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God-Shaped Hole: Antihumanism in the Absent “I Am” of Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

Mark Hendrix

In *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlowe constructs a world populated (and driven) by supernatural action and influence: Faustus holds his titular doctorate specifically in the realm of divinity amidst “[h]aving commenc’d ... the end of every art” (1.1.3-4); he summons and communicates directly with demonic spirits through “incantations” and “uttermost magic” (1.3.5, 15); he negotiates a pact to procure occult powers in exchange for his soul. Despite Marlowe’s clear emphasis on direct interactions between spiritual forces and humanity, however, any portrayal of a presence or personification of the Christian God remains notably absent from the play. Marlowe infuses a religious foundation into the workings of *Faustus*, yet simultaneously evacuates the arguably single most dominant figure within Christianity from it, begging close examination of the logic or motivation driving such a conspicuous exclusion.

By removing God from a work centered largely on consequences related to and enforced by Him, Marlowe constructs an entirely alternative set of interpretations of God’s role in the lives of humans. In *Faustus*, as a non-entity, God implicitly relegates the responsibility of governing Faustus’s mortal sin to Mephistophilis and Satan. Marlowe therein diverges from not only scriptural and theological understandings of the dynamic of God the Father’s authority within the Trinity but literary convention as well: this absent God breaks away from an accepted deistic worldview and foundational religious narrative originating in oral and pre-Christian mythological traditions as a stern regal judge—an understanding of God carried on as recently to Marlowe as Dante’s *Paradiso* in *The Divine Comedy*—transforming instead into a type of timid and passive-aggressive empyrean delegator of His verdicts from afar.

Alternatively, for Marlowe to characterize God within the play as a cosmic interventionist would run contrary to Christian belief. As a by-product of deleting the deity from his work, Marlowe additionally excuses himself from the obligation of unintentionally depicting an archetypal version of God that might appear offensive to especially devout audience members. During Marlowe's time, discussion on acceptable depictions of God and other sacred figures within Christianity typically favored outright censorship. In fact, the Star Chamber court in England condemned representations of the Trinity in church artwork and windows; some members of the council considered any and all representations illegal (Winston 229). By purposefully avoiding assumptions of God's responses to actions (and putting sacrilegious words in the mouth of the "I Am"), Marlowe deftly sidesteps prospective accusations of blasphemy.

Conventional literary portrayals of God appear multifaceted and extremely complex: Dante devotes an immense amount of *Paradiso* describing God's "power," "glory," "magnitude," and "orderly" nature in Canto I, cataloguing His efforts to establish direct relationship with humans throughout Canto II, and identifying Him as a "Sovereign Sire" with a "kingly prudence" in Canto X. By comparison, Marlowe makes no effort to illustrate God in any type of detail whatsoever. Rather than mere oversight or negligence in characterization, Marlowe creates this gap in description intentionally: first, to dialogue with established theological and literary traditions; second, to assert a personal theodicy of the nature of evil and what he views as a more realistic interaction between humans and God.

An investigation of Marlowe's personal religious attitude for his reasons about *Faustus's* exclusion of God reveals a complicated network of disinformation and misleading accusations. Marlowe scholar Robert Ornstein agrees, claiming that the playwright's "contemporaries exaggerated as well as distorted his heterodoxy" (1379). Although Marlowe's religious orthodoxy clearly diverges from accepted church doctrine within the personification of his characters in *Faustus*, less evidence links the author himself with such beliefs. At the time, "[v]ehement accusations of atheism were notoriously casual and inaccurate . . . and Marlowe was the kind of man who incited other men's malice and enmity" (1379). However,

“while the evidence of [Marlowe’s] ‘atheism’ is circumstantial (and the circumstances themselves are doubtful),” Ornstein says, “one is nevertheless struck by the ... consistency of the accusations made against Marlowe” (1379). If such accusations did in fact echo his personal beliefs (or lack thereof), Marlowe’s eradication of God from his work could therefore signify an emboldened, cheeky refusal to contend with the notion of a Supreme Being at all—a notion drastically at odds with his contemporary writers and powerful church leaders. Samuel Tannenbaum’s book *The Assassination of Christopher Marlowe* indicates that the combination of his bombastic personality and fringe beliefs became problematic, unwieldy, and threatening for the powerful. These men (including Sir Walter Raleigh) subsequently arranged to dispatch the playwright in short order, Tannenbaum claims, with a complex conspiracy and series of misleading cover-ups. Nonetheless, any argument over Marlowe’s spiritual affiliations remains tenuous and, as Ornstein says, “circumstantial” at best (1379).

By providing negative space—a gap for the presence of God—Marlowe places a troubling culpability on his audience to account for the vacancy: if God does not intervene, He either actively allows the devil’s doings to occur (thus implicitly condoning them), or He cannot prevent them from happening in the first place. In this way, Marlowe’s evacuation functions instead as a line of interrogation about the goodness of God and His role in the operation of evil. The Greek philosopher Epicurus’s paradox explores the same problematic quandary: “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?” (quoted in Hospers 461). In response to Epicurus’s riddle, eighteenth century philosopher David Hume redirects the focus of the question altogether, explaining that humankind’s inability to reconcile the differences between “the benevolence and mercy of men” and God’s apparent failure to display the same types of benevolence and mercy simply means that man cannot comprehend the morality or reasoning of an omniscient being (Hume 108).

While Hume interprets a lack of competence in human ability to conceptualize God’s motives (and thereby distributes necessity and import for faith and trust in God that His decisions

ultimately operate in the interest of goodness), William L. Rowe asserts instead that if He does exist at all, God openly displays disinterest in goodness, rather than the problem arising from a human misinterpretation of the nature of what acts qualify as goodness. As evidence, Rowe cites examples of suffering which a truly all-powerful authority could prevent if He so desired, “instances ... which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse” (336). Rowe pushes further, claiming that “[a]n omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse” (336). Since “intense suffering” and evil exist outside of the context of consequential loss of greater good as well outside of the prevention of other, more insidious evil, Rowe insists therefore “[t]here does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being” (336). In this way, Rowe’s version of God appears not unlike protagonist Bruce Nolan’s depiction in the 2003 film *Bruce Almighty*: “God’s just a mean kid sitting on an anthill with a magnifying glass, and I’m the ant. He could fix my life in five minutes if He wanted to, but He’d rather burn off my feelers and watch me squirm.” While Rowe does not explicitly declare God fictional or non-existent, his argument sharply echoes Epicurus’s inquiry as to why, if God does exist, humanity would display interest in the fear or respect of such a clearly malevolent entity.

Indeed, Marlowe indicts such questions indirectly within the play’s prologue, when the effectively anonymous Chorus describes the heavens as having “conspir’d [Faustus’s] overthrow” (Prologue, 22). If, according to Christian doctrine, God created everything and holds omniscient power over the heavens and earth, He also holds a direct responsibility regarding the existence of evil; by indicating that the “melting heavens” conspired to overthrow Faustus as retaliation for overstepping human bounds “above his reach” (Prologue, 21-22), Marlowe gestures toward the blurring of lines separating a righteous wrath from vindictive evil, indicating that omniscience and omnipotence must inherently bring together the differences between good and evil to a point in which the two function as indistinguishable from one another.

Inversely, God's absence demonstrates an apathetic assessment of the individual soul's valuation altogether: by failing to engage in a contest over Faustus's soul, God passively displays a disturbing lack of interest. In turn, His failure in involvement conveys a striking sense of spiritual abandonment. When Faustus questions Mephistophilis over what Lucifer stands to gain by obtaining his soul, Mephistophilis simply responds that it will "[e]nlarge his kingdom" (2.1.40). Faustus then presses Mephistophilis further for "the reason" that Lucifer tempts men, to which the spirit responds, "*Solamen misieris socios habuisse doloris,*" or "it is a comfort to the wretched to have had companions in misfortune" (2.1.41-42), portraying a scene—albeit a hellish one—of grotesque camaraderie, but one containing an unmistakable sense of inclusion nonetheless. By comparison, while Mephistophilis expresses clear interest and urgency in obtaining any available soul by springing forth at Faustus's rather clumsy combination of incantations, God apparently neither distributes interest nor ranks any measure of significance to Faustus whatsoever. In this way, His indifference even extends to suggest an altogether different interpretation of the "tragedy" at work within the play—that the Creator of Man in fact possesses no interest, at a personal level, in Man's plight.

A different type of examination of Marlowe's omission gestures toward a preventative measure overtly designed to streamline distractions and redirect audience concerns solely on the cause-and-effect equation depicted by Faustus's actions. Before Faustus completes the act of exchanging his soul for preternatural potency, the Good Angel reminds him of the certainty of undeniable consequences, warning that such actions stand to incite and "heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head" (1.1.73). Ignoring this advice, Faustus clearly exhibits an ability to make his decisions without divine influence or interference. However, Marlowe reminds viewers of the precarious mutability of humans' mortal souls by guiding his audience's focus toward the ramifications rendered by carelessly exercising free will. Indeed, this interpretation echoes the biblical notion of original sin—that Adam and Eve chose, employing their free will, to sin against God. Rather than undertaking an innovative restructuring of God as a type of deified enforcer of justice or a meddling, overly-involved protector of

humanity, Marlowe thus places the responsibility upon Faustus alone for his decisions.

This viewpoint aligns closely with Robert Ornstein's interpretation of Faustus's "spiritual anguish" in the concluding scenes of the play, a state "which seems wholly personal, and emotional, and explicable by Christian doctrine" (1380). In turn, Faustus's subsequent refusal to repent therefore seems baffling and only serves to laud the truly mythic extent of the doctor's pridefulness, as he proclaims "the uniqueness of his fate as one hounded by an unrelenting God for having committed the unpardonable sin of daring" (1380). Readers and scholars of Marlowe's play would therefore "insist that Faustus is mistaken" viewing him "as the victim of his own illusions" (1380). Ornstein explains that "[w]hat Faustus has dared or done now seems irrelevant ... according to doctrine, he need only repent and have faith to be saved" (1380). In other words, Faustus seems to suffer merely from his pride alone—that despite Mephistophilis and Satan identifying his deed as an unpardonable sin, he could conceivably still repent and receive God's forgiveness and mercy.

But to compare Faustus's inability or refusal to repent against Christian doctrine exposes a fallacious misunderstanding of Marlowe's motivations to depict Faustus's struggle in such a way—despite Renaissance humanistic thought's "concern with the purely natural and human, Marlowe was fascinated by the superhuman" (1381), a response particularly much "more antihumanistic than humanistic" and "more medieval than modern" (1381). Marlowe's deep analysis and examinations therefore revealed to him a vast separation between a "supreme authority" with "limitless power" and the weak "measure of human potentialities and limitations" (1381). Faustus's blasphemy "is not a denial of God but a challenge to his supremacy. [He does] not deify mankind; [he] would be [a] god" (1381). Rather than disbelieving in God, Marlowe seeks through Faustus's arrogance to challenge dominance within the omnipotence of God.

Marlowe thus constructs within *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* a complex series of moral, ethical, and spiritual considerations in the relationship between God and Man. Merely through clever ambiguity and erasure alone, the author incites an intertextual systematic reexamination of biblical principles and

exposing historic polemical practices of concurrent theological thought, calling into question and revolutionizing a fundamental understanding of God and His role and influence (and interest) in human existence while simultaneously investigating humanity's capability to interrogate and supersede supremacy itself.

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“God’s Unwanted Children”: Transgressing Gender Binaries in David Fincher’s *Fight Club*

Taylor Boltz

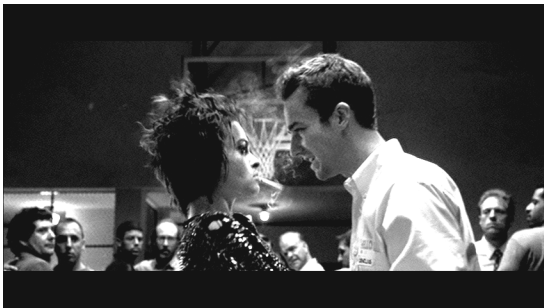
Tyler Durden, dressed in floral print, a sort of Eden, leans over the table in the kitchen, demonstrating the soap making method to Jack. Wearing black leather gloves, he grabs Jack’s hand and kisses it, then rubs lye, causing a reaction between the saliva and the lye. The lips rise against the skin, puckering and reddening with each passing second. Jack pulls down and away, but Tyler’s hold on his hand keeps him submissive and begging. Standing over, Tyler asserts his overpowering dominance, his hyper-masculine identity, acting almost as God as he states “we are God’s unwanted children.” By the time Tyler pours vinegar over the burn, the puckering lips morphed into the shape of female genitalia, branding Jack with the sutured, cauterized, sealed womb— a forever closed Eden to which neither of them will return. Why? Jack meets Marla, a phallic woman who demonstrates more masculinity than Jack, creating the necessity for a supplementary masculinity—Tyler. Tyler, in this sense, demonstrates commodified masculinity, something that defaults from the norm because in relation to Jack, they’ve transgressed into a homoerotic state. Jack and Tyler, fallen from God’s graces, will never re-enter into the perfect, therefore making them unwanted. However, since Marla created this necessity within Jack, she acts as a mother figure, while Tyler takes the role of castrating father, leading the film into a psychoanalytic sphere of influence.

The Oedipus Complex, according to Freud, derives from the mythical character Oedipus and the prophecy that he would marry his mother and kill his father (“Oedipus”). The prophecy came true, but Freud considered this character to be the “cornerstone...of human relationships” and created his theory that children desire the parent of the opposite sex in the phallic stage of development (“Oedipus Complex”). Freud determined that the other parent was, therefore, a symbol of rivalry and hostility to the child’s relationship with the opposite parent. However, since

sexual relationships between child and parent are taboo, according to social constructs, Freud deduced that this desire had to be repressed in order to function in normal society.

Freud's Oedipus Complex have received numerous alterations over the years. Psychoanalytic theorists such as Jung, Lacan, and Rank have altered Freud to fit aspects of their own theories, whether it be the "Electra Complex" for Jung, "Pre-Oedipal" for Rank, or "symbolic order" for Lacan. These theorists and their thoughts have been applied to *Fight Club* by numerous critics, understanding that the film embodies a larger reading of the Oedipal relationship between a mother, father, and child. However, those aspects and critics, which represent nuanced ideas towards the film, overlook the feminist psychoanalytic reading embedded within *Fight Club*. Janine Chasseguet Smirgel creates a version of the Oedipus Complex that conflicts with Freud's and alters almost the entirety of the Freudian argument since she views the Oedipus Complex through a feminist lens and focuses on the mother, instead of the child.

Women, throughout history, have been socially portrayed in media as family oriented, nurturing caretakers who remain at home. Television shows such as *The Brady Bunch*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *Modern Family* and even *The Neighbors*, which depicts aliens coming to Earth as humans, reflect these social constructs in their maternal characters. The movie *Fight Club*, however, utilizes Marla Singer, the sole female character, as a contradiction to the social construct. Marla Singer bounces between two gender roles of a woman: masculine and feminine. Using a feminist-based psychoanalytic reading of gender roles, the reader deconstructs the idea of masculinity in regards to Marla Singer. Masculinity, and femininity,



throughout the movie *Fight Club*, particularly evident through the use of phallic images, becomes a commodified construct: unstable, transferrable, and powerless. The Oedipus complex, as described by Janine Chasseguet Smirgel, relates the phallus as the object that literally inserts itself in the mother/son relationship, but does not hold the power (Benjamin 94). The person contains the power, the liberating force to create a sense of domination and difference (Benjamin 95). Freud labeled the phallus as a sameness between the father and the son, something that forges the bond between the two; Chasseguet Smirgel flips the phallus as a difference between the father and the son, something that incites fear and power in the child (Benjamin 150). Marla Singer represents this father figure. She consistently exhibits nature evident in a masculine character rather than a feminine one. In the beginning of the movie, she invades Jack's space by inserting herself in the yonic circle of the therapy session. Her flaunting of the phallic cigarette in a zone where everyone denies their phallus (Jack) or does not have a phallus (the testicular cancer patients) underscores the irony that the phallus represents a commodified masculinity. The purchase of a cigarette transfers the allegedly innate sense of "masculinity" to her character outward, threatening the masculinity of the actual male characters, similar to the father in the Oedipus triangle.

Marla also partakes in castration, which Freud associates with the father figure of the Oedipus triangle, since the father rivals the child for the mother's affection (Mullahy 25). The idea of castration represents the power of the father over the child, and Marla exhibits the only castrating action when she takes off the dildo and keeps it on the dresser of her room. The castration represents a loss of the one piece that makes a person masculine; to Freud, this body part maintains primary importance, and while Marla maintains that it is "of no threat" to any male character, it further commodifies the male phallus, because after being transferred to the female, the penis is void of power (Mullahy 21). The stability of masculinity does not exist in the realm of gender because of this transference, creating the idea that gender is a social construct.

Simone de Beauvoir once said that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one," meaning that through the gender roles society constructs for and against women, a woman, much like a

man, shifts into what society deems “womanly” (Joseph). Marla Singer maintains control of the phallus, thus becoming more than what social constructs deem “womanly.” When she stands behind Jack and places her hand gently over his penis, her cigarette dangles just off of where his penis hangs under his pants. This image suggests to the reader that Marla’s cigarette extends his masculinity; she threatens Jack’s masculinity, but nurtures and disciplines it through control, which Freud attributes to the father.



However, Freud writes that women can also become masculine beings, phallic mothers. Chasseguet-Smirgel mentions the idea of the phallic mother, or the mother that complicates the difference between the genders. The idea of this phallic mother favors “the idea of being penetrated by a penis is less invasive than that of a deep and greedy womb,” since the penis contains a physical sameness between the father and the son (Benjamin 166). However, this idea now claims the lack of a woman, because the phallic mother presents the idea that “woman is merely that which is not a man” (Benjamin 166). Marla embodies the phallic mother in the fact that she is not physically a father figure, like Tyler; but, she contains a sense of power that he does not. Her power solidifies the idea that gender is constructed, not inborn. Myra Jehlen describes gender as “a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real” since it engrains into the natural way of life (273). Marla wears a faded pink bridesmaid dress that she bought for a dollar from a thrift shop, thus commodifying the idea of femininity through its inexpensiveness.

When Jack insults her dress in the scene entitled “Sport Fuck-ing,” Marla tells him that he “can wear it sometime,” insinuating that he is just as feminine as she, ignoring the fact that she wears

the dress. This insinuation precedes her extension of his phallus with the cigarette, as explained before, and illuminates Marla's femininity as an act. Her body language is that of a phallic woman: she acts delicate in the dress, but stands dominantly behind Jack, gently hovering over his masculinity. The phallic mother reflects the idea that "difference means presence or absence" of a phallus and while Marla recognizes her difference from Jack in regards to a physical phallus, she replaces the body part with representations that generate the same effect (Benjamin 166). Therefore, Marla nurtures Jack's masculinity through her domination, similar to the phallic mother.

However, the reader sees, through the character of Tyler Durden and his involvement with castration, the flip side to the gender construct. Beverly McPhail, in her article about re-gendering, cites another set of theorists, Michaels Kimmel and Messner who state that men "are not born, they are made," reaffirming that there is a sense that masculinity, much like femininity is about looks (40). "Hegemonic Masculinity," which theorist James Messerschmidt mentions and cites from an article by Raewyn Connell, as the culturally idealized form of masculinity that men strive for; it is the "culturally honored, glorified, and extolled" masculinity (10). Messerschmidt also mentions two different types of masculinity: subordinated masculinity and oppositional masculinity, which are based off of race and class or resisting and challenging masculinity, respectively (Messerschmidt 10). Hegemonic masculinity creates the necessity for what Messerschmidt calls "masculine resources" and "masculine challenges." Masculine resources are those actions that are deemed "manly" by masculine society (Messerschmidt 12). The basic idea of "Fight Club" is a masculine resource: a place where men can go to prove their "manliness" when their work or day to day life does not allow it. Messerschmidt discusses masculine challenges, however, as those times when a man's masculinity is degraded (13). The applicants of Project Mayhem, middle aged white men who follow Tyler and Jack around and listen to their every command as though they are brainwashed, are required to stand outside the house on Paper Street, listening to their leaders berate them for three days, without food, water, or sleep. This, being a form of masculine challenges, also engenders a sense of masculinity and submissiveness within the men, because they learn

the behaviors of a “manly” man, while creating discipline. When Jack creates the “Tyler Durden” alter ego and the other men of Project Mayhem follow the hyper-masculine alter, they are assenting to the hegemonic belief of masculinity, and accepting the social construct laid out in front of them by their Oedipal Father.

Through his moonlighting as a projectionist and as the leader of Project Mayhem, Tyler partakes in the act of castration, much like the Oedipal father. His castration is mental: through fear or anxiety. The first instance of fear extends off the mental and verbal beating of the applicants for Project Mayhem. The reader sees Tyler create a chemical burn on Jack’s hand, in the shape of a kiss, but also a woman’s vagina. This representation feminizes Jack but also Tyler, because in order to create the shape, Tyler



had to demonstrate love for the same sex. Jack, of course, now carries this female vagina on his hand as a mark of femininity and submissiveness to the masculine hierarchy that Tyler created, castrating Jack’s independence and individual

masculinity since he never recognizes his penis through the constant attendance of the testicular cancer groups.

Freud discussed projection as the unconscious coming out into the conscious, which occurred often in dreams, or something hidden within (McLeod). Theorist Ken Plummer discusses in his article about male sexualities, that the male sexuality contains “weakness and vulnerability” especially when erect (179). He argues that the penis’ “squashy, delicate” nature maintains the vulnerability because of its fragility, while the need to keep it erect at the right moments and hide the erection at the wrong moments maintain the weakness and insecurity because of its betrayal to the man’s desires (Plummer 179). The fact that Tyler projects porn into children’s movies during night time, when people are hidden in darkness, not only commodifies the male phallus and making it accessible to all humans, but also solidifies his role as the Oedipal Father, who feeds off of the vulnerability and weakness of the child. The Oedipal Father creates anxiety within the child through the lingering images and his destruc-

tion of weakness. He maintains the ideas of the masculine male through the “characteristics of authority, control, independence... individualism, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence,” however, at the same time, the characteristics of a masculine male create vulnerability, just like the phallus does (Messerschmidt 10).

In their book, *Raising Cain*, Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson discuss the violence in men. They acknowledge three reasons why men respond aggressively to life: one, “the motivation for aggression is...defensive rather than offensive or predatory;” two, “boys are primed to see the world as...threatening...and to respond...with aggression;” three, “boys often don’t know or won’t admit what it is that makes them angry” (Kindlon 223–224). They go further to say that class influences violence in men more often than not, since men feel “extremely vulnerable in their efforts to live up to [being masculine] and there is much emotional inner territory that they need to protect” (Kindlon 224). In *Fight Club*, the men use the club as a place to release the built up tension from life and work, becoming violent towards each other. The fighting, since most of the men maintain jobs serving people of a higher class than themselves, turns into a fight for social power—an expression of their rejection. Fighting validates their manliness and acts as a coping strategy for “the feeling of inferiority or being devoid of social status” (Kindlon 225). Men contain great pride in regards to respect, Tyler Durden commands great respect from his Fight Club/Project Mayhem peers, but as Jack, he discovers that “emotional courage...and empathy are the sources of real strength in life,” and while that may seem “feminine” or “soft,” the ability to cry into Bob’s bosom at the testicular cancer group allows Jack to sleep at night (Kindlon 249). Crying is Jack’s form of emotional courage over Tyler and the socially constructed sense of masculinity.

Messerschmidt mentions that violent men may also partake in actions that could be considered feminine (12). Tyler Durden acts and dresses femininely at points: he wears a pink robe and slippers after having sex with Marla, domineers his Project Mayhem to start gardening, and begins making soap on the day to day basis. These instances involve cooking, cleaning and attire that associates more with the feminine sphere. Project Mayhem attempts to break down the patriarchal bonds that society uses



to constrict actions of those within it. The attempt to reject a patriarchal hold is similar to that of a “transsexual ‘renouncing’ his masculinity” because both attempt to destroy the patriarchal society’s rule as to what masculinity is, however, both create a new bond: Project Mayhem replaces the patriarchal bond of society with the

patriarchal bond of Tyler Durden, while the transsexual replaces the men and masculinity patriarchal bond with a patriarchal bond upon his new femininity (Ekins 386). Tyler attempts to discuss family life with Jack while in the bathtub, a mirroring of the modern day “girl time.” Jack partakes in nesting while perched on the toilet, releasing what modern women call a “food baby,” searching through Ikea catalogues for the perfect couch. These contradictions in gender prove masculinity’s social construction because not one person can fit within one certain boundary.

The gender construct for women centers on the domestic and nurturing characteristics allegedly inherent in females. Marla Singer contradicts the gender construct by tainting her femininity with masculine power: she inserts herself in the yonic and comforting areas of Jack’s life, she commodifies the idea of masculinity and femininity through the purchase of cigarettes/dildos and through the purchase of a bridesmaid dress for a dollar, respectively, and finally she nurtures Jack’s masculinity through dominating him. The gender construct for men relies on an “inherent” violent nature that centers on power and control. Tyler Durden, and Jack, contradict gender constructs through the insinuation of violence and the brief moments of femininity: Tyler’s pink bathrobe and brief emotional moments in the bathroom, Jack’s moments of nesting and crying. By disrupting the binaries of gender and migrating into a transgendering of the typical belief of the “mommy” and “daddy,” these characters take on idea of “God’s unwanted children” because they cannot be defined and have structurally deviated from the heterosexual norm. Only when Jack recognizes the illusory masculinity em-

bodied within Tyler can he reintegrate into the norm; the yonic stamp, however, always reminds Jack that Tyler demonstrates the reason of Jack's masculinity—without him, Jack exudes only femininity. Marla, by fluidly migrating between masculine and feminine extremes, absorbs the phallic and the feminine mother, creating within herself a new identity that also transgresses the heterosexual norms. Throughout the movie *Fight Club*, phallic images offer the reader opportunities to partake in a psychoanalytic deconstruction of what it means to be masculine and feminine in a society where the two gender constructs become commodified and powerless.

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If the Shoe Fits: The Pedagogy of Cinderella's Slipper

Taylor McAnally

Everyone knows the story of Cinderella's magic slipper. Walt Disney made sure of that. Almost every culture has their own version or retelling of the humble girl who wins her prince with a magical high heel. For decades, little girls have dreamt of becoming beautiful princesses who live "happily ever after" against all odds. The fairytale genre possesses a magic that transcends culture, distance, and time. In "The Family of Little Feet," a vignette from Sandra Cisneros's novella *The House on Mango Street*, Cinderella's story appears again, this time on a poverty-stricken Hispanic street in Chicago with three young Chicana girls. Surrounded by language steeped in pedagogy and learning, Esperanza, Lucy, and Rachel read the construct of beauty through masculine eyes, a reading they have been taught by the patriarchy and reinforced through fairytales and pop culture. Cisneros structures "The Family of Little Feet" and "Chanclas" to reveal an ongoing dialogue between a feminist reading of the girls' mindset and the potent symbol of the female body and sexuality characterized by the foot/shoe motif, a dialogue connected by the interweaving of the patriarchal construct of the fairytale and psychoanalysis. Cisneros utilizes the chapters to serve as her own rewriting of the Cinderella fairytale, telling a story in which the girls' willingness to force themselves into a socially-constructed beauty mold, represented by the shoes, ultimately perpetuates a confining and mentally damaging gender role.

For centuries, and in many oral and literary forms, the fairytale genre has served as a pedagogical tool to entertain and educate children and adults, reinforcing common assumptions about gender roles. In "Breaking the Disney Spell," Jack Zipes, a notable fairytale scholar and author, asserts that "the genre of the literary fairytale was institutionalized" to teach "proper behavior," "mapped out as narrative strategies for literary socialization" (334). According to Zipes, fairytale authors had an agenda that surpassed mere entertainment for children. He argues that

“the classical fairytale for children and adults reinforced the patriarchal symbolic order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender” (338), an order that regulates the limited, domestic space of women. The archetypal characters and plots in the fairytales direct readers to fulfill their gender roles by maintaining their socially-constructed space, and readers willingly oblige because they internalize these literary and gender conventions. According to Bruno Bettelheim, the great child psychologist, most “children’s literature” used in schools “attempts to entertain or inform, or both” (4), and he goes on to explain how those texts are “shallow” and lacking “significance” because they fail to provide the child reader with a “meaning” for his or her life (4). Bettelheim argues that the “folk fairytale” offers the “child and adult alike” a literary avenue for their pursuit of meaning (5), which can be better understood through psychoanalysis:

Applying the psychoanalytic model of the human personality, fairy tales carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious mind, on whatever level each is functioning at the time. By dealing with universal human problems, particularly those which preoccupy the child’s mind, these stories speak to his budding ego and encourage its development, while at the same time relieving preconscious and unconscious pressures. (Bettelheim 6)

While it is definitely true that fictional tales provide a mental and emotional outlet for individuals of all ages to escape the concerns of their reality (Bettelheim 8), it is gravely problematic to suggest that the traditional fairy tale genre offers only positive and healthy sources for meaning. Most fairy tales present the meaning of life from a blatantly patriarchal standpoint, encouraging passiveness in women, physical mutilation, and poor family dynamics, to name a few. The classic fairytales have been popularized by European men, such as Charles Perrault (France), the Grimm brothers (Germany), and Walt Disney (United States), though nearly all of the fairytales have their own versions in China, the Himalayas, Indonesia, Armenia, Egypt, and Japan. Ultimately, the fairytales utilized today are retellings of the European versions, thanks to

Walt Disney's notorious influence on the fairy tale by bringing the stories from the page to the screen, utilizing the communal outlet of today's era. For years Disney has taken the role upon himself to teach gender roles and serve as the leading voice for all of the fairytales. Like Oz behind the curtain, Disney "robs the literary tale of its voice" (Zipes 344), as well as the voice of women, when he, as a representative of the patriarchal construct as a whole, pushes his own agenda in changing the fairytales to further reinforce traditional gender roles. According to feminist author Judith Fetterley in the introduction to her book *The Resisting Reader*, a male representation of women, and the reading of women through a "male mind" (xxii), has harmful, long-term effects for a woman's "self-image" (xxi). While Disney definitely contributes to these debilitating effects, he is not the sole person to blame; damaging effects on the female self-image have long been circulated through fairy tales, despite Bettelheim's opinion. And although fairy tales have the potential to psychologically harm readers, these tales still remain extremely popular today.

Although the stock story and oral telling of "Cinderella" has existed for centuries with no definitive date of origin, the majority of Americans, in particular, do not know the historical and cultural significance of the tale that is available. Bettelheim labels "Cinderella" as the "best-known fairy tale, and probably also the best-liked" (236), yet most people's knowledge probably stops at Disney's animated version of the tall, thin, blonde whose tiny foot magically fits the Prince's glass slipper. In fact, the original Cinderella tale is not European at all. "First written down in China during the ninth century" (Bettelheim 236), the story of Yeh-hsien (the Chinese name for Cinderella) was narrated by Li Shih-yuan and recorded by Tuan (also known as Duan) Ch'eng-shih in 850 A.D. before Arthur Waley, an Englishman, translated the version (1947) that would eventually lead to the many European appropriations that exist today, as noted by Maria Tatar, editor of *The Classic Fairy Tales* anthology (fn 107). It should come as no surprise that a tale, regardless of the version, focused entirely on the fitting of a shoe, originates in China, the notorious country of foot-binding. The Chinese "connect sexual attractiveness and beauty in general with extreme smallness of the foot ... in accordance with their practice of binding women's feet"

(Bettelheim 236). While the precise origins and reasons behind foot-binding remain unclear, the custom appeared regularly during the “Southern Tang Dynasty in Nanjing, which celebrated the fame of its dancing girls, renowned for their tiny feet and beautiful bow shoes,” as noted in a website entitled Chinese Traditions and Cultures. The website explains how the elite began the painful fashion because women of nobility and gentility did not need to work (“Chinese”). Eventually, however, almost all of China’s women bound their feet, some of which could be found in China during this century (“Chinese”). Poor women sought happily ever afters by hoping to attract men of the elite classes, who they believed to be attracted to women who appeared economically and socially valuable, as symbolized by their bound feet (“Chinese”). It is estimated that nearly two billion women bound their feet between the tenth century and 1949 when Communists outlawed the custom, though some women continued to do so (“Chinese”). Although foot-binding existed for many centuries and was voluntarily performed by billions of women, the practice of foot-binding itself equates to physical torture: the arch of the foot and the toes have to be broken until the desired size (3-3.5 inches from toe to heel) is reached by binding the feet tightly with cloth, which could involve redoing the process over a period of years until completed (“Chinese”). Naturally, many “serious infections” often occurred, yet women still managed to walk and work in paddy fields, suffering with lifelong pain (“Chinese”).



So in the Grimm version of Cinderella, when the stepsisters do not fit the shoe, they cut their toes off. Even Disney’s version alludes to this when the sisters’ feet barely squeeze into the shoe, completely cramped and bent to the shape of foot-binding, before the slipper flings itself off. Even today’s high heels resemble the shape that results from foot-binding, the arch elongated while the total length of the foot is shortened. The leg becomes longer, emphasizing the shape of a woman’s curves while her body is

supposed to be supported by disproportioned feet in impractical shoes. Clearly, the woman's body serves as an object that exists for the aesthetic pleasure of the, traditionally, male gaze. As a marker of a specific beauty mold, tiny feet indicate a woman's value, so "Cinderella" is no simple tale of entertainment or positive meaning for those who must conform to the mold. Ultimately, a one-size-fits-all mold does not exist; therefore, the happy ending cannot apply to everyone, and the fairy tale must be rewritten in order to reshape the mold of society's expectations of women.

In Cisneros's short vignette, "The Family of Little Feet," she retells the classic European Cinderella story through the perspective of three young Latina girls who receive a bag of high heels from their neighbors, to reveal how Fetterley's "male mind" and the common assumptions of gender roles are taught early with fairytales. Clearly a student of pop culture's social construct of beauty, Esperanza's descriptions are painted with imagery pointing toward pedagogy and learning, youth and coming of age. She mentions "hopsotch squares," "a girl's grey sock," their skinny and scabbed legs, and jump rope (Cisneros 40). Cisneros utilizes Esperanza's narration to underscore their age and susceptibility, pointing toward their early childhood development. Esperanza's descriptions reveal a teacher-student interaction where Rachel "learns" to walk in the heels and "teaches" Esperanza and Lucy how to properly cross their legs and walk, all three of them "teetering" like toddlers (Cisneros 40) in the street, learning how to walk. Cisneros employs the teacher-student imagery to argue that beauty is a social construct, a product of nurture not nature, and is consistently reinforced and normalized through pop culture and perpetuated by society. The text further evidences the girls' role in early childhood development when, after seeing the girls strut in their new heels, Mr. Benny says they are "too young," and the bum calls Rachel a "little girl," though he does not mind telling her she is pretty (Cisneros 41). Even Esperanza says Rachel is "young and dizzy to hear so many sweet words in one day, even if it is a bum man's whiskey words saying them" (Cisneros 41). The source of the compliments does not matter, only the reinforcement that proves she has attained a society-approved beauty. Therefore, not only do the fairytales reinforce patriarchy, but society does as well, further perpetuating the damaging "male mind" that Fetterley

argues must be exorcized (xxi). Like an enchantment, Esperanza and her friends simply don a pair of “magic high heels” and they become beautiful (Cisneros 40). The “magic” can be applied or removed as quickly as a wish.

The ideology that beauty is a physical adornment to be put on or removed is a form of commodity culture, and in the story, the girls’ beauty and worth is represented by their shoes. Because their “feet fit exactly” (Cisneros 40), they are Cinderella and their “happily ever after” must be around the corner. The fairytale teaches that even the lowliest, poorest girls can trade in their rags for riches if they only fit a socially-constructed beauty mold. Instead of resisting a patriarchal idea of beauty, the girls force themselves to fit into a mold that is not really made for them, rejoicing when they “fit exactly” (Cisneros 40). According to the Marxist ideology of commodity culture, beauty is an idealistic representation that can be bought, but Cisneros and Fetterley argue that the wearer must confine to her proper gender role in order for the shoe to fit. But it is not the youthfulness of the girls that allows them to conform; even Esperanza’s grandmother wore “velvety high heels that made her walk with a wobble, but she wore them anyway because they were pretty” (Cisneros 39). Instead, it is the desire to be accepted and loved that perpetuates the beauty mold. If the shoe fits, then the lowly girl is supposed to get the prince and his kingdom. Unfortunately, such a high standard of beauty is hard to achieve and maintain. Cisneros rewrites this Cinderella fairytale to reveal that the fairytale ending cannot apply to everyone, especially a thrice-marginalized “Cinderella.” For Esperanza, Lucy, and Rachel, their fairytale ending is more the stuff of nightmares.

For Cisneros’s three Latina “Cinderellas,” their fairytale story lacks the magic and romance that prelude the “happily ever after.” In “The Family of Little Feet,” the prince is a drunken bum only willing to pay one dollar for a kiss (Cisneros 41). Instead of a handsome prince, wedding, and wealthy kingdom that the fairytales promise, the best that Esperanza and her friends can get are a few flattering compliments. In “Someday My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through the Fairytale,” Marcia Lieberman argues that fairytales “present a picture of sexual roles, behavior, and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex” (248). Based on what the fairytales have taught

the girls all their lives, that if they can fit the shoe (beauty mold, gender role, social construct), then they can expect a magical “happily ever after.” Without having to work for her prince, the girl would simply be “chosen because she is beautiful” (Lieberman 250), not that she could work in such constricting shoes anyway. Having been reared up in this patriarchal framework, the girls expected a prince, not a bum. Esperanza and her friends quickly realize that the fairytale genre and pop culture have deceived them. After all, Esperanza’s mother gives them a bag of shoes she can no longer, or no longer wishes, to wear, and the girls become “tired of being beautiful” and hide the shoes until they are disposed of (Cisneros 42). Further underscoring the ideology that beauty is a commodity item, the girls simply remove the shoes and return to their lowly identities. Throughout *Mango Street*, girls of all ages are stuck in the perpetuation of the constricting beauty mold, resulting in women who cannot function on their own. Lois, according to one of Esperanza’s stories, relies on her boyfriend to care for her. Cisneros reveals immediately how the pedagogy of Cinderella’s slipper has infantilized Lois and limited her mobility. Esperanza talks about Lois like she is a baby, though readers really have no idea how old she is: Lois has “big girl hands” and “wears makeup,” but “she doesn’t know how to tie her shoes” (Cisneros 73). Therefore, Lois walks around town “barefoot” with “baby toenails” and smelling of “baby’s skin” (Cisneros 73). The infantilized image of Lois is further reinforced by the image of Sire, her boyfriend, holding her hand when they walk and tying her shoes for her (Cisneros 73). For these lower-class girls, a happy ending to their dismal *Mango Street* stories is not as simple as putting on a pair of shoes or believing in the misrepresented magic of fairytales: the girls must be given a sense of agency, a voice, and power so the fairytale ending can be rewritten.

Shortly after the experience with the heels, Esperanza finds herself in another pair of shoes that determines her sense of beauty, power, and identity in a chapter entitled “Chanclas,” where Esperanza and her family stand in the basement of a church for the after-party of her baby cousin’s baptism (Cisneros 46). Because her mom forgot to buy her dress shoes, Esperanza is stuck wearing the “ordinary shoes” that she wears to school (Cisneros 47). Even though she decided against the high heels in the ear-

lier vignette, she does not like her chancas either: her shoes are “scuffed and round” and do not go with her dress which causes her to not participate in dancing, which she really wants to do (Cisneros 47). Not only do the shoes look “ugly” in comparison to the more socially-approved and aesthetically appealing high heels (Cisneros 47), but even these practical shoes cause her immobility and self-consciousness. When asked to dance by her Uncle, Esperanza describes how her feet “swell big and heavy like plungers” that she has to “drag” across the floor (Cisneros 47). This scene reveals Esperanza’s desire to move her body the way she wants, but the shoes physically hold her to the floor against her will. Esperanza acknowledges that her uncle is the one in control when she says, “My uncle ... walks me back in my *thick* shoes to my mother” (emphasis added, Cisneros 48), clearly not lacking mobility and agency. The use of the word *thick* typically describes the men in Esperanza’s life: her grandpa’s “feet were fat and doughy like *thick* tamales” (emphasis added, Cisneros 39), and her papa has “*thick* hands and *thick* shoes” (emphasis added, Cisneros 57). Therefore, not only can Esperanza not retain a sense of power in the *feminine* mold that society demands, as represented by the heels, but she also does not fit into the *masculine* mold of society either. Each time Esperanza attempts to fit herself into a predesigned mold, she lacks in movement, confidence, and agency. Instead of two options that Esperanza must choose, Cisneros reveals the need for the recreation of molds that are shaped by the unique needs of individuals.

Not only does the foot represent the accepted beauty and desirability of a woman, but it also symbolizes sexuality; therefore, the constricting mold of the shoe perpetuates a limited and controlled female sexuality. The foot itself, according to podiatrist and author William Rossi, is an “erotic organ and the shoe is its sexual covering,” (qtd. in Newman, National Geographic). The foot serves as a universal symbol of sexuality and submission, according to Freud. Therefore, the need to fit into a shoe reveals the societal demands that a woman’s physical beauty and sexuality must fit into a certain mold, which is constructed by the patriarchy and maintained by both men and women, each era teaching from an early age how a person’s body must conform to society through the genre of fairy tales. Interestingly, the most well-known and well-

liked fairy tale focuses entirely on the absolute need for Cinderella (whichever name she is called in the hundreds of versions that exist) to fit the shoe. Apparently, societies through the ages find a/n (un)conscious comfort in the regulation of the female body in order to limit its power. While manhood is often equated to the size of his shoe, the majority of feet-related concepts focus on the woman. While the shoe itself possesses phallic imagery—the long, fine point of the literal heel of the shoe pierces the ground when a woman walks, marking its territory—the irony is that the woman employs the masculinity for masculine eyes. As already discussed, the image of the high heel serves to please the men, but women often attempt to take the power back into their own hands by employing the powerful image of the shoe. According to Michelle Sugiyama, “The subconscious logic behind such confinement is evident in one of the euphemisms for prostitute, *streetwalker*. A prostitute is an unchaste woman who roams the streets more or less freely” (14). While high heels are meant to limit a woman’s freedom, prostitutes, or just any other woman who teaches herself how to employ the heels for her own gain (whether or not she is successful in doing so is not my concern), causes fear for those who attempt to control the woman’s sexuality, specifically on Mango Street where the husbands and fathers attempt to keep their women indoors. For example, Rafaela, a young married woman, “gets locked indoors because her husband is afraid [she] will run away since she is too beautiful to look at” (Cisneros 79). As a result, Rafaela equates herself to Rapunzel who dreams of freedom from domestic imprisonment (Cisneros 79), another clear link to the power of fairy tales. As Rafaela longingly looks out the window, she dreams of “women much older than her” who dance “down the street” (Cisneros 80). Again, the image of dancing resurfaces in Cisneros’s short text, which constantly defines the image of female power as the control of one’s body. When Esperanza talks to Sally, the most promiscuous girl on Mango Street until she gets married, she asks her a question that personifies the feet and equates them to a source of power that possesses the power to change her fate:

“Sally, do you sometimes wish you didn’t have to go home? Do you wish your feet would one day keep walk-

ing and take you far away from Mango Street, far away and maybe your feet would stop in front of a house ... [with] steps for you to climb up ... to where a room is waiting for you." (Cisneros 82)

Ultimately, through the use of the word "wish," Esperanza acknowledges that such freedom is only a dream for girls like herself, Lucy, Rachel, Rafaela, Sally, and many others. "The men in the story control women by controlling their feet" (Sugiyama 14), by controlling their beauty and sexuality, their freedom and power. Sally "sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without [her husband's] permission" (Cisneros 102). Ultimately, even prostitution on Mango Street is only an illusion of freedom, because the girls are "forced into a kind of prostitution, using their sexuality to get husbands [and] houses" in which they can (seemingly) "rule themselves" (Sugiyama 17). Further, a woman's desirability is short-lived: once aging begins to take place, women no longer have the opportunities that they once had; therefore, fairy tales feature only young women who get the prince. Esperanza describes how her Aunt Guadalupe "good to look at" with "swimmer's legs" (Cisneros 58). She goes on to ruminate on how "hard" it is to "imagine" her [aunt's] legs once strong, the bones hard and parting water" (Cisneros 59). As a young woman in control of her body, the adjectives employed to describe her legs allude to the virile state of a man. Once aged and diseased, however, Guadalupe's bones are "limp as worms" (Cisneros 58), "bent and wrinkled like a baby" (Cisneros 59); therefore, Guadalupe's power is limited and temporal. Clearly Bruno Bettelheim missed the mark when he explains the brilliance behind fairy tales teaching "meaning" for children who need something to help them through the trials in their lives. The "meaning" found in a tale like "Cinderella" obviously perpetuates a negative self-image and futile goals in women, because such perfection displayed in fairy tales is impossible. For the sake of generations of girls to come, as well as the boys who help perpetuate such ideals, the stories must be rewritten, and women must have a say in their own stories, as Cisneros does for Esperanza.

Not only does Cisneros rewrite the Cinderella story through a Latina feminist lens to reveal the limitations that women have

on Mango Street, she turns the gender archetypes on their heads, rewriting the prince role and changing the ending. In an attempt to change the patriarchal influence over women in fairytales, Cisneros gives back the voice and power that has been emasculated from Esperanza through internalizing the “male mind” (Fetterley xx). While “The Family of Little Feet” does end with a drunken bum for a prince and three girls suffering from expectation failure, the ending of Cisneros’s novella offers a different ending for Esperanza. In “A House of My Own” Esperanza writes:

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man’s house.
 Not a daddy’s. An apartment all my own. With my porch
 and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. *My books and
 my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed.* Nobody to
 shake a stick at. Nobody’s garbage to pick up after. Only
 a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, *clean as
 paper before the poem.* (emphasis mine, Cisneros 108).

Once upon a time, Esperanza sought to fit herself into a socially-constructed gender and beauty mold in the hopes that she could attain the “happily ever after” she had been taught, but a prince on a white horse never came to take her away from Mango Street. Instead, the male characters served to further constrict her role. But in the end, Esperanza is her own hero, containing the power to rewrite her ending so that she has her own kingdom and her own shoes to fit, not a socially-constructed mold. As stated by Kelly Wissman, “Esperanza’s alternative ‘happily ever after’ comes through locating the vocation of writing as the fulcrum for self-definition and social change” (17). Instead of forcing her feet to fit into society’s glass slipper, Esperanza seeks to fit into her own two shoes; instead of one shoe intended to be looked at, she has two that provide her mobility, and her mobility comes from her power to write her own story. Instead of allowing a patriarchal society to determine how her story should end, Esperanza decides for herself how her fairytale ending should be. And with blank paper before her, Esperanza begins to write, no longer allowing her voice to be silenced or her power to be emasculated. By transforming the traditional fairytale genre, Sandra Cisneros takes back the voices that Disney and other patriarchal voices

have stolen and gives it back to those who have been silenced, telling a new story that sets the captives free.

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On Gender in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Jessica Fountain

The Pearl Poet's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* presents, at first glance, a traditional tale of chivalric knighthood. The poem focuses on Arthur's court, the knight has a quest, and the knight demonstrates ideals of courtliness and chivalry. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that this poem is not as traditional as it might seem. The poet confuses gender roles within the poem by utilizing phallic and yonic imagery and eroticizing the relationship between Gawain and the Green Knight. The poem ultimately discredits the idea of exclusive masculine power by feminizing male authority figures and moves toward a restoration of the balance between masculine and the feminine in the court.

Stephen C. Jaeger addresses chivalric literature's role in maintaining prescribed gender roles in Medieval Romances. He does so in his 1985 book, *The Origins of Courtliness*. He writes, "medieval chivalric literature worked at 'taming the reckless assertiveness of the European feudal nobility'" (18). In other words, chivalric code is a way to keep men in line and to stop them from behaving foolishly in a way that might jeopardize the established power structure. With this in mind, the poem in question works to dismantle the traditionally gendered chivalric code and the usual system of power. Significantly, the Green Knight flirts with the traditional ideas of chivalry when he interrupts Arthur's court and ultimately disrupts those ideas.

When the Green Knight first enters Arthur's court during the Christmas festivities, the poet immediately establishes him as an androgynous presence. Despite his gigantic frame, "he swung no sword nor sported any shield" (Armitage 205). In this context, the sword can be considered a phallic symbol, while the shield, with its curvature, can be considered yonic or at the very least, representative of the feminine. In stating that the Green Knight lacks both, the poet implies that the knight is sexless. Already, this disrupts the traditional idea of a knight as a masculine authority,

rendering him decidedly powerful but without a determined sex. In doing so, the poet begins to chip away at the idea that power belongs exclusively to men.

The knight commands presence in the court and strips Arthur of any power he holds as a male figurehead. He even goes so far as to ask, “Who [...] is the governor of this gaggle?” (Armitage 225-226). Although Arthur is plainly the king, the knight makes a show of looking around, as though he cannot see an authority figure in the hall. Even after Arthur addresses him and identifies himself as the head of the house, the knight continues to mock Arthur, as well as his knights. He says that “the bodies on these benches are just bum-fluffed bairns,” completely emasculating all of the men in the room (280). The knight delivers a verbal blow to the court by insinuating that it is filled with children, not men. He emasculates the court even further when he literally offers a phallus to each and every man in the hall as he proposes his challenge. He offers the challenge-taker a “gigantic cleaver” as a gift, and says that “the axe shall be his to handle how he likes” (288-289). However, no one steps forward to take the challenge, which again suggests the knight’s intention of emasculation. Eventually, Arthur’s hot blood gets the best of him, but Gawain steps in to take the challenge in his king’s stead. He does so by labeling himself weak and stupid—more effeminate, perhaps, than the other knights—and takes up the axe to meet the knight’s challenge. Thus, the self-proclaimed weakest of all the knights musters more courage than Arthur, which signifies Arthur’s social castration.

During the year between the Green Knight’s strange beheading and Gawain’s fateful quest, the Pearl poet foreshadows the result of this quest by alluding to a sexed version of the landscape. With Arthur’s masculine authority diminished, the true nature of Gawain’s quest begins to emerge: he must redeem the court by following through with the Green Knight’s suicidal challenge. As the seasons pass, the poet describes each in its own sensual way. Specifically, the poet describes summer as having flowers whose “leaves let drip their drink of dew,” and autumn which “arrives to harden the harvest” (518-521). Both of these images suggest the sexuality of nature, the seasons acting upon the landscape as a feminine presence inciting arousal. This imagery continues when Gawain actually begins his journey and descends into “a

deep forest, densely overgrown, / with vaulting hills to each half of the valley” (741-742). The landscape grows obviously female, with the forest resembling pubic hair, and the valley reminiscent of the female sex. Gawain performs an act of penetration as he trudges “through mud and marshland” (749) to emerge in the Green World. The journey into a feminized landscape brings the story into the realm of nature—and, as such, the feminine—and away from civilization, the world of men. Moreover, it brings the story to a strange kind of limbo, where the masculine and feminine coexist.

This coexistence comes to light as soon as Gawain first catches sight of Lord Bertilak’s castle. Here, the phallic and yonic imagery intermingle, with a description of the castle’s “high walls / in a moat, on a mound, bordered by the boughs / of thick-trunked timber which trimmed the water” (764-766). A moat is typically circular and also full of water, which indicates a womb-like space. The mound mentioned brings to mind the *mons pubis*, and upon it rise very phallic trees, and “a palisade of pikes pitched in the earth” (769). This is the prime example of the coexistence of the masculine and the feminine within the Green World. This balance is key to the story, as the Green Knight seeks to restore it in the world of Camelot. At this point, the world of Arthur’s court is dominated by men, and it can be expected that Gawain’s time spent in the Green World will see him become the vessel for the restoration of that balance.

As Gail Ashton observes in her article, “The Perverse Dynamics of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,” “clothing is an important symbol in the acting out of gender. [...] the ‘proper,’ social body of romance is a male, fully armored one” (59). When Gawain arrives at the lord’s castle, he experiences a similar unsexing to the one the Green Knight undergoes earlier in the poem, and, interestingly, a subsequent resexing via his clothing. Lord Bertilak’s subjects strip Gawain of his knightly armor—and with it, the superficial prescribed Medieval ideal of masculinity—and replace it with a “stunning gown / with [its] flowing skirts which suited his shape / it almost appeared to the persons present / that spring, with its spectrum of colors had sprung” (864-867). This progression indicates that the members of the lord’s house literally remove his masculinity and place Gawain into a feminine role. The poet

illustrates this by using distinctly feminine language: “gown,” and “skirts.” In addition, the poet compares Gawain to spring, which instantly brings to mind the previous notion of the seasons as feminine. In these loaded lines, the poet manages to emasculate Gawain, feminize him, and also, by proxy, to sexualize him in his newfound femininity.

Perhaps the most well-known aspects of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are the three strange seduction scenes between Lady Bertilak and Gawain. The most obvious implications of a homoerotic relationship between Gawain and the Green Knight occur in this section of the poem. While Richard Zeikowitz only goes so far as to say that “the male-male kisses replicate the eroticism that builds between Gawain and the lady during the three days,” it certainly goes much further than that (74). Paralleled with three detailed and graphic scenes from Lord Bertilak’s hunts, it can definitely be said that Lord Bertilak’s hunting directly mirrors Lady Bertilak’s advances upon Gawain. During his stay in their house, Gawain agrees to give Lord Bertilak whatever he gains while the lord is away. Of course, Lord Bertilak is really the Green Knight in disguise, and he seems to know that his wife will attempt to seduce Gawain while he is away. This stacks the deck against Gawain, in a way, and prepares two versions of Gawain’s seduction: one in which Gawain is a masculine figure being seduced by a woman, and another in which Gawain is a feminine figure being seduced by a man.

Lady Bertilak’s three nights of seduction test Gawain’s sense of masculinity as she tries to get him to have relations with her, and ultimately Gawain thwarts her attempts. The first night, she comes to him and proposes that he is “free to have [her] all” as a lover, but Gawain adheres to his courtly ways (Armitage 1237). When this does not work, she insistently will not allow him to rise from the bed until he has paid her with a single kiss. The next night, she grows bolder and again asks him to make love to her before her husband returns home. He declines, and she kisses him before departing. The third night, she approaches Gawain wearing “nothing on her face; her neck was naked / and her shoulders were bare to both back and breast” (1740-1741). The poet implies that upon the third night, she bares all to him, but still he refuses. Each time she visits him, it is important to note that Gawain remains

chaste and does not give in to her temptations, despite how much she offers herself to him. Attempting to seduce Gawain with the approach of a woman to a man does not succeed.

Parallel to each of these nights are Lord Bertilak's hunting trips, which stand in stark contrast to Lady Bertilak's feminine seduction of Gawain by presenting hunting as acts of aggression and penetration. The first hunting trip emphasizes the nature of the hunt, and of this particular method of seducing Gawain as a feminine figure. The poet describes how, "the broad-horned bucks were allowed to pass by, / for the lord of the land had laid down a law / that man should not maim the male in close season" (Armitage 1155-1157). During this season, the hunters are not allowed to hunt the male deer, but only the female deer. In this analogy, Lord Bertilak is the masculine hunter, while Gawain plays the part of a hind to be hunted down relentlessly. This section also contains very sexual language: "The lord's heart leaps with life. / Now on, now off his horse / all day he hacks and drives" (1175-1177). Again, Lord Bertilak assumes the masculine role and performs acts of penetration: mounting and dismounting his horse, and hacking and driving. In addition, the poet describes how the deer are cleaned. Notably, the hunters pull apart the hind legs and "slit the fleshy flaps, then cleave" (1350-1351). The flaps of skin are reminiscent of the female sex, and the hunters use their phallic knives to penetrate the deer and create a second vaginal-style opening. All of this works to show Lord Bertilak's seduction of Gawain as a feminine figure.

Bertilak's seduction does not stop there, however, as in addition to seducing Gawain as a woman, he also seduces him as a man. This is not accomplished in the same way as Lady Bertilak's attempts because the lord retains his male status in this venture. This creates an image of a male-male sexual dominance struggle, and takes place during the second hunt when Lord hunts down a boar. Whereas in the previous hunting scenes, the deer were all female and symbolic of Gawain's feminine status, boar—with their large tusks and aggression—can be considered emblems of masculinity. The boar and Lord Bertilak face off, with Bertilak wielding a very phallic sword, and the boar howling in a way that makes "the fellows there fear for their master's fate" (1588). This line highlights the masculine power-struggle that takes place

between the two. They actually wind up tangled together in a fierce tussle, until “the moment they clashed the man found his mark, / knifing the boar’s neck, nailing his prey, / hammering it to the hilt” (1592-1594). The lord clearly wins the struggle. This entire scene is a metaphor for a homoerotic, sexual exchange between Lord Bertilak and Gawain, in which Bertilak succeeds in overpowering and subduing Gawain as a masculine entity. Gail Ashton makes another interesting point regarding the hunting scenes in saying that “two of the three hunts result in elaborate meals” (Ashton 61). The hunting scenes, then, prove fruitful. It can therefore be said that Bertilak’s seductions of Gawain as both a masculine and a feminine figure are also successful. In comparison, Lady Bertilak’s attempts to seduce Gawain from a feminine standpoint do not succeed and literally bear no fruit, as Gawain thwarts her at nearly every step.

Finally, Gawain’s acceptance of the girdle signifies the end of his transformation from masculine presence to feminine presence while in the Green World. As asserted before, circles may be interpreted as yonic symbols. As such, the girdle—which is, by all accounts, an undergarment—acts as a physical yonus that Gawain must don to complete his metamorphosis. In doing so, he achieves the balance between masculine and feminine, and will serve as an ambassador to Arthur’s court once he returns. First, however, he goes to meet the Green Knight’s fateful challenge, which serves as his ultimate test to see if he succeeds in becoming a manifestation of the masculine-feminine balance. When the Green Knight goes to lop off his head, the blade merely nicks Gawain’s skin, and the Green Knight pronounces Gawain “as polished and as pure / as the day you were born, without blemish or blame” (2393-2394). In proclaiming this, the Green Knight gives Gawain a fresh, new life as this masculine-feminine hybrid and allows him to return to court.

Gawain returns to court bearing two signifiers of the feminine on his person: the first of which is the scar from the Green Knight’s inflicted wound, and the second of which is the girdle, which he openly wears across his chest as a sash. The wound which the Green Knight gave him symbolizes a physical cutting open of his flesh, forcing a yonic space onto him. By the time Gawain returns to court, the wound heals into a scar, but that serves as

a permanent, personal marker of the feminine. The girdle is less permanent, but it becomes an icon that the other members of Arthur's court can adopt. Gawain presents the girdle as "the symbol of sin, for which my neck bears the scar" (2506). This emblem of sin, when looked at through a light Biblical gaze, brings to mind the punishment of women from Eve's fall. Thus, Gawain will forever bear the mark of sin: womanhood. Arthur eagerly encourages each of his knights to wear a green, gilded sash and "each knight who held it was honored ever after" (2520). Gawain successfully brings the balance of masculine and feminine back to the court.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight begins by dismantling male authority and utilizes phallic and yonic imagery to transform Gawain into an androgynous hybrid of the masculine and feminine while he adventures in the Green World. The Green Knight, disguised part of the time as Lord Bertilak, conquers Gawain sexually—as both a man and a woman—and forces him into this role. Once the metamorphosis is complete, Gawain returns to the court as an ambassador of masculine-feminine balance. He restores the integrity of the court by imbuing the previous exclusively masculine authority with the mark of femininity, as symbolized by the girdle.

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Food Memory: Nikki Giovanni, Edna Lewis, Scott Peacock and the Southern Food Revival

Katie Anderson

*i mean its my house
and i want to fry pork chops
and bake sweet potatoes
and call them yams
cause i run the kitchen
and i can stand the heat*

—Nikki Giovanni, excerpt from “My House”

Historically, southern culture has marginalized certain populations, particularly based on racism, homophobia, and sexism. The entire region faces stigma from the national and international world based on its divisive, exclusionary history. Yet, one positive aspect of southern culture can usually elicit a harmonious response from inside and outside the south: the deliciousness of the food. Whether it’s on Food Network, in glossy magazines, or in most every southern novel, traditional southern food makes the mouth water and the stomach growl. Food and southern culture go together like black-eyed peas and cornbread. One of the South’s most famous literary characters, Margaret Mitchell’s Scarlett O’Hara, enjoys a southern feast at the pre-Civil War party and, after the war, famously declares she will never go hungry again while holding a dirty, limp turnip. Eudora Welty writes about the bounty of southern funeral food in *The Optimist’s Daughter*. Images of church picnics, family reunions, and Sunday dinners abound in southern literature. Proustian memories of these happy gatherings as “Madeleine moments” allow the food to act as a conduit to the past.

Yet, despite Proust’s best efforts to convince us otherwise, not all Madeleine moments are necessarily happy, especially for society’s out-casted others. In southern culture, historically and still today, African-Americans, women, and the LGBT community have all been considered “less than” and, to varying degrees, have

not been afforded the same rights as their white male counterparts. The Madeleine moment for a repressed, oppressed southerner would be much more complicated than simple nostalgia for a warm and fuzzy past. Many marginalized southerners have left their homes for greener, more open-minded pastures. Today, urban sprawl continues to grow around Atlanta, arguably the “Capital of the South,” while South Georgia’s population declines dramatically each year. This modern move toward urban areas in the South was preceded by the Great Migration of blacks in the ‘40s, moving from the rural South to the urban North, taking their food memories and their recipes with them.

Nikki Giovanni, renowned African-American poet, was just two months old in 1943 when she and her family moved from Knoxville, Tennessee to Cincinnati, Ohio in search of better job opportunities. She went on as an adult to write poetry about the food that memorializes her summers and high school years spent in Tennessee with her grandparents (Fowler 42); through her food poetry, Giovanni revisits her Tennessean ancestors, connecting with them in the present, and allowing them to live on through her writing. Similarly, the southern food about which she writes has inspired a cultural revival of traditional southern cooking with a modern makeover; this revival has had a major impact on the national food scene. By destabilizing the idea of the “Madeleine moment,” southern food memory can act less as nostalgia and more as empowerment by connecting certain marginalized southerners in surprising ways, by combining the old and new, and resulting in a more heterogeneous, inclusive community at the southern dinner table.

Giovanni’s sense of home and community in her writing rests in her grandparents’ home in Tennessee. This southern, extended family home symbolizes safety, happiness, warmth, and security for her, although she actually spent most of her childhood in the North. Because her parents grew up in the South, she was raised with southern Appalachian values; however, Giovanni identifies those values less as “southern” but more as “black” (Fowler 43). Often, white Americans lose sight of or have never made the association that many aspects of southern culture have their roots in Africa: the abiding presence and importance of the past, the importance of place, the significance of oral tradition, and the

centrality of food (Fowler 43). Colonization and the slave trade led to cultural blending that affected virtually every area of life including food. Slaves learned European cooking techniques from white plantation owners and used local ingredients along with traditional African and Native American ingredients and techniques to produce a unique southern cuisine (Davis 3). Post-slavery and into the Civil Rights era, black women continued to cook and feed white families. In the 1960s, according to the Association of Black Women Historians, “up to 90 per cent of working black women in the South labored as domestic servants in white homes” (Carmon 1). Still today, personal anecdotally speaking, white women in the south are still hiring black cooks to help in their homes with daily meals and/or parties. The African-American contribution to southern food culture has not received the attention it deserves because of the marginalization of African-Americans and women in the south.

African-American female poet Giovanni celebrates her southern, black tradition in her appreciation of the past, her ability for storytelling and her use of food culture to tell her stories. For her, the ancestor, always female, is an important presence represented in food and associated with comfort, warmth, and safety (Fowler 45). In her poem “Knoxville, Tennessee,” she discusses liking summer best, with all of the foods associated with summer in the south: “fresh corn,” “okra,” “greens,” “cabbage,” “and lots of barbeque,” “buttermilk,” “and homemade ice cream at the church picnic.” She discusses her love of summer, which to her means food, her grandmother, gospel music, and being warm. Her food memories of southern summers contribute to the last two lines of the poem, which refer to being warm “all the time / not only when you go to bed / and sleep,” allowing her to be comforted when she is not in her grandmother’s home in Tennessee. Although the poem is about the summer, the title is “Knoxville, Tennessee” rather than “Summer” (Fowler 46). Giovanni remembers her warm summers as having a distinct sense of place and community.

In her poem “Legacies,” Giovanni connects with her southernness via her grandmother’s homemade rolls. The grandmother wants to teach her little granddaughter the art of making the rolls. The little girl “knew / even if she couldn’t say it that / that would mean when the old one died she would be less / depen-

dent on her spirit so / she said / “i don’t want to know how to make no rolls” (6-11). The grandmother speaks proudly, it says, wanting to share her knowledge and skill, but the child refuses. Again, southern food plays a significant role in her work about her grandmother, familial bonds, traditions, and passing the torch; elements that are all a part of southern culture. She also refers to her desire to be with her grandmother, even though she grew up mostly away from her, and knows there will come a time when her grandmother will die. Her grandmother will live on through the roll recipe and technique; if the little girl does not learn it, presumably her grandmother will not die. The poem is a bitter-sweet food memory from a southern childhood that deals with an aspect of the circle of life that the speaker could not accept at the time, as a young child.

To contrast the goodness of southern food memories with bad news, Giovanni writes about it again in “When My Phone Trembles.” Here, she writes that when her phone “trembles” after midnight, she immediately assumes bad news is on the other end. She never thinks “good news: someone’s birthday, an overseas friend...I never smell / apples baking / or nutmeg dancing / on sweet potatoes / yeast rolls rising / fish frying...I always look / for a way to hold / myself / together / being a 60s person / I know / you have to be / strong” (5-22). To her, these food smells are as good as a birthday, or hearing from a friend who is far away. Food, specifically southern comfort foods from her childhood, equals the safety of good news. The reader gets the impression that in order to hold herself together, the speaker remembers the community of her Tennessean roots, because being a “60s person” who is both black and female took strength and connection with others to get through. The phrase “60s person” overflows with meaning for marginalized southerners and Americans: the political and social upheaval of Civil Rights, women’s rights, and gay rights and the violence associated with these movements would understandably result in a 60s person’s longing for a safe place. For Giovanni, that place was a connection to the strong, southern, black women of her youth.

Not only was her grandmother and family a foundation of her southern food memory poetry, but also an elderly couple in Southwest Virginia, who were friends of hers while she taught

at Virginia Tech and about whom she wrote in “A Theory of Pole Beans (for Ethel and Rice.)” Giovanni compares the black couple to pole beans and states in a recording with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities that they are “ordinary yet substantial...and the people who eat pole beans are also ordinary and substantial, and that they show us we are here and we will be” (“Pole Beans”). The poem states “pole beans are not everyone’s / favorite they make you think of pieces of fat back / corn bread / and maybe a piece of fried chicken / they are the staples of things unquestioned / they are broken and boiled” (Fowler 47). Yet, despite the couple’s difficult time and place, they still “bought a home reared a family / supported a church and kept a mighty faith / in your God and each other”; hence, they did not just survive, they endured. Giovanni ends with reassurance that “your garden remains in full bloom,” as a nod to their teachings being carried on and a hope for the future (Fowler 48). The choice of memorializing an average person in poetry makes the ordinary extraordinary; likewise, Giovanni makes pole beans worth studying and expands readers’ understanding of this couple and of pole beans in a broader sense. Her connection to this couple through southern food communicates that while they were living their lives, she was paying attention, learning life lessons from them, and through her poetry, will continue to teach their history and their lessons.

The elevation of the everyday individual through southern food links Giovanni with another native Virginian, famous southern chef Edna Lewis, who came from humble beginnings. In Giovanni’s poem, “The Only True Lovers Are Chefs or Happy Birthday, EDNA LEWIS”, she acknowledges the “Grand Dame of Southern Cooking,” aka Lewis, which allows a combining of food, black women, and ancestral power and legacy. To conserve space, an excerpt is provided:

...so yes this is a love poem of the
highest order because the next best cook in the world,
my grandmother being the best, just had a birthday
and all the asparagus and will greens and quail and
tomatoes on the vines and little peas in spring and half
runners in early summer and all the wonderful things

that come from the ground said EDNA LEWIS is having a birthday and all of us who love all of you who love food wish her a happy birthday because we who are really smart know that chefs make the best lovers. (Fowler 50)

Here, while Giovanni wishes celebrity chef and famed cookbook author Lewis a happy birthday, she also celebrates her grandmother and all black female ancestry who nourished and loved their family and friends through their cooking. She notes that the real cooking knowledge comes from the heart, and that grandmothers teach us that valuable piece of knowledge (Fowler 50). Coincidentally, like Nikki Giovanni, Edna Lewis (1916 - 2006) was also one of the Great Migrants to the North. She grew up in Freetown, Virginia, a town of freed slaves (her ex-slave grandparents were two of the founders), and was forced to move during the Depression to find work. She left for New York City and went to work as a cook at Cafe Nicholson (*Fried Chicken and Sweet Potato Pie*). Uprooted southern blacks used food practices to maintain familial and community bonds in the North. Like Lewis, many black women used cooking as an economic opportunity, progressing from exploited cooks to entrepreneurs (Davis 3). The idea that southern blacks used food to keep a sense of community becomes even more significant when considering that so many black families were separated during slavery and that tracing their ancestral roots is nearly impossible.

At Cafe Nicholson, Lewis became acquainted with the expat southern literati, several of whom were homosexual: Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and William Faulkner, among others. She loved Capote and his humor and enjoyed feeding him biscuits and gravy (*Fried Chicken and Sweet Potato Pie*). Most of the famous southern writers of the time ate her food, providing them a connection to their home. She became quite famous and a writer herself, authoring the Southern cooking bible, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, in 1976. The style of cooking in her cookbook was the focused and “close-to-nature cooking” of her childhood; the cookbook became more of a study of Southern cooking than just a collection of recipes, and helped change the stereotypes of brown, fried Southern food into a more sophisticated, nuanced

cuisine; hence, a Southern food revival. In 1989, she said of her cooking, “As a child in Virginia, I thought all food tasted delicious. After growing up, I didn’t think food tasted the same, so it has been my lifelong effort to try and recapture those good flavors of the past” (Asimov and Severson 1). Her cookbook was a form of “life story” or autobiography; it allowed Lewis to recall a history and memorialize a place that no longer existed (Zafar 32). Both Lewis and Giovanni achieved this goal in their writing, despite living through some of the most volatile years of racial strife in our country. Their food memories and writing helped them connect in a positive way to a culture that did not accept them as equals. Through cooking, Lewis stayed connected to her past while also helping her fellow southern transplants/creative types stay connected. By doing so, these individuals bonded, forming their own subculture — a modern community based in southern food tradition that included African-Americans, women, and the LGBT community.

After retiring in the mid-90s, Lewis founded the Society for the Revival and Preservation of Southern Food, and one of the members was James Beard award winner Scott Peacock, who at the time was an Alabama chef working at the Governor’s mansion. They developed a close friendship and became the “Odd Couple of Southern Cooking”: an elderly, African-American lady and a young, gay, male chef. Their bond developed over a desire to preserve classic Southern dishes. Peacock said that meeting Lewis convinced him that cooking southern food was the path he was meant to take. He told *The Advocate*, “When we met I was taking the first tenuous steps out of the closet and was planning to move from Georgia to Italy to reinvent myself. Miss Lewis was working in New York City, but she thought a few good cooks should stay in the South. I stayed... Over time Miss Lewis helped me see the value of myself--as a Southerner, a cook, a gay man, and a human being (not necessarily in that order.) She never passed judgment, celebrating me for exactly who I was, yet her unconditional love inspired me to always strive toward being a better person” (Buhl 1). Southern food and food memory brought these two marginalized Southerners together and helped them form their own community, which in turn influenced Southern culture as a whole as they became roommates, went on to found

the Southern Foodways Alliance and wrote a successful cookbook together, *The Gift of Southern Cooking*. He acted as her caretaker for six years until her death in 2006.

This “odd couple,” or — even better — this dynamic duo helped reframe the meaning of “southern” as well as southern food. In an essay written by Lewis, she describes what “southern” meant to her:

Southern is a meal of early spring wild greens — poke sallet before it is fully uncurled, wild mustard, dandelion, lamb’s-quarter, purslane, and wild watercress...Southern is Truman Capote...Southern is a guinea hen, a bird of African origin...Southern is William Faulkner... Southern is desserts galore — coconut cake, caramel layer cake, black walnut whiskey cake, groom’s wedding cake, fig pud-ding, mincemeat pie...Southern is Carson McCullers...Southern is all the unsung heroes who passed away in obscurity...We are now faced with picking up the pieces and trying to put them into shape, document them so the present-day young generation can see what southern food was like. The foundation on which it rested was pure ingredients, open-pollinated seed — planted and replanted for generations — natural fertilizers. We grew the seeds of what we ate, we worked with love and care (Lewis 2-5).

Lewis dedicated her life to documenting and teaching the Southern way of eating, helping future generations understand how their ancestors lived. She included information on the past not as a way to simply remember the good old days through misty eyes, but so that later generations would carry on (Zafar 44). The word *sankofa* is an Akan (African) word that means returning to the past to progress in the present; the term represents a continuance of a “communal, diasporic identity.” Lewis’s choice of African-inspired clothing exemplified how she linked the present, the southern American past, and the African diaspora (Zafar 45). This term describes the specific experience that southern Americans like Giovanni, Lewis, and Peacock have used to go beyond mourning the past to commemorating in the present and

sankofa. Their individual and communal journeys connected them in unique ways to enable them to form their own community within the mainstream southern subculture to the degree that they and their food memory helped spark today's national local and organic food movements.

Lewis and Peacock's organization merged with the Southern Foodways Alliance, based at the University of Mississippi and led by John T. Edge. The Alliance's mission statement hints at the ideas behind the sankofa: "The Southern Foodways Alliance documents, studies, and celebrates the diverse food cultures of the changing American South. We set a common table where black and white, rich and poor — all who gather — may consider our history and our future in a spirit of reconciliation" (southernfoodways.org). The SFA awarded Edna Lewis with their first Lifetime Achievement Award, and Edge credits her with "[singing] the gospel of local and farm-fresh," along with other white, male southern figures like Jimmy Carter, Paul Prudhomme, Frank Stitt, and Bill Neal (Wolf 5). Edge asserts that the southern regional cuisine movement began because of the complex racial history and the interplay of Western European, West African, and Native American influences on the food. He also argues that the South was an agriculturally-centered region for a longer period than any other region in the U.S., and the farm-to-table concept was easier to renew. When questioned about whether southern food can bridge the gap between cultural differences, Edge points out that while a common food history can help bring people of different race and class together, it can also be a "stratifying" force. In order to avoid that obstacle, the SFA puts the barbecue pit master on the same pedestal as the white-jacketed chef in the fine dining restaurant. Edge and his fellow Alliance members want a celebration of all people who devote their lives to cooking, and not just the hipster farmer who has recently discovered food (Wolf 3).

Clearly, the diverse problems in the south that have marginalized individuals by race, class, gender, and sexual orientation can not easily be solved by a plate of fried chicken. Even so, a shared food culture and thoughtfully prepared regional cuisine can bring diners of different backgrounds to the symbolic table. Some of the best restaurants can be found by looking in the parking lot or peeking in the door: if the cars outside are a varied mix of Mer-

cedes, Toyotas, pickup trucks, and station wagons, and the diners range from white collar to blue collar and all colors in between, the food usually has a great reputation. The enjoyment of a meal in such a place comes from more than the taste of the delicious food; the community of people from all walks of life gives a sense of shared experience and connection with neighbors. If diners can find common ground through regional food, perhaps there is hope, but certainly no guarantee, that they can find common ground on weightier issues. When diners write about their food culture in poetry like Nikki Giovanni, or in cookbooks like Edna Lewis, or when they devote their life to cooking regional cuisine like Scott Peacock, they create a form of expression that has the power to draw in other like-minded individuals. For marginalized members of southern culture, art and food can help them commemorate their past and keep moving forward together. The future will depend on how we tend our cultural garden; only then will we discover whether, as Giovanni wrote, our garden “remains in full bloom” (Fowler 48).

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“Partus sequitur ventrem”*: Learning Racism by use of Mark Twain’s *Puddn’head Wilson

Brandie Smith

One of the driving questions regarding race is if racism is inherent or learned—nature versus nurture. In 1896, Jim Crow laws went into effect; laws that would change the course of history and how African Americans were viewed and treated. Jim Crow laws allowed for racial segregation and enforced approval for the “one drop” rule. According to Michael O’Malley, author of “Jim Crow and the 1890s,” this rule states that “one drop of African blood is enough to color a whole ocean of Caucasian whiteness,” (O’Malley) meaning that anyone with African American blood is “tainted.” Since the initial establishment of the “one drop rule,” more laws were created in order to “define race. In most states, someone who was 1/8 black (that is, had one great grandparent known to be ‘black’) counted as legally black, even though this is invisible [for] all intents and purposes. In some states, 1/16 (one great, great grandparent known to be ‘black’) was the rule” (O’Malley). Even though some people were light enough to appear white, this fact was ignored. People did not understand “that ‘black’ and ‘white’ were not fixed and unchanging categories, white Americans generally just preferred to ignore it” (O’Malley). They wholeheartedly followed the doctrine “Partus sequitur ventrem,” meaning “[t]he offspring follows the mother; the brood of an animal belongs to the owner of the dam; the offspring of a slave belongs to the owner of the mother, or follow the condition of the mother” (lawdictionary.org). This issue can be observed throughout history, especially when completing research on the ideas of racism.

The “one drop” rule was highly regarded during the early 20th century; the idea was presented in a number of mediums: film, novels, and documentation. Twain often situated his novels in the Deep South; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* are prime examples of the influence the South had on his major texts. Through his works, Twain created a sphere where readers

could not only enjoy the South's influence, but where they could learn and observe how racism is taught. Mark Twain's *Puddn'head Wilson* successfully confronts issues regarding race and the "one drop" rules. The novel illustrates how racism is viewed and how people react to the other race, revealing that the American attitude at the time favored whiteness. Americans believed that whiteness was a privilege and that one could not simply become white, but flaws are revealed in this assumption when Roxy switches Tom and Chambers at birth. Whiteness becomes a commodity, something that can be taken if given the proper scenarios. Throughout the novel, the notion that race is learned becomes a predominant theory, all of which contradict the idea that racism is inherent. The "one drop" rule was created for both blacks and whites to learn which race was more dominant, which one held the power, and which one was inferior. By learning and incorporating the rule into law, American citizens internalized what it looked like and meant to be black. The novel, then, sets the stage for how readers and society of the time viewed racism, guiding readers through a process that was highly revered as the law.

In the novel, Roxy, out of fear, switches her son, Chambers, with Judge Driscoll's son, Tom. She then recognizes the extent that she has changed the lives of both boys, something that will benefit her later. By switching the boys, Roxy plays with typical race roles. Roxy alters the ideas of racism by creating a scenario where a white boy would learn to become the slave and the black boy his master. According to critic Garrett Nichols, "Roxy soon realizes that the fluidity of appearance allows her to undermine the principle of resemblance in Dawson's Landing while still appearing submissive.... Roxy desires to kill herself and her son, Chambers, to prevent them from being sold down the river, an impulse which opens her eyes to the possibility of subversive resistance" (115). Roxy discovers that she has the power to change the outcome of her son's life, and she is willing to do anything to protect him. Tom, formerly Chambers, consequently lives on the other side of the color line, now being taught to practice racism. Chambers, formerly Tom, is now forced to endure racism taught to Tom. While reading novels such as *Puddn'head Wilson*, readers may infer that racism is a learned trait, especially when viewing the effects of the "one drop" rule. The novel presents the idea that

while racial identity can be learned, it cannot be unlearned. Once both Tom and Chambers discover their true identities, they cannot forget everything that they learned while growing up—once an identity is created, it is hard to undo. Eventually Wilson sets their roles straight by appealing to social structures and learned assumptions about race, further suggesting that the ideas of racism can be taught and learned.

Tom learns about the effects of racism when he first finds out the truth about his true identity. This discovery leads to turmoil in his thought process, and his purity comes into question; if he is indeed black, how will he learn to be black? Can he unlearn his whiteness? What if someone recognizes the black blood coursing through his veins? Tom begins to question what he knows and who he is: “For days he wandered in lonely places, thinking, thinking, thinking. . . . It was the nigger in him asserting its humanity” (Twain 47). This is when he displays his first inner struggle: he is not a white man, but a black man switched at birth by his mother. Tom attempts to learn how to view himself in this regard and begins to contemplate his new world, “trying to get his bearings” (47). The social ideals that one bases his/herself on are delicately structured and initially Tom does not know how to react to the situation. If one “part” of the self becomes untrue or changes, one is liable to unravel, which is the case for Tom when he first discovers his true identity. This is not to say that one ultimately cannot revert back. Tom eventually learns that he is able to bend social rules just like Roxy. This leads to the notion that the ideas of race and racism seem to be learned, not necessarily always inherent. Tom’s situation forces him to learn how to use what he knows about being black. Ultimately, he cannot unlearn his whiteness; it has become engrained into his ego, thoughts, and lifestyle.

The same can also be said for Chambers when he finds out about his true identity, but in reverse. Chambers, much like Tom, eventually has to learn how to be white. Initially, Chambers only knows how to “be black.” On the rare occasions where he is present in the novel, Chambers is seen fulfilling his duties as a slave: “Chambers came humbly in to say that breakfast was nearly ready. Tom blushed scarlet to see this aristocratic white youth cringe to him, a nigger, and call him ‘Young Master’” (46). Unconsciously, the two young men have internalized the ideas of what it means

to be white and black. They have learned these behaviors through society and how they have personally and separately interacted with society. Everything about them has been learned, they were born of another race, but act unlike who they are “meant” to be. Chambers falls victim to the “one drop” rule as well; he is not only forced to be black by Roxy’s decision, but by society’s learned behavior as well. After finding out about his true identity, Chambers is forced to learn how to be white, but does not know how to do this. His knowledge and understanding of black culture prevents him from fully being able to comprehend what it means to be white. In order to be white, Chambers would have to learn how to assert himself as a white man, one who subsequently becomes a member of the superior race. By being raised as a black man, Chambers has surpassed the age in which the identity is learned and the important stages throughout the learning process. Not only has he surpassed the age in which it would be “easy” to learn what it means to be white, but he is “tainted” with the image of being a black man. He will never be accepted in white society.

Historically, race has been used for propaganda and to gain power for centuries creating a lens for obscure racism. In order to gain favor and support from the opposite race, people have used ideas and predetermined assumptions about racism for their benefit. Whiteness can be seen as a commodity and is known to be highly prized and important to American culture; therefore, easy to capitalize. Whiteness provides the comforts of “easy” living, a lifestyle that Roxy wants. Eventually, Roxy uses what she knows about racism and whiteness to create her own form of propaganda. Similarly, in 1864—after the Emancipation Proclamation—“five children, four of whom looked white Charley, Augusta, Rebecca, and Rosina, and three adults, all former slaves from New Orleans, were sent to the North on a publicity tour” to aid in their collection of money and to gain support for the abolition of slavery (Caust-Ellenbogen). While the abolition of slavery was a great feat in our country, the use of children for propaganda was not so grand. The group consisted of four mulatto slave children who were passed as being white slaves. The children were photographed and used to gain support from rich, white, northerners. The fact that southern people were willing to do this shows that people learned to use race and to twist typical norms

of racism to benefit themselves. The use of these children for the benefit of themselves is comparable to Roxy's use of Tom and Chambers to benefit herself and her learned view of racism. Her decision to switch the boys comes "after Percy Driscoll accuses his slaves of theft and threatens to sell them 'down the river' should no one confess" (Nichols 114). Roxy knows what this means for her young child and fears the worst. The Judge uses a form of propaganda to keep his slaves in check while displaying racism. He knows what their deepest fears are, and he plays into them in order to maintain his power over them. Eventually Roxy learns to do the same when she uses Tom to get money and to maintain her freedom. She uses Tom's gambling and his inheritance to support her plight for freedom and wealth.

Wilson uses what he knows about race and what he has learned from the town to get the citizens to fully accept his case; he wants to prove that Tom—Chambers—killed Judge Driscoll. If the citizens of Dawson's Landing were not so easily influenced by the idea of white dominance and racism, they may not have easily believed that Tom was the one who killed his uncle and that he is actually black not white. Garrett Nichols states that "[b]oth Wilson and Roxy expertly understand and manipulate the strategies of power in Dawson's Landing" (124). However, Wilson is able to infuse science with what people have learned about race and implements racism to further enhance the credibility of his case while being able to correct Roxy's wrongdoings: "Wilson strips Roxy of her tools of subversion, stabilizing the confusion that troubles the town" (Nichols 124). Wilson is able to use assumed ideas and thoughts about racism to further prove that Tom—Chambers—is the one who killed the judge. Because whites are so willing to assert their power over blacks, the white citizens are more willing to believe that Wilson is correct. Wilson seems to be playing into the learned ideas of racism and race. He is able to blend science and theories to prove who the true killer is. Wilson also plays into the love that the citizens have for the judge, a white powerful figurehead of the town, so that the town almost has to believe his case and the evidence presented.

One may argue that the idea of racism is inherent rather than learned, and this is true to some extent. Scientists and psychologists have been interested in studies focusing on nature versus

nurture for many years. According to Saul McLeod—author of “Nature vs Nurture in Psychology” — “This debate within psychology is concerned with the extent to which particular aspects of behavior are a product of either inherited (i.e. genetic) or acquired (i.e. learned) characteristics” (McLeod). In a study completed in 2005, “Nature and Nurture in Own-Race Face Processing,” scientists from the Department of Psychology at Tel-Aviv University studied infant children in an attempt to discover whether or not infants are biased when it comes to race. The scientists and psychologists stated that “[t]he purpose of the... research was to assess whether infants as young as [three] months of age show preference for own-race faces relative to other-race faces, and whether the development of such preference is modulated by infants’ exposure to members of other races in the immediate social environment” (Bar-Haim 2). The results from their studies showed that there may be a link between preferences of one’s race versus another.

Interestingly, psychologist Yair Bar-Haim and his colleagues discovered that, yes, there are natural tendencies and biases for one’s own race. They also learned that “children who came from integrated schools and lived in mixed-race neighborhoods showed smaller biases than children from segregated schools” (2), suggesting that a major contribution to the ideas of racism are derived from what is taught, not necessarily always what one is born with. Similarly, because Tom and Chambers were raised by members of a different race, they, too, displayed a similar bias. Bar-Haim then states that “although the ability to categorize faces on the basis of characteristic facial features may be a prerequisite for the development of own-race favoritism, it is clearly not a sufficient condition for such favoritism. In this respect, the present study is novel in showing that actual preference for own-race faces may be present as early as [three] months of age” (4). With additional research, he noted that “[e]arly preferences for own-race faces may contribute to race-related biases later in life, perhaps by facilitating cognitive and emotional processing of own-race faces” (5); again, further supporting that the nurturing of children by their parents can significantly influence how a child perceives race, which potentially leads to interpreting racism. Bar-Haim also details that “the role of the environment in shaping the own-race

bias by showing that early intensive contact with other-race faces can overturn the bias" (4); meaning that although children may have bias' about racism, that they can eventually learn to change their minds, so to say.

In short stories such as Flannery O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger," the idea that whiteness appears to be learned is presented. Being seen as an author who dabbles in the shocking side of racism and literature, O'Connor displays how race is learned. The scene takes place in Georgia, where a young boy, Nelson, and his grandfather travel to Atlanta. While on the train the young boy—who claims that he would know a black man if he saw one—has his first encounter with a "coffee-colored man" (254). Having not been in close contact with a black man before, Nelson did not recognize the man's race, he only knew him as being a fat man. Once Nelson found out he was a black man, he immediately vocalized and internalized all of the racist thoughts his grandfather had taught him—thoughts he would not have known to place in the same category as the black man had his grandfather not taught him. Nelson's initial lack of understanding followed by his immediate hatred for a man that he does not know signals the influence of racism and how one learns how to interpret racism.

Nelson attempts to extend his learned hatred for blacks when he encounters a black woman, but he does not know how. Instead, Nelson is confused about how he should perceive the woman—knowing that she is black—and he develops a sense of longing for her. Nelson "suddenly wanted her to reach down and pick him up and draw him against her" (262). Nelson's confusion displays his lack of understanding of the ideas of whiteness and blackness. Nelson is beginning to learn how to treat people who are different than his as inferiors, but he does not understand the concept. He has not been fully assimilated by his grandfather in regards to racism, so Nelson does not know how to decipher his feelings. Similarly, Tom is taught how to display racism, especially at an early age, but he, like Nelson, does not fully understand the extent of his mistreatment. When Chambers saves Tom from drowning, Tom immediately goes on the defense, asserting that he would never "remain publicly and permanently under such an obligation as this to a nigger, and to this nigger of all niggers" (Twain 19).

However, Tom contradicts this statement when he willingly plays with Chambers, signaling how he is in the process of learning to make Chambers inferior because of his race. Because of Roxy's switch, the boys learn how to internalize what they have been taught about race. The race the two boys now associate with has now taken control of their lives; they have completely infused their "new" race with everything they know.

When viewed through the lens of modern society, one can easily determine that racism is still learned. Currently, racism is still learned through listening to music, watching television, or simply going to the store. When meeting an old acquaintance (a young African American male), asking what they have been up to, and receiving the response, "just bein' black," certain questions arise—what exactly does it mean to be black? How do you respond to this? Why would someone say this? Ultimately, such instances remind us that even in today's society, issues involving race are still occurring. Through what is learned from the radio, television, and general observations, ideas on racism are formed; some people may have racist thoughts when observing a young group of black males because they associate them with crime, while some people may have racist thoughts when listening to the radio. By internalizing what other people deem racist, people learn how to act. Racism becomes a tool that people use to learn how to express it and how to learn what racism means to different races.

Sarah Song, an author at Stanford University, discusses how educators are infusing lessons on multiculturalism. To help prevent racism in current society, education programs are implementing courses that deal with multiculturalism: "a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity" (Song). When teaching multiculturalism, students young and old will have to understand that "[m]ere toleration of group differences is said to fall short of treating members of minority groups as equal citizens; recognition and positive accommodation of group differences [is] required" (Song). Admittedly, the idea of multiculturalism being taught is relatively new, and there are some critics who disagree with the implication of it in schools, but there are supporters of its cause. By learning and understanding multiculturalism, the hope is that people will be able to broaden their minds, to understand the

world, and to recognize that all human beings are fundamentally the same.

Mark Twain plays with the idea of nature versus nurture when dealing with racism in *Puddn'head Wilson*. Throughout the novel readers develop a sense that the vast majority of racism stems from nurture, although the underlying layer of racism may partly originate from nature. Not only does *Puddn'head Wilson* confront the stigma of nature versus nurture, it addresses issues regarding race and the “one drop” rule—blacks in the novel are sectioned off from greater society simply because they have one-sixteenth of black blood that “out-voted the other fifteen parts” (Twain 7). Both Tom and Chambers are taught how to be white and black, they are taught what society deems important regarding race and both have been forced to experience race from another’s perspective when they are simultaneously forced to revert back to their true identities. Roxy and Wilson use what their town has already learned about race and to benefit them; “[b]oth are keen observers of human nature, and both understand how power works in Dawson’s Landing” (Nichols 111). Roxy is able to switch the boys because they look similar—so similar that Tom’s own father cannot tell which baby he is—and because the town has already established that Roxy and her child are fair skinned. Wilson “on the other hand, ends up introducing new strategies in order to more firmly cement the structure that already exists” (Nichols 111) to prove who murdered Judge Driscoll. By reading and understanding how racism is learned, people may be able to better understand how to infuse ideas such as multiculturalism to help prevent racism.

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***Moll Flanders* and *Jane Eyre* as Sorts of Conduct Novels**

Nathan Strickland

Given the conduct book's long life and popularity, stretching from as far back as Chaucer and other writers of the Middle Ages, it should come as no surprise that these pages of patriarchal propaganda persisted well into the eighteenth century, and arguably even further. Srividhya Swaminathan defines the conduct book in her essay "Defoe's Alternative Conduct Manual" as follows: "Written in didactic prose, post-Restoration conduct manuals provide religious and secular instruction on proper behavior and delineate the duties of men and women within the home and within society" (517-18). These books often contained sexually loaded analyses of the parent/child, master/servant, and husband/wife relationships, clearly granting privilege to one over the other, while not so subtly advising quiet patience and submission, especially in the case of women, whether wives, sisters, or daughters. Writers of such rule books included John Gregory—who Mary Wollstonecraft lexically smote in her feminist treatise *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*—and Daniel Defoe, men who sought to inform the inhabitants of an ideal social apparatus how to act virtuously, often advising women to restrain their liberties in favor of "practicality." Because of the rigidity of England's social structures, then, conduct manuals played a commodified social role for both the writers and readers of these commanding books; that is, they reinforced the notion that men owned their wives and daughters, which similarly reinforced men's desire to bend women to their patriarchal will. Traditional conduct books maintained popularity despite their disenfranchising nature, so it comes as no surprise that writers such as Daniel Defoe and Charlotte Brontë wrote radical inversions of them—magnified through the lenses of Naomi Wolf's feminist philosophy and dialectical analysis—in *Moll Flanders* and *Jane Eyre*, with Brontë's novel being the more socially useful of the two. Returning to Swaminathan's essay, she asserts that conduct manuals were written to inform the denizens of environs in which "the basic needs of food and shelter are met"

(518) and there stood a strong family and economic stability; however, these standards very well exclude Defoe's eponymous hero and victim of social circumstance, Moll Flanders. Even the laziest reader need not look far into *Moll Flanders* to observe her childhood lack of familial and economic stability, as she notes these absences on the book's first page. Because the England of Moll's time lacked "the House of Orphans" familiar in France, she laments,

I was not only exposed to very great distresses, even before I was capable either of understanding my case or how to amend it, but brought into a course of life which was not only scandalous in itself, but which in its ordinary course tended to the swift destruction both of soul and body. (1)

In other words, Moll's destiny seems socially predetermined toward what Dr. Gregory would label fallen conduct long before she can play a conscious role in her care. She comes into the care of a nurse, during which time she first becomes acquainted with the idea of commodifying herself, as with the Mayoress who eventually takes her in as family after paying Moll for her quaint talk.

It is this episode in Moll's narrative which fetters her firmly to the patriarchy, as she—at least from a conduct standpoint—regresses from selling her personality to selling her body, which introduces the victim feminist ideology that, as Naomi Wolf puts it in *Fire With Fire*, money acts as a contaminant to the female psyche (136). During her tenure with the Mayoress's family, Moll falls for young, knavish Robin's older brother who sneaks around to talk with and kiss her, after which he hands her five guineas (14), an exchange ritual which he continues as he makes further sexual advances toward Moll. After sexual activity just short of intercourse (so Moll says) Moll reflects on her conduct:

Had I acted as became me, and resisted as virtue and honour require, this gentleman had either desisted his attacks, finding no room to expect the accomplishment of his design, or had made fair and honourable proposals; in which case, whoever had blamed him, nobody could have blamed me. (16)

Instead, she accepts more money as this older brother continues to use her for sexual gratification, a social exchange which simultaneously endears Moll to patriarchal economic codes of signification and binds her to an inauthentic feminine identity.

Swaminathan makes her point abundantly clear: Moll, as well as the other female characters in the text, survives most aptly when enclosed in a strong, supportive female social network. Moll herself demonstrates this in the vulnerable state between meeting the London banker and getting pregnant by a falsely forced Lancashire husband, as she needs assistance which her landlady brings by referring her to a midwife (127) who Swaminathan identifies as Moll's most intimate confidante. As she points out, Mother Midnight—Moll's governess, as she calls her—teaches her the art of survival through thievery, and advises her in many issues, helping her get the better of the foppish knave from the Bartholomew Fair scene (186), and ultimately supplying her with an alibi after she gets thrown into Newgate, forging Moll's escape to Virginia. While this helps Moll, it reflects further conduct descent and also shows another element of victim feminism, as Naomi Wolf explains. She speaks of the victim feminism mythos, asserting that women in this ideology seek to communicate and connect (144), the two things Moll most needs within the text to survive, showing her in the less-than-ideal light of victimization, reinforced by her penitence at the end of her life (which echoes the Nietzschean notion of resentment from *The Genealogy of Morals*), unlike Charlotte Brontë's hero Jane Eyre, who ultimately stands as a figure of power feminism through a critical dialectical analysis of sex.

Brontë's employment of Hegelian dialectic discourse, similar to yet different from Moll's physically alternative conduct, shows *Jane Eyre* to be something of a psychologically alternative conduct book, wherein women analyze thesis and antithesis to arrive at positivist synthesis. That is to say, Brontë masterfully deconstructs the sexual binaries which recur throughout the novel (male/female, master/slave, and angel/monster, for instance) and shows them to be necessary parts of a unified whole, much as in Hegel's positivist and progressivist vision of history. The claim of Brontë's philosophical parentage by Hegel may seem like a stretch, but Jane's time with St. John reveals Brontë's leaning on Hegel's brand of German ideal-

ism, as Jane learns German so she may read Schiller (Brontë 338), one of Hegel's most eminent pupils; however, St. John's Christian imperialism stomps this idealism out, as he makes Jane switch to studying Hindustanee with him. The most apparent example of the dialectic at play lies in the opposition between Jane and Bertha, both who reflect antithetical components of Brontë, as Toril Moi explains of Gilbert and Gubar in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics*. Moi asserts, "The angel and the monster, the sweet heroine and the raging madwoman, are aspects of the author's self-image, as well as elements of her treacherous anti-patriarchal strategies" (60). This notion appeals to the reader as especially empowering, since Brontë describes Bertha as an unnatural woman in contrast to Jane; however, as Moi goes on to point out, the very idea of natural femininity is simply a social construct by which the patriarchy ascribes its desired characteristics as "natural" (64). Thus, the binary of natural/unnatural femininity falls apart through dialectical synthesis, ultimately demonstrating an alternative, psychologically subversive conduct, as Bertha's violence and sexuality become suggested modes of acceptable female expression for Brontë, one of Wolf's many tenets of power feminism (138). Unlike the victimized Moll, Jane stands to empower the female sex.

In sum, the difference between Moll's life of victimization and Jane's life of empowerment is one of social use; that is, Jane's life acts as a model of strong feminine conduct, whereas Moll's story serves the purpose of instilling senses of fear and penitence in women. Jane holds tightly to another of Wolf's tenets of power feminism in that she exercises the right to determine her life (138), which she claims outright as she flees from St. John to Rochester: "It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play, and in force" (Brontë 358, emphasis mine). Therein lies an important distinction between Moll and Jane: Moll can only have agency in the world by splitting her psyche into wily or subservient types, whereas Jane stakes claim of her agency not by dividing her angelic and monstrous sides, but rather by incorporating elements of both into an organic whole therefore promoting a more psychologically healthy way of living. Thus, Jane's psychologically alternative conduct ultimately accomplishes both physical and metaphysical ends, whereas Moll's physically alternative conduct reaps only of fiscal benefits.

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Like Father, Like Son: Attempted Revisions of English Masculinity in *Emma*

Leeanne Hoovestol

Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815) is generally considered another marriage novel. However, each of the titular protagonist's potential suitors presents the heroine with not just different types of potential husbands, but with potential revisions of England's idyllic man. Critic Warren Roberts describes in "Nationalism and Empire" that Britain and France were essentially at war with one another in a struggle for empire from 1793 until 1815, with only brief bouts of "peace" (330). Written and published at the end of this politically charged time, *Emma* explores the social effect of this political destabilization, specifically as it pertains to the English definition and expectation of masculinity. Roberts focuses primarily on a comparison between Frank Churchill and George Knightley, and his analysis culminates in the idea that the two figures represent the dichotomy between England and France (335). He explains an association of certain qualities—such as seriousness, brilliance, plainness—as English, and other, "more fashionable" qualities as French in order to concretize this idea (334). Such a comparison expectedly renders the "tru[ly] English" Knightley the "better" of the two (Austen 99; Roberts 335).

Claudia Johnson likewise consents to the popular interpretation that Mr. George Knightley and Frank Churchill represent nationalistic figures of England and France, respectively. In "Not at All What a Man Should Be!": Remaking English Manhood in *Emma*," she aligns the character of George Knightley with the political context: he serves "to recover a narrative tradition of gentry liberty, which valued its manly independence from tyrannical rule." In this manner, Knightley opposes such courtly rule that was exposed during the 1790s through the French Revolution (201). The "French-ness" that Knightley opposes manifests in the character of Frank Churchill, whom Mr. Knightley declares "can only be amiable in French, not in English." Although Knightley acknowledges Frank's seemingly "amiable" disposition and "very good manners," he criticizes Frank's lack of "English delicacy

towards the feelings of other people,” which Knightley equates with amiableness, and therefore concludes that there is “nothing really amiable about him [Frank]” (Austen 159). Even without Knightley’s accusations of Frank’s questionable national alliance, Emma notes his forceful desire to “prove to belong to the place.” On a walk through town, Frank states that he wants to go into Ford’s, a local shop, so that he may “be a true citizen of Highbury.” He furthermore insists that he “must buy something at Ford’s. It will be taking out [his] freedom” (203). Frank’s behavior suggests performance—“there was an air of foppery and nonsense about [him],” both of which are traits that fall into Roberts’ characteristically categorized “French-ness.”

Unlike the false character of Frank Churchill, Mr. Woodhouse authentically typifies the ideal sentimental man, despite his reputation as “a silly old woman.” Johnson argues that the examination of Mr. Woodhouse in his appropriate historical context reveals that he “represents the ideal of sentimental masculinity,” and that he even “typi[fies] the venerated paternal figures” of earlier texts, rather than deviating from them. Mr. Woodhouse’s “typified” qualities include “sensitivity, tenderness, ‘benevolent nerves,’ allegiance to the good old ways, courtesies to the fair sex, endearing irrationality, and even slowness, frailty, and ineptitude.” Elaborating on the idea of “benevolent nerves,” Johnson explains that “during the 1790s, a man’s ‘benevolent nerves’ carried a national agenda,” meaning that this particular disposition reflected the spirit of the nation—its hospitality and goodness, which constituted the “age of chivalry.” In opposition to the coldness of the new regime, a sentimental man’s authority was legitimized by his sensitivity, which enabled him “to rule by weakness rather than force.” Additionally, his “attachment to the old ways preserved continuity and order, while qualities such as energy, penetration, forcefulness, brusqueness, bluntness, and decision were deemed dangerous, volatile, and cold.” The crucial difference Johnson highlights is that a sentimental man earned his virtue by “the love he inspired in others, not by...the power he wielded over them.” Johnson encapsulates the sentimental qualities of this “old kind of gentleman” by using the term “a Woodhousian man” to both characterize and reference this specific type of masculinity occurring in the late eighteenth century. Mr. Woodhouse represents

an older type of masculinity, one which was fading out with the older generations of gentlemen, which is perhaps why he appears a comedic figure in the novel. However, any perverseness of his character is due to the novel's attempt to redefine a type of masculinity that Johnson explains was already "under reconstruction" at the time that the novel was written (198).

Critic Laurie Kaplan affirms the assertion of the novel's nationalistic critique, and states that "depictions of fatherhood in the novel create unresolved problems and ambiguities" (237). These depictions crucially function alongside other cultural factors "to create a complex subtext critiquing the state of the nation" (238). The multiple and diverse paternal forms in the text undermine the strength of the characters and subsequently create problems. Without parents, particularly a father, Jane Fairfax is left to the mercy of her poor female relatives, who are likewise unable to support themselves without a male head of household. Thus, this trio of women endure the brunt of the paternal-centered patriarchal structure of their society. Without fathers, these women lack paternal protection and support and must suffer the consequential social disadvantages. During what is described as the Georgian period, there was a series of social reforms, including the grant of a Royal Charter to Captain Thomas Coram in 1739 for the foundation of the Foundling Hospital. This hospital was established in 1742 "for the fare of London's unwanted, illegitimate, or orphaned babies" (239). While the hospital was charitable in nature, it evolved into "England's' first public gallery for contemporary art" as well as a "fashionable place to worship" due to the efforts of artistic benefactors such as William Hogarth and George Handel (240). The exhibits these and other benefactors held and hosted popularized the hospital, but such popularity led to a tightening of security, and "In 1801, the Foundling Hospital revised its admission standards" (241). Such "revisions" stipulated that in order to be accepted, a child must "be illegitimate or the offspring of a father killed in military service, and under one year." Preference was given to "the children of mothers who had been the victims of male deception, such as a false promise of marriage." Additionally, mothers were required "to provide two character references" (242). These new stipulations made it difficult for an orphaned child to be accepted, resulting in the abandonment of "thousands of unwanted children

each year in London." Given this context, Kaplan concludes that "the Highbury orphans...are the lucky ones" (240).

Her catalog of the "Highbury orphans" includes: Emma, Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax, Harriet, Mr. Elton, Mrs. Elton, "and even Miss Taylor" (237). Kaplan's catalog of orphans necessitates further qualification. These "orphans" do not necessarily lack both parents, although some do—Jane Fairfax, Harriet—, but they lack at least one parent—Emma and Frank—, or their story line fails to include the mention of a parent—as is the case with Mr. and Mrs. Elton and Miss Taylor. Despite these stipulations, these characters all require paternal supplementation. In this orphan-filled novel, Mr. Woodhouse functions as surrogate father to many of these characters, particularly the men, and it is the men that require a proper masculine influence: he is father-in-law to both Mr. Knightleys, and potential father-in-law to both Mr. Elton and Mr. Frank Churchill. In effect, Mr. Woodhouse fulfills, or nearly fulfills, the role of surrogate father for all major male figures in the text; he serves as the central masculine figure, representative of the sentimental tradition, and all other male characters show possible revisions of that tradition, with George Knightley succeeding as the new ideal man. Thus, Mr. Woodhouse is the father of the novel's original masculinity, and the other men function as his "sons," attempting to adapt their father's tradition to the changed social atmosphere. Much criticism of *Emma* concerns the national crisis of an undefined masculine identity. These criticisms unanimously name George Knightley as the most ideal of the available *Emma* successors to the proper Englishman archetype and highlight the falseness of his competitors. I argue that each of the "sons" possesses "Woodhousian" traits and that it is the manner in which they apply these traits that determines their ultimate success as Mr. Woodhouse's successor; it is not George Knightley's acquisition of Woodhousian traits that renders him the preferred son, but rather his unrivaled understanding and sincere application of those traits. In other words, while all of the "sons" share the legacy of a Woodhousian man, it is their inadequate interaction with and adaptation of the model that determines their ultimate marital fates; only George Knightley successfully incorporates the Woodhousian model with the changing social atmosphere and emerges as the new model Englishman.

Critic Michael Kramp also studies the curious relationship between masculinity and political events in *Disciplining Love: Austen and the Modern Man*. He claims that “Austen repeatedly represents men who monitor their sexualities as part of their larger civic duties” (2). The 1790s were a time of great uncertainty, and so to “politiciz[e] gender” helped to secure more solid and unwavering definitions of gender, which was “integral to larger reform projects” (18). These reforms constituted a revision of England’s nationalistic attitude: public policies began requiring censuses in order to count the number of able-bodied men in the country. Men became able to gain status through identification as a nationalist—their patriotism won them recognition previously ignored in the middle and lower classes. The newfound ability to gain masculine authority publically led men to revise their private masculinity as well because the two—public and private—began to rely more upon one another. The previous model for male masculinity was discarded without a definite replacement, which caused several different attempts to construct one (18-19). This link of public and private masculinity was problematic because if a man failed to maintain his masculinity privately, then his public influence and reputation also suffered. While the bourgeois men had previously maintained public influence without a necessary correlation to their private lives, they were now expected to maintain that same stature at home; this proved a new challenge for some men, and disallowed for the continuation of a Woodhousian man. He explains that “the men of Austen’s corpus negotiate these models of masculinity in order to stabilize their social/sexual subjectivities and gain access to the national community” (21). Kramp engages in a similar discussion as Johnson—he even references her—and states that George Knightley represents “an archetype of modern masculinity” because he is both chivalric and yet also a man of reason (110). In other words, Knightley is a fusion of the past and the newly emerging ideal of masculinity, and it is his negotiation of these models that allows him to balance his masculine qualities properly and effectively.

Emma witnesses an encounter between Mr. Woodhouse and George Knightley. Mr. Woodhouse, compelled by the dictates of his particular brand of civility, must play host to his visitor: “Mr. Knightley, who had nothing of ceremony about him, was offering

his short, decided answers, an amusing contrast to the protracted apologies and civil hesitations of the other." Despite familial ties and a close friendship with Knightley, Mr. Woodhouse adheres to the social dictates instilled in his generation. Mr. Knightley realizes this, but feels such behavior is unnecessary, asking, "My dear sir, do not make a stranger of me," suggesting that the close acquaintance renders such social dictates antiquated (Austen 55). This scene hints at a departure from the overt Woodhousian model, yet George Knightley always respects and generally seeks to uphold his predecessor's honor. Upon the cancellation of the excursion to Box Hill—a trip in which Mr. Woodhouse would not be taking part—George Knightley alternately proposes a visit to his home, Donwell Abbey. Though the majority of the guests partake in outdoor activities—picking strawberries and exploring the grounds—George Knightley makes special arrangements for Mr. Woodhouse: "[he] had done all in his power for Mr. Woodhouse's entertainment. Books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos, corals, shells, and every other family collection within his cabinets, had been prepared for his old friend, to while away the morning" (371). Woodhouse responds approvingly, thinking "it very well done...very kind and sensible" and admits to "ha[ving] been exceedingly well amused" (365, 371). The outdoor activities—picking berries—though not thought a traditionally masculine activity, is more physical than Mr. Woodhouse's sentimental alterative. Thus, this proposed alternative activity reflects George Knightley's mediation between the sentimental and the more fashionable. Additionally, this scene foreshadows George Knightley's impending succession with Mr. Woodhouse's reference to him as "friend"; George Knightley is the only "son" of Woodhouse who receives this recognition.

George Knightley seemingly unknowingly prepares to assume Mr. Woodhouse's familial position. As uncle to John and Isabella's children, George Knightley already maintains a dominant position in the family that he shares with Mr. Woodhouse. George attends family visits and presides as master to the Knightleys' Donwell estate. His position as an authoritative male in the family already stands to threaten Mr. Woodhouse's somewhat marginal standing in both his family and community. Despite their friendship, "Mr. Woodhouse could never allow

for Mr. Knightley's claims on his brother [John Knightley], or any body's claims on Isabella, except his [Mr. Woodhouse's] own" (79). Mr. Woodhouse, as the ruling patriarch of his family, disallows ownership claims from any other masculine figures. Unlike his brother John, George Knightley signals a potentially threatening powerful masculine figure. George stands to claim Mr. Woodhouse's last remaining daughter, his property, and his social reputation. Mr. Woodhouse's hesitation in allowing George Knightley to attend dinner during Isabella and John's visit signals a failing patriarch—he is unable to stop the encroachment of the younger man. However, Mr. Woodhouse's consideration and attempt to dissuade Emma from inviting George hints at his uneasiness and foreshadow his later resistance to their marriage. While George may show signs of encroachment, he remains a subversive patriarch, unwilling and unable to fully transcend the position, at least while Mr. Woodhouse lives. George Knightley's patience towards Mr. Woodhouse reveal the sincerity of his respect for the older sentimental tradition, as well as his mediated patriarchal stance.

George takes a modern approach to lecture Emma—his advice is not the mumbled cautions of Mr. Woodhouse, but rather an insistent lecture. "This is not pleasant to you, Emma—and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will,—I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now" (384). Emma later reflects on this criticism with regard to her father: "As a daughter, she hoped she was not without a heart. She hoped no one could have said to her, 'How could you be so unfeeling to your father?—I must, I will tell you truths while I can.'" (386). Her application of his advice to her father suggests a shift in the dominant male influence on her—from Mr. Woodhouse to George. The somewhat harsh approach in which George addresses Emma signals another slight departure from his predecessor, as well as Emma's positive reception to that change. Whereas Mr. Woodhouse offers only minimal suggestive advice to Emma, George Knightley does not hesitate in providing constructive criticism. Woodhouse's advice usually regards Emma's preoccupation with match-making and, being resistant

to change, he attempts to dissuade her. Mr. Knightley's criticisms usually form in response to behavior he disapproves—he advises to instigate change.

Perhaps the most divergent topic concerning George Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse's friendship involves George's desire to marry Emma. Mr. Woodhouse admits, "I never encourage[d] any body to marry" (284). Despite developing and acknowledging feelings for George Knightley, Emma resolutely decides, "Marriage...would not do for her. It would be incompatible with what she owed to her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father. She would not marry, even if she were asked by Mr. Knightley" (425). Emma's inner turmoil and extensive contemplation over marriage signals her sense of paternal duty—she cannot abandon her father. Yet, she ultimately marries George Knightley, effectively replacing the central masculine and paternal figure in her life. In this act, Emma chooses and indirectly advocates for the revised masculinity of George Knightley. Her choice is validated by Knightley's acceptance of the role of Mr. Woodhouse in both of their lives, while Knightley retains the actual power over all of them. With Mr. Woodhouse's discouragement and Emma's seeming resolve, George's primary struggle in his pursuit of Emma is "how to...ask her to marry him, without attacking the happiness of her father" (459). His consideration of the union necessarily involves Mr. Woodhouse's sentiments and importance. While Emma retreats to the safety of continuation and resistance to change, claiming that she only needs "him [George] but to continue [to be] the same Mr. Knightley to her and her father," George persists in creating a most palatable solution for all involved parties. He merges Mr. Woodhouse's propensity for continuation with his and Emma's desire to progress their relationship; this proposed plan involves renouncing his home for Hartfield, which Emma recognizes as a sacrifice of Knightley's masculine independence (460). Despite George's willingness to compromise, Mr. Woodhouse cannot agree to the idea. It is only when outside threats—pilfering—threatens his personal safety that he concedes to the marriage.

Ultimately, George Knightley cannot emerge as the replacement of English masculinity until Mr. Woodhouse gives his

consent. Woodhouse's sentimental disposition delays the inevitable change in his household structure. However, external forces combine to necessitate the change:

Mr. Woodhouse was very uneasy [over stories of pilfering in Highbury]; and but for the sense of his son-in-law's [John's] protection, would have been under the wretched alarm every night of his life. The strength, resolution, and presence of mind of the Mr. Knightleys, commanded his fullest dependence. While either of them protected him and his, Hartfield was safe.—But Mr. John Knightley must be in London again by the end of the first week in November. The result of this distress was, that, with a much more voluntary, cheerful consent than his daughter had ever presumed to hope for at that moment, she was able to fix her wedding-day. (495)

The changed atmosphere of Highbury, now made to feel unsafe, reflects England's political turmoil at this time. While the idea of a sentimental and chivalric man may harken back to a previously safer time, even the most rigid Woodhousian man must consent to reality and relinquish his authority. During and after England's warring period with France, it becomes no longer practical or possible to rule by kindness, yet the opposite disposition seems likewise improper. An overly aggressive disposition was assumed by the British government through Imperialism, which was criticized during its time, and so an imposing disposition would likewise prove inhumane or unnecessary. Such context paves the way for George Knightley's new Englishman-hood to emerge; he is kind, but firm; genteel, yet humble; wise, but human. While his unique composition of characteristics is irreproducible, they should nevertheless inspire others to attain such a mediated and moderate type of masculinity.

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“[B]ut it had gone wild”: Slavery, Ecofeminism, and Post- Colonialism in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Angeline Bullington

Charlotte Brontë’s popular novel *Jane Eyre*, which was published in 1847, is known across the literary spectrum for its surplus of information concerning female identity and independence. When Jean Rhys, a modern author on subjects like the West Indies, read Rochester’s “madwoman” in the attic, she decided to morph the story into an in-depth historical narrative about the unfortunate woman who finds her demise at Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*. In her novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, Rhys explores a new plot for Bertha Mason, giving her a proper identity and resurfacing her historical background. While Bertha, or Antoinette, is the focus of the novel, two other women are present—Antoinette’s mother, Annette, and Christophine, who is Annette’s servant. These two women represent separate narratives of exile even though they are both Martinique natives. While Annette is not described as being forced from her home, she is never happy at Coulibri Estate. The wild and overgrown atmosphere plays a key role in the unhappiness and withering mental state of Annette—she is not only a reflection of Antoinette’s future, but a specific reference to female condition, or, unwanted marriage and early marriage. Christophine is taken from her homeland, given to Annette as a present, and she supplies Antoinette with her identification to the black Caribbean culture. Antoinette herself is the ultimate form of what her mother represents—a woman taken from her home, whether by will or force—and given to a man for his control. Even though the novel does not allow an agreement or disagreement with her status as the “madwoman,” her story offers an alternate background to the woman in the attic, a history full of racial and cultural diversity. An ecofeminist reading of Antoinette, Annette, and Christophine and their surroundings reveals that the harsh reality of the regional and cultural spaces around them affects

their relationships with each other, as well as the way men and their community harshly treat them.

As the author of a novel dealing with the life and culture of nineteenth century Jamaica, Jean Rhys is a critical component to the reception of the plot and historical context of the book because she herself is from the same background. In the book *Creole Crossings*, Carolyn Vellenga Berman includes a quote from Rhys in which she states, “So I could manage Part I because I *did* go to a convent. [. . .] The place I have called Coulibri existed, and still does” (169). Rhys grew up in Dominica, and she uses her childhood home and experiences as the setting of the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Angier 3). In her book, *Jean Rhys: Life and Work*, Carole Angier details the connection between Rhys’s last novel and her life growing up. Even though Rhys names the setting of the beginning of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Jamaica, Angier develops a relationship between Antoinette’s home, Coulibri Estate, and the childhood home of Rhys, Dominica. Angier describes the hardships of the land, saying, “On top of violence and excess Dominica has always had ineradicable poverty and plain bad luck. It has always been hard to work here: the interior repels all effort” (4). However, along with the severity of the Dominican land, there is beauty; for example, Angier also writes, “Colours are brighter, smells stronger; trees and flowers and insects grow bigger. So much grows so quickly that almost everything has a parasite . . . All this careless, cannibal life is beautiful, but also sinister” (3). In other words, just like the land itself embodies a mixture of violence and beauty, Rhys is able to capture this mixture of brutality and blessings of the land in order to create a space for Antoinette to grow into her complex identity.

One of the first main spaces the narrator, who is young Antoinette, introduces to the audience is her home, Coulibri Estate. Antoinette describes the garden at Coulibri as a reflection of the entire estate. Through an analogy of the garden and the Garden of Eden, Antoinette constructs a contradictory image of a wild and overgrown area, which mirrors the deteriorating state of the family that lives there. This garden, Antoinette describes, is “large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible—the tree of life grew there” (19). Here, Antoinette establishes that she recognizes an image of beauty in her garden and is able to place it in the same context as

the Garden of Eden. However, she immediately deconstructs this haven-like image when she states, “But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell” (19). Since there are no longer any slaves at Coulibri Estate, no one is left to cultivate the garden; thus, it turns wild. While literally, the garden itself is “wild,” this is analogous with the relationship between Antoinette and her mother, which has in its own way “gone wild.” Even though there is still humanity existing in and around the garden, the ruin, or “smell of dead flowers,” intermingles with the fresh life of the garden (19). This negativity complicates the beauty of the area while also giving it depth. In other words, Antoinette remembers a time when she loved her mother and describes enjoying sitting and watching her; however, now the relationship is failing as her mother’s mental state deteriorates, and Antoinette places the audience in the middle of this decline. After her description of the garden, Antoinette recounts a conversation with her mother in which Annette speaks to her daughter “angrily” and pushes her away, and Antoinette, thinking aloud for the audience, says, “Once I would have gone back quietly to watch her asleep on the blue sofa—once I made excuses to be near her when she brushed her hair, a soft black cloak to cover me, hide me, keep me safe” (22). In the past, Antoinette admired her mother because Annette represented beauty and comfort for her; however, now that beauty has transformed into something not necessarily ugly, but something primitive and untamed. Like the garden that morphs into strange things, such as the octopus flowers, the mother/daughter relationship alters over time as Annette’s mental stability grows weaker.

In addition to the parallel between the garden and the mother/daughter relationship, the garden also stands as a reflection of the estate as a whole, the home and the people. After establishing the connection between Eden and her own garden, Antoinette goes on to detail the images of wilderness, placing representations of life and death in order to deconstruct her own household. For instance, while she says the light under the tree is “green” with life growing there in the ferns, the flowers that are also there represent death. Describing the orchids, Antoinette says they “flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin

brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root" (19). In this image, the twisted root represents the distorted basis of the culture surrounding Antoinette. In other words, similar to the unnatural form the garden has taken, Coulibri's previous slaves twist and morph judgments about the Mason family so much that they eventually destroy the home. With the emancipation of slavery, the surrounding town attempts to gain control over this family they hate. However, the irony of this image lies in the fact that their hate stems from cultural differences the emancipation was meant to solve. As an institution, slavery required the labor of African Americans to uphold the system. Similar to the image of an "octopus orchid," this ideology flourishes and cultivates land for their masters; however, the lack of the slaves has led to the "brown tentacles" and the desolation of the land. At Coulibri Estate, Christophine is one of the last slaves present since the Emancipation Act recently passed (17). However, the concept is still fresh, and people do not quite know how to work this new issue into their lives. Antoinette's mother speaks on the subject with anger, furious that her slaves have left, yet the loss barely affects Antoinette since she "did not remember the place when it was prosperous" (19). She connects the deterioration of the estate with the loss of slavery saying, "All Coulibri Estate had gone wild like the garden, gone to bush," but it does not sadden her because she recognizes that the home never represented "prosperity," but it portrays "beauty" for her. The beauty, present in Antoinette's garden, turns "brown" as the loss of slavery begins to affect the people, specifically her mother, and the surrounding area. While no one is there to care for the land, Christophine, Annette's "girl," stays at Coulibri and she exists in order to maintain Antoinette's link between the land and the culture. In other words, Christophine is the only representation of slavery at the estate; she is Martinique just like Annette, but she was given to Annette as a present. Therefore, Annette assumes she only stays because she now has nowhere else to go, but Antoinette does not mistake Christophine's loss of home as a loss of having a home. While she indeed lives at Coulibri, Antoinette knows there is a possibility of her leaving just like the other slaves, so she avoids and represses this fear.

While she establishes a link between Antoinette and her culture, Christophine represents the problem of slavery in the novel.

Since Jamaica is now emancipated, Christophine is one of the only slaves left at Coulibri Estate. While the Emancipation Act is still fresh on the minds of Jamaicans, the cultural differences still present create a threatening environment for Antoinette and her family. These problems, such as mocking from the old slaves of the Mason home, create fear in Annette and lead to the eventual destruction of the home. The destruction creates a new narrative and outlook for the post-emancipation of the Jamaican township. Surrounding the news of the Emancipation Act, there is sadness at Coulibri Estate, such as the death of Antoinette's father and the general unhappiness of the Estate (17). In the article, "Women, Slavery, and the Problem of Freedom in *Wide Sargasso Sea*," Jennifer Gilchrist discusses the connection of "despair" with the emancipation of slavery. Gilchrist states, "As the Imperial Abolition of Slavery changes the political status of the West Indies from British protectorates to colonies, Antoinette suffers a childhood without protection and an adulthood of cultural and gender oppression" (462). These statements present an idea that Antoinette faces estrangement from her mother after her father dies as well as mockery from her community because of her Creole heritage. Despite her estrangement, she holds no ill feelings for the former slaves and the black community. On the other hand, her mother feels anger and fear toward this community and openly admits that Christophine stays with her because she is her "present," showing that, as a part of the Coulibri Estate, Christophine creates motherly affection and protection for Antoinette when she cannot expect any from her mother (21).

Despite her love toward Christophine, Antoinette cannot escape the fear she experiences when confronting the issue of obeah. In her own words, she explains, "Yet one day when I was waiting there I was suddenly very much afraid . . . I was certain that hidden in the room . . . there was a dead man's dried hand, white chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut, dying slowly, slowly" (Rhys 31). Even though no one has told her about obeah, Antoinette admits that the unknown frightens her. In Regina Barreca's "Women Writing as Voodoo: Sorcery, Hysteria, and Art" she states, "Voodoo is fire and earth and air and water; mostly it is fire and earth. Voodoo as text is particularly interesting in terms of women's exclusion from the masculine 'high culture' script" (Plasa

101). Further, “[Voodoo] works as an interesting metaphor for women’s texts . . . [relying] on the double frame whereby the ‘true’ power of the voodoo spirits is placed under the aegis of ‘accepted’ religion” (101-102). Religion is not an issue in the Jamaican novel; however, the inclusion of obeah (voodoo) speaks to the position the three women find themselves in— confused, displaced, and afraid in Coulibri Estate. It is through specific indications of West Indian culture, such as this inclusion of obeah, that Rhys shapes the reflection of her own background. In her essay “Reflections of Obeah in Jean Rhys’ Fiction,” Elaine Campbell focuses on the practice of obeah in Rhys’s childhood home and how this practice affects Rhys’s fictional writing. Campbell states,

The version of Obeah practiced on Rhys’ home island of Dominica has been described by Rhys herself as a milder version of Voodoo . . . [and] she says about Obeah ‘even in my time nobody was supposed to take it very seriously’ but she confirms the existence of Obeah with an example of a practioner in her own family household. (60)

Through her use of obeah, which stems from her own childhood experience just like many other aspects of the novel, Rhys establishes Christophine as a central character. Since she is brought to Coulibri from Martinique as a wedding gift, Christophine represents property for Annette, but Antoinette does not receive the representation of this culture from her mother who is also Martinique, but from Christophine. Campbell states, “What Wilson Harris call Rhys’ ‘mythic’ treatment of West Indian obeah enabled Rhys to transcend the social barriers imposed by her skin colour . . . What racial barriers prevented Rhys from achieving in actual life, literature enabled her to accomplish through art” (63). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, obeah plays a key role in the element of the mysterious landscape. When Mr. Mason repairs Coulibri, the changes sadden Antoinette; however, it’s not the look of the house that causes the change, but rather the lack of dirt and other un-clean traits. She states, “Coulibri looked the same when I saw it again, although it was clean and tidy, no grass between the flagstones, no leaks” (30). The presence of cleanliness also brings new slaves who “talk about Christophine,” and Antoinette says

this talk is what truly changes her home—not the “repairs or the new furniture,” but “their talk about Christophine and obeah [changes] it” (31). In contrast with the new and clean home, here, Christophine represents the contamination still present in the home. In other words, Rhys does not perfectly explain, nor does Antoinette know for certain, what Obeah is; however, by introducing the practice after Mr. Mason repairs the home, Rhys asserts there is a deeper corruption present in the Coulibri home which begins with Mr. Mason’s coming there. His presence, his wealth and white supremacy, brings destruction to the home.

In contrast to the desolation and unhappiness of Coulibri Estate, Thornfield Hall, where Antoinette eventually ends up in *Jane Eyre*, creates a revision of the colonial discourse in the novel (Hope 51). In the article, “Revisiting the Imperial Archive: *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and the Decomposition of Englishness,” Trevor Hope discusses Rhys’s “return to *Jane Eyre*” and how the destruction of Thornfield Hall reflects “the encounter between two inextricably intertwined discursive structures [...] namely the imperial and the post-colonial” (51, 52). In the beginning of the novel, Rhys revises the destruction of a home, giving a parallel to the ruin of Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette loves Coulibri Estate more than her mother; she feels safety in the garden and the outside world. As she lies in bed after a nightmare, she describes the world outside her window: “There is the tree of life in the garden and the wall green with moss. And the barrier of the cliffs and the high mountains. And the barrier of the sea. I am safe. I am safe from strangers” (27). Antoinette always refers to this tree as the “tree of life” despite the fact that the land is withering away and the slaves are no longer with the family to help with the land; she still recognizes the life in the home and connects the life there to her safety within. While Antoinette feels safe in the borders and barricades of the mountains and the “tree of life,” her mother recognizes the sinister signs of evil, and she begs her new husband to take them away. The “strangers” Antoinette feels safe from are who Annette fears are coming for them. The black community that continue to mock Annette and her family include some of her former slaves, and she says to Mr. Mason, “They are more alive than you are, lazy or not, and they can be dangerous and cruel for reasons you wouldn’t understand”

(33). All of this foreshadowing leads to the ultimate destruction of their home.

By revisiting the destruction of a home through fire, Rhys “decomposes” the structure of *Jane Eyre* in order to establish a statement about the unfair treatment of the land and women in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Hope 53). Annette’s fear and anticipation leads up to the terrible fire that destroys Coulibri. When the family is awoken one night by an angry crowd, Mr. Mason tells Antoinette, “There is no reason to be alarmed . . . A handful of drunken negroes”; then Antoinette says, “A horrible noise swelled up, like animals howling, but worse” (38). Then, the angry emancipated slaves set fire to the house. Christophine says, “They must have climbed that tree outside. This place is going to burn like tinder and there is nothing we can do to stop it. The sooner we get out the better” (40). By using Antoinette’s beloved tree, Rhys implies that the family is no longer safe in this home because Antoinette previously connects the tree to her own safety. The mirroring of the land with the destructive relationships in the family establishes the home as an unsafe territory. In other words, there are several inter-relationships in the novel—Mr. Mason and Annette, Annette and Antoinette, Christophine and Annette and Antoinette, and lastly the relationship between the family as a whole with the negro community. These relationships all contain some form of toxicity and deterioration. Specifically, the marriage between Mr. Mason and Annette does not seem built on love and affection; their differences outweigh their similarities, namely the fact that Mr. Mason feels safe at Coulibri and did not listen to Annette’s warnings about the community, leading to the fire. In comparison with *Jane Eyre*, Rhys takes a different approach to the destruction of a family and their home. In Brontë’s novel, there exists a hope for a new family with the death of Bertha (Antoinette) Mason. When Jane narrates her finding Thornfield Hall in ruin, she is in despair because she was trying to get back to Rochester. Instead, she confronts “blackened ruins” and describes the land, saying, “The lawn, the grounds were trodden and waste . . . no roof, no battlements, no chimneys—all had crashed” (Brontë 414). This image recalls the image of Coulibri Estate burning; however, Jane is then informed that Bertha Mason destroyed Thornfield: “It’s quite certain that it was her and nobody but her, that set it

going . . . she set fire first to the hangings of the room next to her own; and then she got down to a lower story, and made her way to the chamber that had been the governess's . . . and she kindled the bed there" (416). The man informing Jane does not realize he is speaking to the governess, so he does not know the shock the story gives her. Then he describes Bertha Mason: "she was on the roof . . . shouting out till they could hear her a mile off . . . she was a big woman, and had long, black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood . . . and [then she] gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement" (417). Here, an image of Bertha standing on top of the blazing Thornfield is a reflection of her mother, Annette, during the Coulibri fire. Antoinette recalls her mother running to the room of Pierre, her sick brother, and returning with her hair singing, smelling of "burned hair," holding the dead-looking Pierre. Then Rhys presents another wild image of Annette while the family struggles to leave the burning house; Annette is fighting Mr. Mason fiercely trying to "go back for her damned parrot" (41). Here, Rhys is not only supplying the audience with a background for Antoinette's madness, but also displacing Annette's position as a sane, perfect, and positive role model for Antoinette.

The contrast of the images of the two women in two texts written by different authors creates a crucial conversation between the texts. Trevor Hope states that it is important to note that "there is no *single* building that monopolizes either narrative structure . . . these are texts about displacement as much as inhabitation," and he goes on to establish that *Wide Sargasso Sea* "violently decomposes the topographic and textual structures of *Jane Eyre* through various modes of geopolitical dispersal and displacement . . . [providing] the very principle of the structural relationship between the two texts" (53). In other words, while the images of the two homes establish *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* as texts about inhabitation, the displacement of the women in each novel provides a depth to the narrations. The revision of Bertha Mason's story and Rhys's re-imagining of the destruction and deconstruction of a home places importance on how the family "reconstructs" itself. While Bronte allows Jane to have a happy ending with Rochester at the expense of Bertha's blazing suicide, after the fire at Coulibri, Antoinette is further estranged from her mother, and Rhys surprises

the audience with Annette's surprising and mysterious death (61). Therefore, even though Rhys draws a connection between the texts, she dismisses a hopeful and happy ending with the death of Annette and Antoinette's future marriage to Rochester, in which her displacement continues and her unhappiness.

For Jean Rhys, the West Indian culture holds much influence, and in writing *Wide Sargasso Sea* she successfully creates a revision of the post-colonial narrative through this influential landscape. In her own words, Rhys explains the West Indies and its effects on the novel: "The West Indies *had* a (mel?) dramatic quality. A lot that seems incredible could have happened. And did. Girls *were* married for their dots at that time, taken to England and no more heard of. Houses were burnt down by ex slaves, some servants *did* stick—especially children's nurses" (Plasa 96). This harsh yet beautiful land complicates the representation of Bertha Mason in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; while giving an explanation to the state of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys establishes the ecofeminist narrative of Christophine, Annette, and Antoinette relationships with their homeland and the central connection between them. Even though Coulibri is destroyed and their links are thrown in destruction with it, the bond that existed at Coulibri is never lost. Through the influence of the beautiful, but un-clean home, Antoinette finds solace and safety; however, once the land is ruined, so is her independence and freedom as a woman. After the destruction of Coulibri, she marries Rochester and her troubling narrative continues from there. Her link with Coulibri is never truly lost, though, because Christophine maintains her role as Antoinette's motherly guide. Through Christophine's known practice of obeah, she continues the link to the mysterious and beautiful West Indies; similarly, Antoinette represents the wild nature of Coulibri through her wild and destructive "madness" seen in *Jane Eyre*. Therefore, through the narrative of these three women, Rhys establishes the importance of the culture and landscape to the story Brontë barely scratches the surface of.

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Blinding Sight: Carter's Critique of the Reliance on Vision in "The Bloody Chamber"

Abigail Driver

Angela Carter's short story "The Bloody Chamber" tells the story of a young woman who marries a wealthy French marquis. Although her fiancé appears slightly odd at first, she numbs her misgivings with the distraction of his many gifts, the promise of wealth, and the dignity available through an upwardly mobile marriage. Not long into the honeymoon, the young girl makes a horrifying discovery: her husband owns a murdering chamber. In her husband's absence she explores the chamber and uncovers the remains of his previous wives. All at once she realizes that she stands next in line for his game of demented, sexualized murder. Despite the countless visual implications of the marquis's perversion, the girl remains oblivious until she blatantly beholds the crime. While alert readers catch on to the marquis's dark side near the beginning of the story, the girl remains blind to his depravity, creating an ironic presentation of the human ability to gloss over obvious truths in order to create the desired reality and shattering the theory of empiricism, the idea that "all knowledge is derived from sense experience" (dictionary.com). Carter's illustration of the girl's ignorance of the marquis's true nature despite countless visual implications of his corruption hints at the human tendency to skew visual reality and serves as a criticism of the reliance on sight and the theory of empiricism, ultimately questioning the extent to which authenticity can be established when coupled with the often impairing effects of sight.

Evidences of the girl's obliviousness to the marquis's corruption appear intertwined throughout the entire story. From the very beginning, she fails to understand her fiancé through his direct expressions or words because his face "seemed to [her] like a mask, as if his real face, the face that truly reflected all the life he had led in the world before he met [her...] lay underneath this mask" (Carter 1470). Therefore, she looks for visual clues to interpret their relationship. Near the beginning of the story she recalls

how the marquis sent her “a gigantic box that held the wedding dress he’d bought [her], wrapped up in tissue paper and red ribbon” (Carter 1470). In the midst of unwrapping the lavish dress, her mother questions, “Are you sure you love him?” and the girl ignores the question of loving her fiancé (Carter 1470). Rather, she notices how “[t]here was a dress for her [mother], too; black silk, with the dull, prismatic sheen of oil on water,” and replies, “I’m sure I want to marry him” (Carter 1470). Even from the beginning, physical objects distract her from reality. Rather than assuring herself of her love for the marquis, she focuses on the beautiful dresses. Also, later on, the girl uses the extravagant clothing her husband purchases as shield to hide from the reality of interaction with other people. She recounts, “The chauffeur eyed me [...and] I hid behind my furs as if they were a system of soft shields” (Carter 1473). While at first glance the action of hiding behind her furs appears insignificant, it actually furthers the idea of her physical possessions blinding her to reality. Like an ostrich hiding its head in a sandy hole, the girl sinks among her furs, assuming that if she cannot see the chauffeur, then his gaze loses significance. Already vision skews her perception of the world. Carter shatters the philosophy of empiricism as she illustrates how the sensory experience blinds the young bride from reality rather than leading her to the truth and as she demonstrates how vision causes the girl to ignore deeper, more insightful ways of perceiving the events surrounding her life.

Later on, the girl receives significant hints of the marquis’s true nature as they sit in the opera “the night before [their] wedding” (Carter 1471). During the poignant opera, her “heart swelled and ached,” and she muses, “I must truly love him. Yes. I did. On his arm, all eyes were upon me” (Carter 1472). Although she finally confirms her love for her fiancé, her decision appears skewed by the visual revelation that her association with the marquis generates popularity and status. She concludes that she loves him when she notices other people watching and admiring her. Also, once again, the visual representation of material wealth comes into play as she wears a dainty dress he purchased earlier, causing “every one [to stare] at [her]. And at his wedding gift” (Carter 1472). The attention gained through association with the marquis and the luxurious clothes twists the girl’s perception of reality, because

although she “saw him watching [her] in the gilded mirrors with the assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh” (Carter 1472), she remains ignorant, distracted by her sight. She recognizes that she had “never seen, or else had never acknowledged, that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it” (Carter 1472), but immediately becomes distracted when she beholds her own beauty in the surrounding mirrors. Much to the frustration of a readership who grasps the *marquis’s* corruption, the girl remains oblivious, shielded from reality by her glittering image upon the mirrored walls. Again, she misses the truth because of what she sees, reinforcing *Carter’s* critique of empiricism.

Once the newlyweds arrive at the *marquis’s* immense seaside mansion, they settle down to begin their lives together. The girl increasingly discovers visual evidence of her husband’s disturbing nature, but ignores it. As they consummate their marriage in a room “surrounded by so many mirrors [...] on all the walls, in stately frames of contorted gold” (Carter 1474), the whole experience becomes surreal. Rather than focusing on her husband who stands physically present before her, she “watche[s] a dozen husbands approach [her] in a dozen mirrors and slowly, methodically, teasingly, unfasten the buttons off [her] jacket and slip it from [her] shoulders,” and she dwells on the image of her “scarlet, palpitating core” (Carter 1474). Even in sexual foreplay, a deeply intimate moment, the girl remains distracted from her husband’s animalist treatment by her own image in the mirrors and her obsession with deceptive sight rather than reality. Combating the stereotypical male-as-spectator and female-as-object sexual experience, *Carter* establishes the girl as both spectator and object, a combination of roles that leads to an ultimate blindness of the situation. *Carter* recognizes that rather male or female, a focus on vision leads to a dangerous path, and through this moment, *Carter* effectively reinforces the blindness caused by a reliance on vision. The girl’s obsession with her own image and even her husband’s image in the mirrors distracts her from the impending danger and disgrace.

Finally, after days of ignorance, the girl stumbles on evidence that shocks her into understanding the devastating reality of her husband’s perversion. When he leaves her during their honeymoon for a sudden business matter, she explores the mansion.

Before leaving, he warns her, “All is yours, everywhere is open to you—except the lock that this single key fits” (Carter 1478), and he forbids her from entering his personal room where he goes “to savour the rare pleasure of imagining [himself] wifeless” (Carter 1478). Of course his absence coupled with her boredom leads to her harrowing exploration on his forbidden room. Behind the door, she unveils the most blatant evidence of her husband’s depravity—his torture chamber. The light from her match reveals “a room designed for desecration and some dark night of unimaginable lovers whose embraces were annihilation,” and she discovers “a metal figure, hinged at the side, which [she] knew to be spiked on the inside and to have the name: the Iron Maiden” (Carter 1482). This feminized torture instrument greets the blinded female, hinting at her own hand in her impending destruction. As she beholds her husband’s bloody chamber, she finally grasps his true nature and all of the hints she previously ignored materialize in the form of his grotesque instruments, caked in the blood of his previous wives. From the very beginning he purchases her affection with possessions and promises of prestige, all for his demented purpose of sexualized torture, and, in this moment as she gazes upon “the ring for which [she] had sold [herself] to this fate” (Carter 1483), she finally realizes how her reliance on vision brought her to this point. Glittering jewelry and clothes coupled with envious stares from onlookers all added to the girl’s faulty perception of reality, culminating in this moment of utter despair. Throughout the short story, sight presents an immense distraction. Although numerous proofs stand in her path, the visual diversion of romance and finery prevents her from realizing the danger of her situation. When at last vision actually leads to a true understanding of reality, it is too late. The girl has fallen into the murderer’s trap.

Additionally, Carter depicts how sight also blinds the marquis. Distracted by his young wife’s physical appearance during their first sexual encounter, he makes no personal connection with her, and “stripped [her], gourmand that he was, as if he were stripping the leaves off an artichoke” (Carter 1474). Also, during the girl’s explorations of the mansion, she discovers his collection of pornography books. As Sweeney effectively sums up, “These pornographic images are especially significant because the nar-

rator becomes acutely aware of herself as her husband sees her” (Sweeney). Essentially, before the girl’s discovery of the bloody chamber, she remains blind to her husband’s objectification, distracted by all the glittering images of wealth and excitement. Carter realizes the human tendency to become preoccupied by visual representations, and, as Sheets asserts, “Carter assumes that most pornography is reactionary because it serves ‘to reinforce the prevailing system of values and ideas in a given society’” (Sheets 635). Carter understands that many people suffer from an incorrect method of perceiving other humans, especially when people are sexualized, because of the blinding effects of vision. By viewing his new wife like “a housewife in the market” who “inspect[s] cuts on the slab” (Carter 1472) and by surrounding himself with pornography, the marquis way of viewing females in general, especially his wife, becomes skewed by false expectations. He misses the opportunity to connect with his wife on a personal level because of his obsession with what he sees on the surface. Through her demonstration of the marquis’s similar visual impairment, Carter reinforces how sight blinds all people, male, female, wealthy, and poor, repeatedly skewing their perceptions of reality.

Interestingly, Carter furthers her critique of the reliance on vision and visual interpretation through the illustration of two characters with limited to no vision who accurately and swiftly grasp reality. For example, when the girl calls her mother, she “burst[s] into tears” (Carter 1480) and mentions how she has “gold bath taps” (Carter 1480). In that short conversation, the girl never directly confides any misgivings to her mother, and her mention of the bathroom decor only reinforces her focus on sight. However, through the phone call, her mother, unimpaired by vision, discerns trouble brewing. Less than a day later, her mother appears “galloping at a vertiginous speed along the causeway” (Carter 1488) to save her daughter from the bloodthirsty marquis. Without a direct cry for help, the mother perceives her daughter’s need to be rescued. Later on, the girl praises, “I can only bless the—what shall I call it?—the *maternal telepathy* that sent my mother running headlong from the telephone to the station after I had called her” (Carter 1490). Her mother, unhindered by the images of her daughter’s seemingly perfect husband, mansion,

and marriage, successfully comprehends the situation and rushes to her daughter's aid. While empiricism claims that sensory experience leads to comprehension of reality, Carter demonstrates here that often the absence of vision allows for a more accurate assessment of the truth.

Similarly, the girl encounters a blind piano tuner during her first days at the marquis's mansion. Despite his blindness, he grasps the girl's emotions more fully than the marquis. When they first meet, the girl notes, "He was blind, of course; but young, with a gentle mouth and grey eyes that fixed upon me although they could not see me" (Carter 1479). She recognizes that despite his blindness, he understands her emotions and connects with her. As Sivyer asserts, "Instead of turning the young woman into an object of visual pleasure, the piano-tuner listens to her 'touch' and 'technique,' impressed at her skill rather than her appearance. The difference between the Marquis and the piano-tuner is also revealed in their eyes" (Sivyer). The husband sees her, but does not value her. The piano tuner cannot see her, however he connects with her on a personal level, unimpaired by the sense of sight. As Hooks observes in her critical essay, "Only with the blind man who humbly serves her music can Carter envision a marriage of equality for the Marquis' bride" (Hooks). Additionally, his blindness prevents him from seeing the red mark left on her forehead by her previous husband which "[n]o paint nor powder [...] can mask" (Carter 1490), allowing him to perceive her as pure and beautiful, despite her past mistakes. In a way, the piano tuner's inability to see the red mark on the girl's forehead demonstrates the freeing qualities of the lack of vision. If she married a man who daily witnessed the red blot upon her skin, he would often remember her past. However, the piano tuner's blindness allows him to love her more completely, unimpaired by the visual remnants of the girl's history.

In conclusion, Carter uses her story to present a harsh critique of the reliance on vision promoted through the theory of empiricism. She illustrates the impairing qualities of sight, its ability to blind people from obvious realities, and successfully paints horrific and beautiful images. Carter creates an aesthetically intriguing story that engenders curiosity, and, simultaneously praises the lack of vision, demonstrating how vision prevents people from

genuinely perceiving the world. Readers must remain cautious to not become distracted by the visual representations in the text, just as they yearn for the young bride to grasp the realities before her rather than remaining blinded by the images she witnesses. Despite the horrific nature of the story, Carter crafts it into a tool for teaching her audience the importance of never becoming blinded by sight and sheds light on the short comings of empiricism.

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Dr. Strangelove Or: How America Learned to Stop Worrying and Laugh at the Bomb

Hannah Fulmer

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in a nondescript American park, a happy, normal American family sits on the grass enjoying a picnic—Father tends the grill; Mother scolds Bobby for snacking before supper; and little Sally giggles for no reason. Out of nowhere comes a blinding flash! Without thinking, Mother, Bobby and little Sally dive under the picnic blanket in perfect unison while Father falls flat on the ground, instinctively covering his head with his trusty newspaper. Luckily, they all know what to do, so the entire family survives this random, yet inevitable, atomic bomb attack. Yes, their quick thinking, preparation, and flimsy coverings have saved them from the most deadly weapon mankind has created so far.

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Any modern audience would find this story absurd, even funny, but it describes a real scene from a government-sponsored public service announcement by the Federal Civil Defense Administration and Archer Productions called *Duck and Cover*, which the American public—children, in particular, as they were the target demographic—took very seriously when it first aired in 1951. This ten-minute television segment directed by Anthony Rizzo features a knowledgeable, trustworthy announcer, a catchy theme song, and a careful, yet savvy, turtle named Bert, who teaches America's youth how to “duck and cover” whenever they see the iconic flash of the atomic bomb (*Duck and Cover*). This broadcast and others like it flooded American airwaves, entering suburban homes through the one ubiquitous all-American apparatus—the television set. In fact, during the first decade of the Cold War, the number of American homes with televisions “increased from 0.4 percent in 1948 to 55.7 percent in 1954 and to 83.2 percent four years later” (Baughman 42). In its ever-growing popularity, television media quickly became the government's personal

tool of propaganda through the expansion of broadcast news networks and government-sponsored programming, spreading anti-communist sentiments and rampant paranoia across the country. The trend of legal propagandist broadcasting led to a ubiquitous, normalized fear, engrained in the American psyche through constant, relentless reinforcement.

In Stanley Kubrick's 1964 political satire *Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, General Jack D. Ripper represents the most extreme embodiment of anti-communist paranoia. At the start of the film, General Ripper single-handedly orders an unprovoked attack on all major Russian military installations as part of the previously developed "Attack Plan R," unleashing a fleet of B-52 bombers armed with nuclear missiles, which can only be withdrawn with a three-letter recall code known only by the general himself. Ripper describes his order as a necessary preemptive strike to prevent Russian infiltration of Americans' "precious bodily fluids," warning Group Captain Mandrake about the dangers of "fluoridation" while only drinking "distilled water (or rain water) and pure grain alcohol" (*Strangelove*). The absurdity and utter strangeness of this idea—this fear of literal communist contamination—strikes the audience right away, but the humor of it comes later in a sort of belated reaction that seems to linger. Although the film features hilarious slapstick routines by Peter Sellers as Dr. Strangelove and George C. Scott as General Buck Turgidson and silly domestic quarrels between U.S. President Merkin Muffley and Russian Premier Dimitri Kissov, all of which provoke hearty laughs from the audience, General Ripper's cringe-inducing concerns for his "purity of essence" offer a delayed, yet persistent humor that stays with the audience long after the film ends. This belated reaction, at least in part, holds the key to the film's satirical success. The lingering quality of the laughter General Ripper evokes forces the audience to face the reality of the paranoia he so blatantly embodies, which plays such a large role in the daily lives of the American people during this time.

Through the delayed laughter at General Ripper's absurd paranoia, along with the more overt laugh-out-loud moments interspersed throughout the film, Kubrick teaches the American public how to laugh at the bomb, in turn combatting the ram-

pant fear and paranoia propagated by the U.S. government and television news networks. By targeting familiar fears of the Cold War era with humor and ridicule, the film also offers a sort of catharsis, a way of dealing with the trauma of living through such a tense, hostile period of battling world views and the constant threat of a deadly assault. In the humorous depiction of seemingly impossible events, a greater truth about the power of the American government and the reality of nuclear war begins to shine through, revealing a powerful critique of the numerous ideals, fears, and motives behind the perpetuation of an enduring paranoia throughout the American public. And by almost forcing the audience to confront this rampant paranoia, the film gives the American people the chance to change the reception of Cold War propaganda, seeing it as funny and absurd instead of frightening. Therefore, in helping America laugh at the bomb as something both terrifying and ridiculous, *Dr. Strangelove* helps to attenuate American paranoia while criticizing the corrupt, irresponsible actions of the U.S. government and attempting to change the perception of propagandist fear mongering as a whole.

Section I: Historicizing Cold War Tensions

The main source of contention that perpetuated Cold War conflicts grew out of preexisting fears on both sides that went unresolved at the end of the Second World War, forcing the United States and the Soviet Union into a seemingly predictable, yet drawn-out state of opposition. In his 2004 work *The Cold War: A New History*, John Lewis Gaddis explains the apparent inevitability of future conflict between the U.S.S.R. and the other Allies: “[T]he war had been won by a coalition whose principal members were already at war—ideologically and geopolitically if not militarily—with one another” (6). The “principal members” Gaddis refers to primarily included the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Though the U.S. and Britain may have had slightly different postwar goals, the real conflict came from the vast difference in political ideology between Russia and the other members of the Great Alliance. After defeating the Germans and ending WWII, each of the Allies made their country’s security a priority, but each leader’s strategy for ensur-

ing that security varied wildly. In his book, Gaddis first explains Russian leader Joseph Stalin's postwar plans for his country's future: "Stalin's postwar goals were security for himself, his regime, his country, and his ideology, in precisely that order" (11). Gaddis goes on, stating, "Narcissism, paranoia, and absolute power came together in Stalin: he was, within the Soviet Union and the international communist movement, enormously feared—but also widely worshipped" (11). Stalin's ultimate goal, according to Gaddis, was "not to restore the balance of power in Europe, but rather to dominate that continent as thoroughly as Hitler had sought to do" (14). The potential consequences of these apparent goals would have been, in themselves, apocalyptic, both for the daily lives of Europeans and for the system of democracy as a whole. Understandably, the threat of the expansion of the U.S.S.R. strengthened the already mounting distrust between the Allies and the Soviet Union, helping to foster the growing sense of fear in the United States government following WWII and into the Cold War.

Of course the development of the atomic bomb towards the end of WWII expedited previous suspicions the Soviet Union and the United States had of one another, which led directly into postwar tensions and then almost immediately into the Cold War. Originally, the "Americans and the British had secretly developed the weapon for use against Germany, but the Nazis surrendered before it was ready," and Soviet intelligence discovered the existence of the Manhattan Project through espionage and successfully penetrated security at Los Alamos, where the bomb was built (25). The U.S. and Britain withheld information about the bomb from the Russians until after testing it in the New Mexico desert. This secrecy in the development of the most powerful manmade weapon to date sparked obvious insecurities on the part of the Russians, forcing the implementation of a Soviet program to "catch up" to the Americans and the British in order to avoid a significant gap in power (26). The actions of the U.S. and Britain regarding the bomb, along with the Soviet Union's tactic of spying on its allies, set the stage for the tensions of the Cold War, explaining why this new conflict arose so rapidly after the old one had apparently dissipated. These circumstances laid the groundwork for Cold War hostilities, but the rampant

manufacturing of anti-communist fear and paranoia by the U.S. government perpetuated the conflict, at least on the part of the Americans, and effectively warped the American imagination.

Motivated by the communist threat at the start of the Cold War, American leaders began implementing strategic psychological warfare—both at home and abroad—in the form of propaganda. In his work entitled *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, Kenneth Osgood explains the massive role propaganda, and psychological warfare as a whole, played in the first decades of the Cold War: “Psychological warfare became, in essence, a synonym for ‘cold war.’ It reflected the belief of many politicians and foreign policy analysts that the Cold War was a political, ideological, psychological, and cultural contest as well as a military and economic one” (35). The Cold War marked a shift inward, a concentration on the minds of civilians more so than on military weapons. As part of this strategic change, the U.S. government began focusing on, monitoring, and manipulating the American public’s and the international community’s intake of information almost immediately after the start of the Cold War. In fear of losing the “war of ideas” to the “Soviet Union’s supposedly superior propaganda apparatus,” the Truman administration, along with the newly established National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency, implemented both overt and covert propaganda operations at home and abroad (35-37). These operations included broadcasting anti-Soviet propaganda in the form of “Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)” to Eastern Europe and Russia as well as more overt broadcast news and film segments which aired in the United States (40). In 1951, the same year *Duck and Cover* first aired, President Truman “created a Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) . . . to produce unified planning for American psychological operations” (43). Though the PSB died out from “bureaucratic strangulation by the time of the 1952 election,” the newly elected President Dwight D. Eisenhower began implementing new programs with a focus on psychological warfare. With his “deeply held conviction that psychological forces were critical elements of American leadership in the world,” President Eisenhower sought to capture the “hearts and minds of the world’s people” (45-47) and instill within them the anti-communist sentiments he thought were necessary to gain the

upper hand in the Cold War conflict. Thus began Eisenhower's fear-inducing propaganda war against the American people and the world, which led to the ubiquitous sense of paranoia in Cold War era America.

The Eisenhower administration ushered in a new and sophisticated, yet disturbing, strategy for the American government's use of propaganda against domestic and foreign audiences, taking advantage of the growing media presence in the average American home. In *Total Cold War*, Osgood describes further Eisenhower's considerable influence on psychological warfare during the Cold War:

To a remarkable extent, Eisenhower involved himself personally in the adoption of psychological warfare strategies intended to make U.S. propaganda more persuasive and credible. Eisenhower believed that for propaganda to be effective, "the hand of the government must be carefully concealed, and, in some cases I should say, wholly eliminated." (77)

This elimination or concealment of government involvement in the biased skewing of public information marked a new era of manipulation and deceit, which led to a widespread and almost entirely manufactured sense of national paranoia. The Eisenhower administration used "covert" or "unattributed" propaganda to denounce communist ideals and promote attitudes that "served American foreign policy interests without revealing U.S. government involvement" (78). Government propagandists relied on "the independent news media, nongovernmental organizations, and private individuals as surrogate communicators to convey propaganda messages" (78). In projecting anti-communist newscasts and nuclear attack instructional programs directly into the homes of American families, the U.S. government made the Soviet Union's threat of communism the sole reality of the first Cold War decades. In hiding the government's sponsorship of certain programs, their anti-communist message became more personal; it became a real problem that affected every American family in a very intimate way. It was through that intimacy that Eisenhower's administration captured the "hearts and minds" of

the American public, planting the seeds of communist fear which would quickly grow into an ever-present sense of paranoia, and of course that paranoia and its great impact on the American psyche are the primary subject of critique in Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*.

Section II: A Reaction to Propagated Paranoia

In a critical response to the incessant perpetuation of paranoia by the United States government and news media during the first decades of the Cold War, American film director, screenwriter, producer, cinematographer, and editor Stanley Kubrick created his now legendary political satire *Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Based on the book *Red Alert* by British writer Peter George, *Dr. Strangelove* combats the seemingly constant state of paranoia that permeated the American imagination during the Cold War conflict. The film's intent self-awareness and pointed comedy offer a unique critique of the government's perpetuation of fear and paranoia while teaching the American public to laugh at the Cold War, the bomb, and the legitimate terror they inspire.

Kubrick's film captures the essence of American propagandist programming without direct reference to its practice or presence in American culture, making the critique all the more poignant. The film begins with a simple black frame with white writing, offering an apparently official warning of the nature of the film's content:

It is the stated position of the U.S. Air Force that their safeguards would prevent the occurrence of such events as depicted in this film. Furthermore, it should be noted that none of the characters portrayed in the film are meant to represent any real person, living or dead. (*Strangelove*)

By beginning with such a warning, the film grounds its material in the reality of its audience. Many American adults watching this film at the time of its release in 1964 would have watched propagandist programming like *Duck and Cover* as children and therefore had an acute awareness of the Soviet threat engrained in their imaginations at an early age; the Cold War and its ac-

companying paranoia comprised, in essence, all they knew. By beginning with a reference to that undeniable reality, the film, its content, and its message enter the sphere of realism and truth instead of remaining outside the realm of possibility. *Dr. Strangelove* also alludes to government-sponsored propaganda with the introduction narrated by the familiar, disembodied voice of American male authority, which appears in nearly every anti-communist television program. That seemingly all-knowing and trustworthy voice of America evokes immediate recognition from the audience, further positioning the film—paranoia, absurdity, and all—into the world of the real. Without these familiar callbacks to propagandist programming, the film could easily slip into the realm of complete impossibility, but with these simple references, Kubrick grounds the film in the reality of his viewers and holds the U.S. government accountable for its rampant use of propaganda against the American public.

Dr. Strangelove's link to the government's fear-inducing propaganda offers a uniquely irreverent critical perspective when paired with the comedy routines of Peter Sellers as President Merkin Muffley and Dr. Strangelove and George C. Scott as General Buck Turgidson. Each of these funny and absurd characters represents some facet of the U.S. government's top leadership: the president of the United States, a top-ranking Air Force general, and the government's top nuclear weapons expert. The direct mockery of these fictional leaders seems to downplay the real-life positions of authority they represent, allowing the audience to laugh at them as inherently flawed, irrational human beings instead of all-powerful, all-knowing authority figures. From his first appearance onscreen, General Turgidson exudes misogyny, masculine insecurity, and an over exaggerated sense of national pride while his incessant gum chewing and hilariously hyperbolic facial expressions keep the audience laughing. The grossly uninformed President Muffley bickers with Russian Premier Khrushchev like a wife nagging her husband about leaving his socks on the floor, and Dr. Strangelove struggles to suppress his Nazi sympathies due to an unruly hand, determined to salute the Führer (*Strangelove*). The film portrays these characters as absurd, comical, and flawed, prompting hearty laughs from the audience. But when paired with the potential of an apocalyptic atomic event,

the ineptitude of these characters, and by extension the actual leaders they represent, becomes truly terrifying. In emphasizing the silliness of these characters in such a frightening, potentially realistic situation, the film promotes an irreverent attitude towards authority and, in turn, renders the government's fear-mongering propaganda essentially benign, even humorous. In helping the audience laugh at anti-communist propaganda, Kubrick's film seems to attenuate the communist threat, decreasing its power over the American imagination.

Diving deeper into the depictions of government leaders in *Dr. Strangelove*, the displays of hyper-masculinity from General Buck Turgidson seem to comment on the motivations behind the American and Russian struggles for power, particularly their use of nuclear warfare. The first image the audience sees of General Turgidson, baring his hairy chest while wearing boxer shorts and towering over a near-naked woman, immediately establishes him as the ultimate representation of stereotypical American masculinity (See fig. 1).



Fig. 1. *Dr. Strangelove*. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1964. Screenshot.

This hyper-masculinity seems to stem from certain insecurities seen throughout the film. For example, General Turgidson fixates over the “Big Board,” which shows the positions of American planes in Russia. The general seems to take pride in the Big Board, particularly due to its size, and obsesses over the possibility of

Russian officials seeing it. Clearly a phallic image, the Big Board seems to represent Turgidson's power and, in turn, his source of pride and motivation. Turgidson's fear of losing control of the Big Board fuels his resentment and desire to act against the Russians, rendering him irrational. Aside from a completely sexual reading, the film seems to depict Turgidson as an insecure juvenile, reluctant to share his toys with the other children. In any case, the motivation behind the general's irrational behavior stems from an apparently inherent sense of immaturity. From this perspective, the film seems to suggest that the same selfish immaturity fuels the American and Russian leaders, at least to an extent. Adding to that the thousands of nuclear weapons each of these superpowers has at its disposal, the potential for an apocalyptic event seems well within the realm of possibility. Therefore, in highlighting the inherent immaturity and irrationality of human beings and acknowledging the very real possibility of an atomic event, Kubrick's film asserts that no one—not the Americans, Russians, or any human being—is ready for such a powerful and potentially catastrophic weapon. Through the hyper-masculine images and highlighted insecurities of General Turgidson, *Dr. Strangelove* comments on the motivations behind the use of powerful nuclear forces, asserting that humans, as of yet, do not possess the emotional maturity to reasonably employ such potentially catastrophic weapons. In this, the film casts doubt on the rationality of Cold War motivations and the conflict as a whole.

Section III: The Importance of Laughter

Though the laugh-out-loud slapstick routines of Peter Sellers and George C. Scott hilariously satirize government leaders, the more subdued, yet completely absurd, portrayal of General Jack D. Ripper by Sterling Hayden taps into the American psyche in a way that leaves a lasting impression on *Dr. Strangelove's* audience. General Ripper embodies the most extreme potentiality of the government's fear-inducing propaganda battle. His completely internalized fear of the communist threat has rendered him irrational. Out of fear of communist "fluoridation" of the American water supply Ripper drinks only "pure grain alcohol" and "rainwater" and remains convinced that Russians consume

only vodka as their sole source of nourishment. He even “denies” women his “essence” for fear of losing control to communist forces (*Strangelove*). Though Ripper’s internalization of anti-communist paranoia manifests in absurd, irrational behavior, the primary fear fueling his actions likely strikes a familiar chord with the film’s 1964 audience, which has undoubtedly experienced the same fear-mongering government propaganda as what seems to have instigated Ripper’s paranoia. Due to the personal, familiar nature of the fears Ripper exemplifies, the memory of his absurd behavior stays with the audience, allowing for a more detailed contemplation of the paranoia he represents.

The lasting impression of General Ripper’s paranoia, through both its familiarity and its absurdity, creates a type of belated humor which offers the potential for self-reflection from the film’s audience. Unlike the more overt comedy routines and physical humor in *Dr. Strangelove*, the cringe-inducing paranoid conspiracies of General Ripper resist an immediate outward response. The lasting humor of the situation comes later, once the utter strangeness of Ripper’s paranoid eccentricities and drastic actions combines with a sense of familiarity. Through this delayed and enduring reaction, the audience has time to think about General Ripper’s paranoia, almost forcing them to face the same feelings of fear and paranoia that permeate their own average American lives. In coming to terms with and learning to laugh at the ever-present fear of the early Cold War era, the power it holds over the American imagination begins to dissipate. By recognizing the irrationality of General Ripper’s paranoia and finding humor in it, the audience has the chance to shed that fear, offering a cathartic release from the government’s constant propagation of anti-communist paranoia. In changing the perception of an audience member’s personal experience with fear and paranoia, the film sparks a movement of dissent, shifting the reception of Cold War propaganda into the realm of ridicule, ultimately rendering it powerless over the American imagination.

Dr. Strangelove’s ability to inspire such social change seems to stem from its humor and the communal experience of watching a comical film. In the same year *Dr. Strangelove* premiered, the film *Fail-Safe*—“a Hollywood thriller with a similar plot, directed by Sidney Lumet”—opened to much less popularity (Schlosser).

Taking a serious look at the government's power and use of nuclear weapons, *Fail-Safe* ends with the destruction of New York and Moscow, killing millions. Though the two films deal with the same basic issues and even follow similar themes, *Dr. Strangelove* enjoyed widespread popularity, grossing nearly ten times the amount of *Fail-Safe*, and sparked a culture of dissent throughout the nation. One of the major contributing factors in the success of Kubrick's film seems to be its emphasis on humor. When watched in a theater with an audience full of people, comedic films enjoy a unique communal quality that dramas inherently lack. Laughter is an uncontrollable, inherently mysterious reaction that forces an outward response. The experience of laughing in a crowded theater with a group of strangers offers an odd, almost unexplainable connection, and in a film like *Dr. Strangelove*, with its incredibly funny, yet deeply poignant and personal content, this connection amplifies. After the immediate reaction of laughter comes a sort of accountability; through its connection, the audience holds itself responsible for their communal reaction. This connection and accountability become crucial in a satirical work, forcing the audience to face the reality and truth of the satire as a group, instead of on an individual level, like in a dramatic film. That accountability sparks a conversation about the subject of the film's satire, which ultimately leads to widespread social development. Without that accountability, as seen with *Fail-Safe*, the film's critique loses its ability to affect the minds of its audiences in a lasting, meaningful way. Therefore, because *Dr. Strangelove* leaves the audience accountable for its laughter, it has the unique ability to enact enduring social change.

Through the satirical portrayal of the American government's strategic propagation of anti-communist paranoia, *Dr. Strangelove* allows the American public to shed the ever-present fear that permeated Cold War era America. The pointed laugh-out-loud comedy of Peter Sellers and George C. Scott helps to humanize the seemingly all-powerful voices of authority from the American government, promoting cultural irreverence and scrutiny towards biased government-sponsored programming. The audience's belated reaction to Sterling Hayden's absurd, yet eerily familiar portrayal of paranoia encourages a sort of self-reflection, paralleling the American Cold War reality with the

irrational, apocalyptic potential epitomized in the character of General Ripper. That belated reaction and induced contemplation, coupled with the accountability inherent in a communal comedic experience, help spark a conversation about unjust government fear-mongering and foster a culture of dissent that ridicules such blatantly propagandist material as *Duck and Cover* and other programs. The lasting impact of Kubrick's film emerges in contemporary America's reliance on satire to speak out against abusive authority and corrupt government practices. In teaching America how to laugh at the bomb, *Dr. Strangelove* promoted an enduring culture of skepticism which was necessary in combatting Cold War paranoia and continues to hold accountable those in positions of great power and authority.

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