 148), and later when the Commander rapes her at Jezebel’s, she describes the poppies on the drapes and the pictures of buttercups on the walls (Atwood 290). In this way, Offred uses the surrounding, external floral imagery to withdraw from her internal anguish by disassociating herself from her bodily experiences, thereby using the same flowers that afford her some hope and agency as a type of warped coping mechanism for her physical trauma.

Likewise, the strikingly contrasting conditions of the flowers and gardens in each setting of the story also elaborate upon the agency of the women in those spaces. For example, the one place in the story in which women have some (although relative) freedom to talk amongst themselves, dress differently, and congregate together, is at Jezebel’s. Upon entering the secret brothel, Offred immediately describes the surrounding vegetation: “there’s a fountain in the middle of it . . . spraying water in the shape of a dandelion gone to seed. Potted plants and trees sprout here and there, vines hang down from the balconies” (Atwood 271). The wild foliage here starkly contrasts the neat and controlled garden of Serena Joy, who carefully ties each one of her flowers into place (Atwood 13). Offred’s mention of the “dandelion gone to seed” is especially meaningful, as outside the Commander’s house she observes that, though she longs to see even one “insolently random and hard to get rid of” dandelion, there are none in sight as the lawns have been picked clean (Atwood 245). The imposition of human control on the vegetation in Gilead mirrors the imposition of male control on female bodies, and although this control is certainly still imposed upon the women at Jezebel’s, they are in many ways afforded more agency than Offred has been afforded at the Commander’s house. Thus, for Offred, the description of the untamed foliage parallels the relative freedom the girls enjoy at “the club.”

While the recurring floral motif and imagery in *The Handmaid’s Tale* at first appears to be a simple allusion to traditional femininity, it is, in fact, nuanced and often conjures conflicting symbolism. While flowers are sometimes used to signify hope, resistance to patriarchal oppression, and expressions of female sexuality, they are also rooted in patriarchal rhetoric about women’s bodies and used as a method by

which Offred disassociates herself from the rape she endures. However, the conflicting messages that the floral motif conveys in the novel are, on a deeper level, a parallel to the hypocritical religious-fundamentalist propaganda about women which is enforced by the State of Gilead. During one of her walks, Offred remarks:

The red of the [hanged man's] smile is the same as the red of the tulips in Serena Joy's garden . . . but there is no connection [between them]. The tulips are not tulips of blood, the red smiles are not flowers . . . The tulip is not a reason for disbelief in the hanged man, or vice versa. Each thing is valid and really there. It is through a field of such valid objects that I must pick my way, every day and in every way. (Atwood 38)

In an authoritarian nation such as Gilead, reality becomes distorted and surreal, nonsensical connections are made between objects and dogma, and arbitrary rules often contradict one another. This is the “field” through which Offred must “pick [her] way, day by day” (Atwood 38), and the reason why, in an effort to preserve her sanity, she stresses the lack of connection between the blood of the hanged men and the red of the tulips (Peloso 6–7). Ultimately, Atwood's use of the floral motif represents an extension of this paradox, an indication of the contradictory nature of the gender-essentialist understanding of women which at the same time places them in a position of utmost importance, to be chivalrously protected, while also stripping them of their fundamental human rights.

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Redefining Borders and Identity through *The Angel of History* and *Exit West*

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Borders, both physical and psychological, are explored in Carolyn Forché's poetry collection, *The Angel of History*, and in Mohsin Hamid's novel, *Exit West*. These two works interrogate how crossing borders impacts both memory and time through global and individual events. The characters in *Exit West* move through a war-torn world outside of their control, and they use doors as a physical gateway to cross through dangerous national borders to potential safety. The poems in *The Angel of History* also cross borders, but instead of moving through doors, the poetic content moves through different areas of Europe ten years after the end of World War II, describing the destructive effects of the war. Both *The Angel of History* and *Exit West* focus on the world as a container of the human body in past and future tenses, rarely the present—and, when examining these works in conversation with each other, they both seem to reflect on a world that, in its present form, is imperfect. When viewed together, Forché and Hamid appear to have a conversation across genres and decades discussing how individuals grapple with tragedy on a global scale. These authors' works demonstrate the importance of reflecting on past events in order to make sense of current climates and how one might move through them in an attempt to form an optimistic view of the future.

Though published more than twenty years apart and written in different genres, *The Angel of History* and *Exit West* offer similar interpretations on how literature can reflect upon and contextualize historical effects that have occurred or are still occurring today. Both works use

an individual's suffering (whether it be through fictional characters, as in *Exit West*, or through Forché's poetry of witness, which I will define) as a way to personalize the experience of a global crisis. In *The Angel of History*, published in 1994, Forché articulates the effects of World War II in France, Germany, and Japan through poetry written almost fifty years after the war's conclusion to depict the "opening of a wound, the muffling and silence of a decade" (81). While Forché uses poetry to reflect on the destructive effects of war on the world, Hamid sets *Exit West* in a city "swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war" (3). Hamid uses fictional prose to comment on destructive issues in present society. Coming from a contemporary viewpoint rather than reflecting on an experience from decades prior, as Forché does in *The Angel of History*, allows Hamid to explore the relevancy of present issues and their potential lasting effects.

The Angel of History and *Exit West* work in conjunction with one another by highlighting what has, or has not, changed in the present world through the authors' exploration of how borders serve as physical and psychological demonstrations of movement through time and memory. Forché's *The Angel of History* is divided into five parts, with each part containing a sequence of fragmented poems that relay realistic-seeming responses of imagined individuals experiencing life in different parts of the world post-World War II from their first-person perspectives. This use of fictional, first-person narrative poetry is a part of what Forché coins a "poetry of witness," which, she states, seeks to "[reclaim] the social from the political and in doing so defends the individual against illegitimate forms of coercion" (Usner). Forché's poetic style thus reflects on personal, individualized experiences that reclaim the social aspect of history. Her "poetry of witness" considers how the survival of certain memories is a reflection on their thematic pertinence to present events. By writing from individuals' perspectives, Forché highlights the social consequences of the political decisions made during World War II, reminding readers of their importance.

Hamid's *Exit West*, published in 2017, portrays a more current depiction of the world and reflects present-day issues of the refugee and immigration crisis through the fictional narrative of Nadia and Saeed. These two young characters are forced to navigate their growing romantic relationship against the background of a war-torn country, which can only be escaped by means of finding physical doors that hold the supernatural ability to transport them to another place in the world. Nadia and Saeed navigate a world riddled with violence through

the passage of these doors, and in doing so test and develop their own personal boundaries. While the supernatural element is not a representation of current affairs, the significance of borders and their setting in a world at war in *Exit West* is reflective of our current world's refugee and immigration crisis. Many scholars of postcolonial theory have considered borders from the perspective of being "isolated to the lines of a political map of states," and I will be furthering their work in this essay by discussing borders from a critical border studies perspective and focusing on how borders serve "often [as] pools of emotions, fears and memories that can be mobilized apace [*sic*] for both progressive and regressive purposes" instead of as fixed lines (Johnson 61–62).

Synnøve Bendixsen considers how borders function as a way of managing time, and her work provides insight into the significance of borders within both Forché and Hamid's works. Her definition of borders as a permeable concept connects to how Forché and Hamid use them in their work by emphasizing the weakening implications of physical borders. Bendixsen's essay, "The Refugee Crisis: Destabilizing and Restabilizing European Borders," focuses on the implications of border construction and reproduction and the impact of shifting borders following "the alleged weakening" of European borders after the Cold War (536). Her essay outlines European migration patterns, reflecting on the characterization of individuals after their "journey" of moving across a border and the impact of neighboring countries after a border has been closed (541). Bendixsen implies that borders are becoming unstable, and this "destabilization is being countered by a restabilization, or reconfiguration, of borders" (537). Emphasizing the idea that borders are becoming permeable, or "destabilized," implies that borders are abstract; they are lines that are meant to be crossed and "reconfigured." Using this approach to view borders as abstract lines that are always subject to destabilization and transgression as a framework for understanding both Hamid's novel and Forché's poetry in relation to one another, borders are then not only unstable but also can be placed on a spectrum ranging from "temporally-structured" to "spatially-structured." The works of Hamid and Forché work together to demonstrate how this fluidity of borders impacts an individual's perspective on the historical and present political moments.

Bendixsen's theory on the potential instability of borders provides *Exit West* with a historical context for the tumultuous experience of crossing borders. The doors in *Exit West* serve as an example of a world where borders can only be transgressed effectively through a supernat-

ural element, perhaps signifying Hamid's lack of interest in writing on the experience of movement through space. The doors highlight Hamid's interest in what happens to an individual once they have made that movement. Bendixsen remarks that "the border is both a temporal and a spatial experience" and that "time and temporality play important parts in border management" (538). Her comments imply that borders exist in different ways for different people; instead of being only a physical divide of space in the Earth, borders also exist as a social construction in time. This idea of borders as a social and physical construction relates to the movement of time and space that Hamid and Forché grapple within their work. The "production and reproduction of borders at various scales and the interrelatedness of these processes" connects to Hamid's *Exit West* and Forché's *The Angel of History* (Bendixsen 539), as both works consider the world (and the borders that have been mapped onto it) as a container not only of human physicality, but also of social and psychological memory. Borders are not a solid structure, but rather a demonstration of temporal and spatial divides that can be, and inevitably will be, moved or destroyed.

Forché's poems play with the instability of physical borders through placing speakers along different areas of destruction in Europe after World War II, demonstrating Bendixsen's idea that a border is a spatial *idea* rather than a physical line. Forché reflects on the spatial element of borders through her sectioning of *The Angel of History* and the locations in which she bases the poems. Forché's work begins in France to reflect on the genocide there, shifts to Germany to focus on the aftermath of the Holocaust, and ends by reflecting on the aftermath of atomic warfare in Japan. This movement across multiple borders demonstrates Forché's fragmentation of time and space.

The poems in *The Angel of History* fragment syntax and the formal structure of each work to emphasize the physical fragmentation of the world dealing with the aftermath of World War II. In her poem "XVII," for example, Forché uses her fragmented syntax and blank space on the page as a way to emphasize the deconstructed world around the speaker. She writes:

A mirror of swans, a gesture of regret, bridge stones rippling
in the Vltava,
your face strewn with childhood:

We were looking for _____ we found _____.

The hourly figures struck each other.
They knew the time was passing in which we are now suspended.
(Forché 41)

In this poem, Forché uses her first line as a sequence of fragmented descriptions. The beauty in a “mirror of swans” contrasts with the next thought of a “gesture of regret,” followed by another image of stones causing ripples in the Vltava river, located in the Czech Republic. Forché mimics unfinished thoughts within one’s stream of consciousness and she writes these thoughts down instead of ignoring them. She underlines spatial blanks to imply either an unfinished thought or perhaps a chosen blocked memory; these blanks could alternatively welcome the reader to fill in the blank with their own interpretation. Her line referencing the passing of time is described as “suspended,” as if time can be interpreted through one’s memory. The implications of past and future, and how memory serves as a reflection on past events from a future standpoint, demonstrate Forché’s poetry of witness and its importance. Memory comes up regularly in Forché’s work, and it is always connected to the idea that memory is a fragmented concept; we only remember fragments of our history, and those fragments are strung together through our current understanding of how the memories have impacted us presently.

In Forché’s poem, “The Garden of Shukkei-En,” memory comes from the speaker revisiting the Garden of Shukkei-En, located in Japan, after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (see fig. 1). While it is unclear whether the speaker is revisiting the Garden of Shukkei-En in the initial aftermath of the bomb or at a later point in time when the Garden has been restored, it is evident that the speaker has been to the Garden before and “has always been afraid” to go there (Forché 70). In emphasizing their fear of visiting the Garden, Forché demonstrates the emotional connection that the speaker has with this particular location, and how revisiting this location brings with it a feeling of wariness. The destruction of the garden is evident, as seen in the figure below, and indicates why the speaker could be fearful and despairing in response to the violence done to the landscape.



Fig. 1: The Garden of Shukkei-En from: Scanlon, M. “The Garden of Shukkei-En.” *Ethics and Literature*. University of Mary Washington, 25 Sept. 2013, ethicslitf13.umwblogs.org/2013/09/25/the-garden-of-shukkei-en/.

In Forché’s poem, an event that had global ramifications is reflected through an individual speaker’s memory. Forché opens her poem with the image of walking across a river “[by] way of a vanished bridge,” which she compares to a scene of “cloud lifted snow” ascending a mountain (70). By beginning her poem with an image of destruction by a man-made object contrasted with the beauty of nature’s ability to produce snow, Forché implies that beauty can be found both in nature’s memory and in nature’s destruction, which enables elements of nature to be redeveloped or reborn. The image above depicts the clear destruction of the garden referenced by Forché, and provides visual context for the subject’s memory of how the garden was destroyed. In revisiting the garden after some time has passed, the speaker of the poem remarks on how it looks today (see fig. 2) and compares it to what it used to be. The garden is located in Hiroshima, and it can be assumed that the “vanished” bridge was destroyed by the nuclear attack. The poem highlights the impact destruction has on both the physical world and the individual’s world.



Fig. 2: The Overachieving Shukkei-en Garden and Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum. Hiroshima, Japan. Japan Cheapo, 25 Nov. 2018, japancheapo.com/entertainment/shukkei-en-garden-hiroshima-prefectural-art-museum/.

As demonstrated in her poem “XVII,” “The Garden of Shukkei-en” also contrasts descriptions of natural beauty with the destruction of nature by humanity, signifying that the choices made by humanity influence an individual’s personal and physical world. Forché further develops this idea when she writes that the “*matsu* trees brush her hair as she passes / beneath them, as do the shining strands of barbed wire” (70). The life of the *matsu* trees in the speaker’s present demonstrates the earth’s rebirth. The trees in the garden that died after the bombing of Hiroshima in Figure 1 are brought back to life in time, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

The image Forché describes of the tree branches brushing through strands of hair implies a passive form of new life flowing through strands of hair attached to a living human, whereas the barbed wire can potentially serve as a reference to the speaker’s memory, perhaps of barbed wired constraining her during World War II. Though the garden and the speaker’s memory were damaged by the events of World War II, the ability for the earth to be reborn serves as a beautiful contrast to destruction. The contrast of life and death is further demonstrated through the lines, “[where] this lake is, there was a lake, / where these black pine grow, there grew black pine” (Forché 70). The speaker draws upon memory to reflect on what was and connects that past reality to what currently exists. But the memory of the beauty found before the bomb is dimmed by what is found after, even if it is the same kind of “lake” and “black pine” that had been there before (see fig. 2). The setting is different and foreign to the speaker because time has passed and so much destruction has occurred.

The destruction of the garden further develops through very literal depictions of death, which Forché inserts near words of life, obscur-

ing the temporal border between life and death through the speaker's memory. Forché indicates that the border between life and death can be found not only in the physical remains of human life, but also through the border of what one remembers and what actually occurred. The speaker remembers the river in the garden and "the living / and the dead both crying for help" (Forché 70). The speaker suggests that the living and the dead remain connected despite the passage of time because they live on in her memory as victims of the war due to their crying for help. In doing so, Forché dissolves the sense that a firm boundary exists between life and death as separate states of being and instead implies that what happens in life will continue to follow one in death. Forché furthers this idea by writing of a "wooden teahouse / and the corpses of those who slept in it" (70). Her specific word choice using "corpses" to describe the dead instills the reality that the garden and the people around it were destroyed as a consequence of man-made destruction. Though pine trees and a lake remain, there is also the heaviness of death. Forché's blurred temporal boundaries demonstrate Bendixsen's theory that "time and temporality play important parts in border management" (538). In the speaker's memory, the dead and the living both cry out for help, and their affiliation with one another resembles how the speaker's memory has blurred the borders of life and death.

Forché also blurs and transgresses boundaries through the memory of physical and psychological destruction within the poem directly proceeding "The Garden of Shukkei-En." In "The Testimony of Light," Forché again moves through the aftermath of Hiroshima in fragmented verse, this time orienting the reader in Hiroshima's initial aftermath with the lines:

The coal bones of the house clinked in a kimono of smoke.
An attention hovered over the dream where the world had been.

*For if Hiroshima in the morning, after the bomb has fallen,
is like a dream, one must ask whose dream it is. (72)*

The physical space of the world's body has vanished, just as the bridge vanished in "The Garden of Shukkei-En" as a result of the atomic bomb. The "dream" created by individuals living in Japan is lost in the aftermath, and the world holding that dream is disoriented, leaving individuals to wonder who dreamt of this destruction of the world. Forché continues to write that the world is "without self, without cen-

ter,” and without an idea of what comes next (72). Without direction or sense of self, an individual has no movement propelling them forward. Similarly, a world without direction or center can make no progress towards a substantial future. Forché closes the poem with “[t]he worst is over. / The worst is yet to come,” signifying that what is past is not left in the past (72). Through her poems, Forché remarks that tragedy occurs after boundaries have been crossed by outside forces, highlighting the instability of borders. Her fragmented verse echoes this sentiment, implying that there is a lack of unity and boundedness where destruction is involved.

Forché transgresses memory and its ability to bind together past events as she creates distance from herself as a writer and the speaker in the poems looking back on a memory that Forché, herself, did not personally experience. In order to gain a greater understanding of the impulse behind Forché’s “poetry of witness” as defined earlier, one can look towards historical evidence of society’s reaction to the immediate aftermath of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. A newspaper article written in *The New York Times* on August 7, 1945, a day after the bomb was dropped, demonstrates the public’s initial confusion regarding the extent of the destruction in Japan. The article, written by reporter Sidney Shalett, is prefaced by the title: “Impenetrable Cloud of Dust Hides City after Single Bomb Strikes.” The author of this article seems unable to comprehend the bomb’s effect, as a “single” bomb had never before been able to enact such large-scale destruction. The initial incomprehensibility of the level of destruction caused by the bomb demonstrates the importance of taking time to reflect on events in order to make sense of them and draw new meaning from them, as Forché does in her poetry. Shalett’s article contextualizes the events that Forché refers to in her poem—events that, Forché writes in “The Testimony of Light,” caused “an attention [to hover] over the dream” (72). This article is the type of attention that Forché is referring to; the event was so catastrophically destructive that the entire world’s attention was on it precisely because the scope of its effects seemed unreal.

Shalett’s article also contextualizes how Forché places herself as a poetic witness in the article’s description of how individuals in America reacted to the event. In the article, the event of the bomb and its destruction in Hiroshima could not be accurately stated as the United States War Department claimed it was “unable to make an accurate report [because] an impenetrable cloud of dust and smoke’ masked the target area” (qtd. in Shalett 1). By defining Hiroshima as a “target area”

that was home to “an important army center,” the War Department uses rhetoric that dehumanizes the destructive event in that location (Shalett 1). However, the scale of the destruction was still unclear at that time, as Shalett refers to President Truman stating that the “explosive charge on the bomb was ‘exceedingly small,’” but then continues to write that “for various reasons, the bomb used against Japan could have been extremely large” (2). The contradiction between the statements made by the War Department, President Truman, and Shalett exemplifies the country’s inability to fully grapple with the historical ramifications of the bomb. Truman is further quoted telling the Japanese that “the end is not yet” (2), which resonates with the concluding line in Forché’s poem “The Testimony of Light” that reads “[t]he worst is over. / The worst is yet to come” (72). The connection between *The New York Times* article and Forché’s poetry serves as an example of the initial lack of knowledge regarding the destruction in Hiroshima and how the passage of time would allow for greater understanding of an event. Forché’s poetry moves her speaker across temporal borders to gain perspective on how past events have shaped the speaker’s future.

Forché looks back on destructive historical events in *The Angel of History*, using fragmented verse to describe individuals’ reactions to those events and explore how their reaction from a future standpoint continues to be fragmented. The physical world was torn into fragments due to the destructive nature of war, while Forché’s speakers exist in fragmented psychological states due to their memory of the war. Forché’s movement across and between memories raises the question of whether or not there is hope to be found within this kind of fragmentation. Many readers may find that Forché’s poems express a lack of hope regarding the state of the world. She writes in one of her final poems, “Book Codes: 1,” that “the world does not change / the visual field has not a form like this” (75). In closing her work with a hopeless view that the world is incapable of change, Forché instills within the reader the sense that the world is constantly on the brink of destruction and is merely fragmented by pauses in which there is peace. While Forché rather pessimistically envisions the world’s brokenness in her poetry, *Exit West* suggests that there is hope to be found through the rebuilding of this torn world, and in this way, readers are able to connect the two works.

Hamid’s *Exit West* tells a story through precise and intentional language, which contrasts with the fragmented thoughts composed by Forché. The use of boundaries in *Exit West* seems not to lead to a pes-

simistic view, as found in Forché's work, but instead implies an optimism for the potential of a unified world that develops together through time. Hamid's prose works towards an objective standpoint, and yet his word choice serves as a richly emotive tool for depicting the characters' story. The characters of Nadia and Saeed provide a fictitious rendition of life as a refugee, but due to the current climate and aspects within Hamid's novel that resonate with twenty-first century ideologies, it is easy for readers to connect *Exit West* with the world around us today. Making connections through literature and history aid in the contextualization and personalization of an individual's view on the world around them. Hamid's novel creates an avenue for readers to draw similarities between what their world is and what their world could be.

Exit West tells a story through the lens of fictional characters but draws upon current political relations to highlight how borders are an example of a temporal construction placed upon an 'other' by an oppressive force. Hamid introduces Nadia and Saeed, two young people who meet in class and develop a romantic relationship within the background of a country that "war would soon erode . . . as though it had accelerated time itself, a day's toll outpacing that of a decade" (11). Hamid uses war in his novel almost as a passive secondary character. It is there, and it is getting worse. Throughout the novel, Hamid places short references to the destructive nature of the war, one of the first examples being when Saeed and Nadia ride a motorcycle and "[have] to be careful when making turns not to run over an outstretched arm or leg" of people dying on the streets (26). Perhaps Hamid includes these short references towards the destructive capability of warfare to imply the desensitization humans have to war in today's world. After these short remarks on the current climate of war, the focus of the novel returns to the relationship between the characters of Saeed and Nadia and how they navigate the movement of their relationship through the worsening of the war.

The world in *Exit West* exemplifies borders in both physical and psychological arenas, though they are more explicitly defined through Hamid's use of language than Forché's. Initially, Nadia and Saeed are surrounded by physical borders that both confine them and threaten their safety. Because there are rumors that doors are beginning to transport people to new places, the physicality of doors and windows are looked at from a new perspective. Windows are regarded with fear as they are characterized as a "border through which death was possibly more likely to come" (Hamid 71). Instead of windows representing a

clear divide between structures, they are now regarded as open, vulnerable spaces. Shards of glass or stray bullets can penetrate through the opening, crossing this boundary that used to represent safety but now causes injury or death. Windows are no longer regarded as providing an unthreatening view of the outside world, but have instead become a divide that reveals the vulnerability of the characters inside to the dangers of the outside world.

In Hamid's work, boundaries also function as psychological ideas that are meant to be escaped or destroyed. Forché implies through memories that the crossing of borders implies a destructive action, creating a rather pessimistic view of borders in the aftermath of World War II; Hamid uses borders as an opening of opportunistic possibility. However, Hamid erases the physical experience of refugees crossing borders through his use of doors as that boundary which must be crossed to arrive at potential safety. In *Exit West*, doors hold the power to transport one to a new country, diminishing the use of physical borders in the landscape of the world. Characters in the novel begin to regard "each of their doors" with a "twinge of irrational possibility" that one of the doors may transform into a gateway to escape the danger in their area (Hamid 73). Nadia and Saeed physically transgress space via doors as they cross national borders and begin a new life in a hopefully safer part of the world. By removing the process and intense physical movement refugees must undertake to cross borders in reality, Hamid downplays the physical displacement of border crossings and instead focuses on what happens to an individual once one is placed in new surroundings.

Sara Ahmed's essay, "Affective Economies," uses the idea that borders are constructed through an interpretation of fear and how fear constitutes a lack of security. Relating this interpretation of borders to *Exit West*, Ahmed's essay focuses on how the physical aspect of borders are constructed due to the idea that they have already been crossed over, inferring that physical borders are a social concept and a process of colonization. Ahmed argues:

Security is not simply about securing a border that already exists, nor is fear simply a fear of what we are not . . . Borders are constructed and indeed policed in the very feeling that they have already been transgressed: the other has to get too close, in order to be recognized as an object of fear, and in order for the object to be displaced. This transgression of the border is

required in order for it to be secured as a border in the first place. (1323)

The theory that the physical nature of borders is put in place based on the belief that the border has already been crossed allows for an understanding of why Hamid decides to cut out the process of crossing through borders in his work. If Hamid agrees with Ahmed's idea that borders are already transgressed, then his decision to use doors as an avenue to instantly cross over borders supports that the physical aspect of the borders is unimportant because they have already been crossed. Similarly, Ahmed's argument clarifies why Forché chooses to not include the physical process of border crossing in her poetry. Instead, both Hamid and Forché understand that borders are a social construct used to instill a feeling of security for those who are already within the border. By eliminating the process of crossing over a physical border, Hamid and Forché allow readers to focus on how individuals relate to their surroundings after a border has already been crossed.

Hamid's lack of focus on the journey of relocating to a new place greatly emphasizes how Nadia's and Saeed's individual identities change in their new physical surroundings, thus impacting their relationship. Hamid's interest in what happens to an individual after they have relocated echoes sentiments made by cultural theorist Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." Hall examines how the identities of individuals are created as "alternatives to colonial imposition," which complicates the concreteness of labeling an individual who crosses over a physical border (1191). Hall writes:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place time, history, and culture. Cultural identities came from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (1193)

Hall argues that identity is constantly changing and examines what happens once one has crossed into an unknown territory as an 'other' and how that new identity is both separate from and familiar to the identity one held before crossing the border. One's identity has the ability to change, and Hall argues that cultural identity constantly undergoes transformation. He states that "identities are the names we give to the

different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 1993). Only by positioning oneself in the past can one understand the implications of the present. When looking at Hamid’s approach to eliminating the extensive journey of crossing a border as a refugee in light of Hall’s argument that identity transcends movement, it becomes clear that Hamid is placing greater importance on the transformational effects that crossing has on one’s identity than one’s journey to get there.

Echoing Hall’s argument that identity develops over time, Hamid’s use of doors serves to reconfigure the idea that physical borders between nations represent a divide between national identities. Hall poses the question: “if identity does not proceed, in a straight, unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation?” (1194). If identity does not proceed in a “straight, unbroken line,” then this question of whether or not identity arises from an origin—more specifically, an origin within the construction of a physical border—suggests that borders also do not proceed in an unbroken line, implying borders are an example of a human-made concept. The characters in *Exit West* are in a world where they are “remodeling the Earth itself” (Hamid 178). Doors allow the physical borders between nations of the world to become unimportant in Hamid’s world, emphasizing the fact that such borders can be considered arbitrary. Hamid’s use of borders, like Forché, diminishes their sustainability and implies that borders are meant to be changed.

Hamid and Forché demonstrate in their work how literature can be used as an avenue towards understanding the contextual and personal effect that historical events have had on both an individual and the world. The importance of the idea that literature and history can be used together to develop a deeper understanding of our world is explored in “Cultivating Humanity: The Narrative Imagination” by Martha Nussbaum. In this essay, Nussbaum highlights the role that literature and history play in developing our civic consciousness. Nussbaum suggests that literature can provide a perception of history through an individual’s context, thereby creating a personal connection to the past. Nussbaum writes that learning through literature allows humans to use “these stories [to] interact with their own attempts to explain the world and their own actions in it” (385). Hamid and Forché’s works also test the boundaries of place and time as they seek to “explain the world” and our “actions in it.” Forché uses *The Angel of History* to remark how, even after fifty years have passed, the destruction of World War II con-

tinues to influence society today through the presence of the haunting violence that exists just out of sight, across the temporal boundary that divides the past and the present. Hamid's *Exit West* likewise engages with contemporary aspects of the world, attempting to outline a world in which there can be hope after destruction. Without these stories, it would be hard to imagine the personal lives of others as they were experienced during these moments of historical upheaval. Literature is what allows us to orient ourselves within the universe; it generates empathy through emotive language. Literature, according to Nussbaum, aids in the fostering of "an exercise of the compassionate imagination that crosses social boundaries, or tries to" (387). Not only do Forché and Hamid's works demonstrate movement across physical and temporal borders, but they also test the boundaries between individuals by creating empathy for individual characters within their literary works.

Forché's poems in *The Angel of History*, particularly "XVII," "The Garden of Shukkei-En," and "The Testimony of Light," support Nussbaum's theory that literature can contextualize historical events because the speakers of the poems all generate emotional responses. These poems outline, from the individual speakers' perspectives, what life has done to them. Through the speakers' memories of the events, the reader is invited to evaluate the progress, or the lack thereof, through time. *The Angel of History* shows "what life has done to" these individuals because Forché's style of poetic witness is exactly that: witnessing an experience, thinking about that experience, and composing poetic verse that connects the reaction and reflection of being part of that experience (Nussbaum 387).

But reflection on an individual's experience does not need to be focused only on past events which are far removed, as Hamid demonstrates in *Exit West*. Hamid's novel affirms literature's ability to outline the implications of what one has viewed within their own history and create a narrative that suggests movement on where to go from those implications. Hamid uses his novel to comment on how "everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives . . . We are all migrants through time" (209). Hamid breaks down a different type of boundary: the boundary between those who are identified as migrants in political discourse and everyone else. The comment that everyone migrates through time is a comment that can only be found in literature, thus Nussbaum's theory that narration through literature is what enables humans to define happenings of the world around them.

At the end of *Exit West*, after the destructive effects of the war

have diminished “half a century later” (229), the characters of Nadia and Saeed, no longer in a romantic relationship, meet at a café. During their meeting, the characters watch young people “who [have] no idea how bad things once were, except what they studied in history” pass by (230). By remarking “how bad things once were,” Hamid is subtly noting that things have gotten better, implying that there is hope in the world for things to change. Hamid sets the novel in a time period similar to our current day regarding the chaos of the refugee and immigration crisis, and by closing his novel with this suggestion that there is hope for peace to return, Hamid suggests that there is hope for our own world, too.

The world of *Exit West* is a fictional, though not impossible to imagine, world threatened by the destruction of war and inhabited by characters who are inevitably displaced as they cross borders. Forché uses her poetry to convey a story of historical deconstruction through the development of an individual’s memory. When compared, these two works demonstrate how time and memory serve to close the gap between the past and the present. These works of literature emphasize the importance of memory to literary craft and how memory can impact the future by crossing temporal boundaries. Because these two works are so different in style and time yet hold the same thematic content regarding the impact of destruction, when they are looked at in conversation with each other they highlight the permeability to physical and psychological borders in our world today. Borders today are generally seen as stable boundaries that mark where one country ends and another begins—as lines that must be defended and protected. But through the works of Forché and Hamid, those lines and the weight of their importance blurs with time. *The Angel of History* and *Exit West* highlight a present world that holds borders too highly in its importance, and in placing these two works in conversation with one another, readers can understand that borders are meant to be crossed.

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