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# The Failed Subversion of the Patriarchy in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

| Alexis Catanzarite

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Salman Rushdie's 1983 novel *Shame*, an allegorical work containing elements of magical realism and a postmodern examination of social conditions, seeks to interrogate and re-imagine gendered constructions by giving voice and action to the disempowered female. To this end, making use of the freedom afforded to the writer of fantasy and magical realism, Rushdie thoroughly envisions different types of power endowed upon female characters, from domestic to political to physical. Ultimately, however, the portrayal of the empowered female character fails as the women in Rushdie's narrative are encompassed and confined by the patriarchal structures they struggle against. Even more importantly, they are defined by these restrictive structures and a dualistic vision of gender, even when they actively oppose them. Perhaps the problem is that, while patriarchy may be opposed in Rushdie's novel, it is never transcended. The women in the novel, though potentially creative and unique social agents, are diminished to the point of almost complete insignificance due to the rigid and unforgiving gender roles that Rushdie seems to attack, but ultimately reinforces. Women do not successfully exist as *women* in Rushdie's novel; they are forced to either forsake their femininity in favor of a masculine transformation or die in response to the pressures of living up to the female archetype. The female character as an empowered social agent is almost entirely obscured by, invalidated by, or concentrated into a male-centered view of the world, where the only implied

alternative to this scenario is a denial of one's cultural identity.

The fact that the female identity is obscured in *Shame* is all the more striking given the fact that the novel offers a range of innovative and seemingly powerful female characters, to such a degree that some critics are in fact convinced that Rushdie has engaged in a successful negotiation of female agency. This opinion of Rushdie's success could be derived from his

meta-acknowledgement of the role that women occupy in the novel:

The women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my "male" plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and "female" side. It occurs to me that the women knew precisely what they were up to—that their stories explain, and even subsume, the men's. Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well. (181)

That Rushdie so deliberately acknowledges the oppression of women is an indicator that he intends to address that struggle in his narrative, making its "intolerability" something with which he takes issue. To an extent, the aforementioned critics are right; Rushdie does engage in a negotiation of female agency, but ultimately the undertaking was not in favor of the feminine, but rather of the patriarchal society.

The novel opens with a description of the three sisters, Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny—mothers to the "peripheral hero," Omar. There is no doubt at all that these women are, physically and psychologically, forceful and resilient characters in the context of *Shame*. Moreover, they actively resist the patriarchal power structure that encompasses the novel. Raised by an oppressive father in sheltered conditions, the sisters, following their father's death, form

a tight-knit matriarchy with an incredible degree of unity between them. They interact successfully with the outside world through their dumbwaiter, offering a mechanism of protection to them. They are described as “rather strong-chinned, powerfully built, purposefully striding women of an almost oppressively charismatic force” (Rushdie 12); that their charisma is described as “oppressive” speaks to their defiance of the traditional patriarchy. By the same token, the narrator tells us that these women, as young girls, imagined a type of heterosexual meeting in which *they* would be the aggressors, albeit using their female attributes. They imagined “bizarre genitalia such as holes in the chest into which their own nipples might snugly fit” (5). Finally, these sisters are willing to and capable of dramatically subverting tradition and socially sanctioned behaviour, as demonstrated in their having a party with alcohol and Western style music, conceiving a baby outside of wedlock, and—perhaps most scandalously of all—undertaking to raise him *without* shame.

Arguably, these three sisters form a more powerful model of the liberated female than Sufiya Zinobia does, although the latter attracts far more attention from critics. In fact, critical analysis of Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny is surprisingly scarce, despite the fact that these women successfully design and inhabit a completely alternate, female-centered society, utterly rejecting the patriarchal world and all that it has produced. The most plausible reason that three sisters are able to avoid the constraints of the patriarchy is that they have not been educated or truly exposed to the world, making them less subject to social conditioning than most. However, this potentially matriarchal society is fatally compromised by one key factor that is completely outside of the sisters’ realm of control: they, and their matriarchal world, exist only on the peripheral, powerless to penetrate or affect the outside world. Ultimately, this position deprives them of true agency. The very factors that originally seemed to define them—for example, their “forceful” beauty and fertility—can only be sustained temporarily and by wholly unnatural means.

For example, the sisters insist on nursing Omar well beyond the appropriate age of infancy. Once Omar is weaned, the powers that had seemed to define the sisters diminish: their “breasts dried and shrank . . . they became soft, there were knots in their hair, they lost interest in the kitchen” (30).

Even more telling is the fact that the entire source of the sisters’ power is, and remains, almost entirely dependent on stereotypical feminine roles. Their assumed power is in their “magical” fertility, beauty, and formation of a restricted, closed society that excludes not only most members of the opposite gender, but also the entirety of the outside world. The narrator’s geographical locating of their dwelling highlights this effect. Omar is born on the border, close to the “Impossible Mountains,” in a liminal zone not closely associated with any specific country. Perhaps the most damning statement about this attempted establishment of a matriarchal sub-society is in the character of the sisters’ shameless offspring, Omar. He is the “peripheral hero,” and remains, even to the end of the narrative, vulnerable and improbable, desiring separation from the matriarchal society in which he was raised. Moreover, his position is fundamentally precarious, which is expressed by the fact that Omar grows up thinking he is “living at the edge of the world, so close that he might fall off at any moment” (14).

Therefore, this commendable attempt at creating strong female characters only strengthens the view that such an idea is very precarious and fatally compromised within the society depicted in the novel. In fact, it is clear that Rushdie can only endeavour to construct the illusion of strong females through extraordinary measures or circumstances as unusual as the “Impossible Mountains,” but even then, there can be no melding or cooperation with the remainder of society. Indeed, it is a violation of position that inevitably puts one outside of the norm, in a position where there is scant social power. Feminine power is profoundly marginalized, in other words, as well as being bound by the same duality that the patriarchy creates. Omar, as a profoundly liminal

character, navigates between the marginalized female world and the larger society, which, perhaps, makes it natural that he would enter into an intimate partnership with the most controversial character of the novel, Sufiya Zenobia. In one obvious way, she is his foil, as he is raised without shame and she embodies it. Moreover, it can also be argued that Omar's background, as a man who is the product of a wholly feminine sub-society, makes it possible for him to become entangled with a woman who becomes the extreme embodiment of aggressive power.

Of course, Sufiya is a profound contradiction in and of herself. Though seemingly intended to be the portrayal of the dangerous, vengeful female, Sufiya does not reject patriarchal values or shame itself, as Omar's three "mothers" do. Instead, she takes it into herself and it becomes the source of her power. As an expression of female rage in the face of oppression and victimization, Sufiya may, as Lotta Strandberg suggests in "Images of Gender and the Negotiation of Agency in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*," be identified with the goddess Kali (143). However, she does not and cannot function without reference to—or even an embracing of—the violent characteristics that embody the patriarchy. In "The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's *Shame*," Samir Dayal shrewdly observes that the characterization of Sufiya reinforces patriarchy rather than subverting or transcending it; Rushdie's magical realism and the presentation of liminal characters "deconstructs simple divisions of the masculine and feminine" (40), but does not dismantle or even interrogate the essential dichotomy between genders that is assumed to exist. It is continually assumed that there are "masculine" or aggressive characters, and "feminine" or passive and vulnerable characters, and the fact that these roles may be reversed—that is, the male characters become "passive and feminized"—does not change the fact that these stereotypes are reinforced rather than challenged (50). In her article "The Limits of What is Possible: Reimagining Sharam in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*," Jenny Sharpe agrees, stating that:

Although Rushdie reverses the effects of shame and violence in his novel, the gendering of those effects remain the same. Violence is represented as an active, masculine response to shame, and silence as a passive, feminine one. Sufiya escapes the place of her subordination only because she has access to a violence that is figured as a masculine response to shame. In other words, women have power only inasmuch as they act like men. (Paragraph 17)

Indeed, from the beginning of her life, Sufiya's "shame" seems to stem from the fact that she is not born a boy, despite her father's strenuous wishes and vain search for male genitalia on his infant daughter (Rushdie 94). Rushdie certainly condemns such shaming of the feminine, but does so not by removing the taint of shame but by imagining, in its most graphic and dramatic sense, the literal and metaphorical embodiment of that shame. Sufiya, therefore, is quintessentially a product of her society, just as Omar himself is a product of having been conceived and born at the very margins of society. Both are profoundly affected by their positions and origins, and cannot escape the web of gendered constructions that define their social worlds: masculine/feminine, active/passive, norm/other.

At the same time, to the degree that conventional gender roles are challenged, the deviation from these roles is viewed, in the novel, as profoundly threatening. Sufiya's "empowerment" is attained passively, but, once established, it is potent and gives her a true might that allows her, at least potentially, to express and redress the damage done to innocent victims such as the anonymous woman the narrator calls "Anna M." However, Sufiya attains power only by becoming herself a monstrous and horrifying creature. Inderpal Grewal, author of "Salman Rushdie: Marginality, Women, and *Shame*," considers the characterization of Sufiya's transformation to be a "distrust of any oppositional practices engaged in by women" (138). Indeed, the horror of the transformed Sufiya plays to "a patriarchal fear of women" (138), which is itself the traditional justification for subjecting women to the order of the patriarchy.

Other female characters, ones that appear to embody versions of Rushdie's feminine extremes in this novel, reinforce an implicit message that is produced by the portrayal of the female characters discussed thus far. Arjumand Harappa, like Sufiya, seeks power by rejecting the weakness and passivity typically associated with her female gender, which appears to require physical transformation. Arjumand's physical transformation, however, is not quite as dramatic as Sufiya's in two respects; there is nothing supernatural about the transformation, and it is a choice that Arjumand makes. It is not akin to a curse that she is unable to control. In Arjumand's case, she opts to bind her breasts in response to her father's advice to "rise above" her gender (Rushdie 129). It is very telling that, in lieu of striving to give her gender a new dimension with all that she is capable of accomplishing, Arjumand chooses to forsake her femininity in the most literal way possible. In fact, Arjumand is described as "loathing her sex" and going to "great lengths to disguise her looks" (162) in spite of her much-acknowledged beauty. Arjumand's complete disregard of her gender speaks to her character's inability to subvert the patriarchy; she would rather choose to exist within the confines of it.

Unlike Arjumand, Good News initially embraces the traditional roles that her gender requires of her but ultimately commits suicide in response to the pressures of her hyper-fertileness. Like Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny, Good News is the archetype of the mother, but she surpasses even them in her idyllic vision and fulfillment of the role until it overwhelms her to the point of oppressiveness. Embracing the more traditional aspect of feminine power—that of the mother—seems to leave one diminished, held captive by the power of uncontrollable fertileness or motherliness. The exponential growth of motherhood is expressed through unnatural "multiples," the number of Good News' children, as well as through the magical transmission of motherhood among the three sisters and the image of their six lactating breasts which fed a single boy for no less than six years. There is, perhaps, a fear of uncontrollable development

that is likewise associated with the feminine, implicitly justifying the woman's removal, either by self-imposed death or exile. On the other hand, the rejection of femininity, as seen in Arjumand and Sufiya, allows women to function within the external world, but only with a violent denial of self and others.

There is no place for the healthy and balanced expression of feminine social agency in Rushdie's novel. There are only multiple inherent arguments for the impossibility of such agency's existence. The portrayals of Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny, and that of Sufiya, are the extreme rationalizations of how and why feminine empowerment is a frightening and ultimately impossible feat. It can only—and questionably, at that—be achieved in a position on the very perimeter of society, and even then the integrity of such female empowerment is in question, as it seems to exist wholly in response to feminine biological drives and stereotypical assumptions. Moreover, when a female character leaves the liminal position of society's perimeter, the powerful female becomes, through the lens of society's restrictive norms, monstrous and terrifying. Whereas Omar was happy to escape the patriarchy within which he was raised, it also seems that his upbringing among women left him profoundly vulnerable to the destructive power of his disturbed bride, Sufiya. Despite the initially promising depictions of a uniquely feminine sub-society and a powerfully vengeful woman out to punish the patriarchy's relegation of women, Rushdie's novel provides no viable position within which a complex female character can exist, let alone flourish. After all, "It's a man's world . . . . This is no place to be a woman" (129).

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## Cramped and Civilized in *Huckleberry Finn*: Clothing's Function as a Cultural Mask

| Kaley White

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Samuel Clemens was a man of performance and clever costuming. As William Dean Howells notes in *My Mark Twain*, Clemens, known in his white suit as Mark Twain, had “a keen feeling for costume which the severity of the modern tailoring forbids men. . . . He enjoyed the shock, the offence, the pang which [his white suit] gave the sensibilities of others” (4-5). Scholars who mention Clemens’s creation of the penname Mark Twain often note the performance aspect of Clemens when portraying himself as the satirist. In “Mark Twain and Gender,” Susan K. Harris states that, “Perhaps more than most of us, he understood that social life is a series of overlapping performances” (189). Robert E. Weir’s assertion in “Mark Twain and Social Class” of “Mark Twain assum[ing] many personae” including “playful eccentric, nomad, crusading journalist, misanthrope, social climber, literary lion” (196) touches on the theatrical aspect of Twain’s life by referring to his different “roles” within society. Perhaps Clemens’s answer to his complaint “that he was restrained from truth-telling by the shackles of convention and the herd-mentality of his audience” (Robinson 20) was his “habit of wearing a full white suit in the manner of the southern gentleman in December 1906” (Hearn 185). His white suit allowed him to assume a new character, taking a step back from

society, critiquing it from a “new” set of eyes. In fact, his good friend William Dean Howells, upon observing Twain for the first time before the Congressional Committee on Copyright in Washington, stated, “Nothing could have been more dramatic than the gesture with which he flung off his long loose overcoat, and stood forth in white from his feet to the crown of his silvery head” (96).

Twain’s white suit served as his costuming, creating a penetrating, memorable appearance to all those who viewed him. As Annelise Madsen notes in “Dressing the Part: Mark Twain’s White Suit, Copyright Reform, and the Camera,” Clemens creates the character of Twain to vocalize his discontent with society: “Twain delivered his progressive ideas about copyright reform with wit, humor, and conviction, performing all the while in a magnificent white suit” (57). Gregg Camfield reveals in *The Oxford Companion to Mark Twain* that

when [Clemens] wrote ‘Clothes make the man; naked people have little or no influence in society,’ Twain engaged in his frequent class leveling, saying not that *fine* clothing matters, but that *some* clothing matters to make one’s position in society. (217, emphasis in original)

As a man of performance and clever costuming, Twain’s fascination with clothing often permeates his work.

Twain’s critique of clothing’s function of blending into society or standing apart from it resonates in many of his works, including *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Although scholarship can be found on the subject of clothing in much of his work, *Huckleberry Finn* lacks significant research on the topic. In fact, one critic who focuses solely on clothing in *Huckleberry Finn* mentions in his three-page essay that, surprisingly, he had trouble finding scholarship on the subject (Sommers 19). Although many scholars note the effects of Twain’s white suit on society and the effect in Twain’s work of clothing within race, class, and gender, gaps still remain in the study

of Huck's transcendence of society's restraining, defining system of clothes. Gaps are also left unexplored in how Clemens's creation of Twain to advocate his progressive ideas directly parallels his created character Huck<sup>1</sup>, who engages with and advocates the leveling of society.

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck constantly describes the clothes that people wear, clothes that create cultural assumptions of class, education, religion, and race. While clothing in *Huckleberry Finn* reinforces social barriers between characters in the novel, Huck freely moves through the system of clothes, partly due to his boyish innocence and partly due to his ability to see past clothing, judging others by who they are under their clothes or by their moral character. Clothing within *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* reveals Mark Twain's belief in its function as a type of cultural mask, a system of societal assumptions in which his character Huck observes and "tries on" several roles by putting on new outfits. However, Huck ultimately remains outside of and eventually removes himself from the system altogether.

The very opening of the novel reveals the importance of clothing's ability to transform someone into a person society respects. As an unruly boy who recently came upon unexpected fortune, Huck is taken in by Widow Douglas, who chooses to take responsibility for Huck in order to civilize him. However, Widow Douglas not only insists that he begin going to school, but also that he change his clothes to match the new role she desires him to play in society. Huck, on the other hand, states that "She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up" (Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* 2). Huck's comment reveals his innocence of the purpose clothing serves in society. Not able to understand why anyone would wear such uncomfortable clothes, Huck soon comes to the realization that clothes are, in fact, not made for "usefulness," but to create an appearance attractive to the mass of mankind. Huck, clinging to his old lifestyle, begins to see his starchy clothes as a threat to his

identity and therefore desires to be free from the system that, like his new clothes, restricts and confines him. He expresses his rejection of society's need to alter his appearance in order to assimilate him by putting back on his rags. Huck states that "I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags . . . and was free and satisfied" (2). Although Huck correctly associates clothing with "fitting in" to society, he would not understand just how deep the roots of clothing conformity serve to mask the true identity of individuals until much later in the novel.

When Twain introduces Pap early in his novel, he bolsters his argument, initially presented through Widow Douglas, that people depend on clothing to make judgments concerning societal standing. When Pap sees Huck for the first time after a long absence, he heckles Huck and criticizes his appearance, assuming solely from his starchy clothing that Huck is currently receiving an education. Pap also suggests that by wearing nice clothing, Huck is consciously trying to appear superior to his father: "Starchy clothes—very. You think you're a good deal of a big-bug *don't* you? . . . You've put on a considerable many frills since I been away. . . . You think you're better'n your father, now, don't you?" (30). Through his statement, Pap acknowledges society's assumptions about clothing, viewing Huck's putting on "frills" as a threat, a way of rising above his father in status. Pap then orders Huck to "stop that putting on frills. I won't have it . . . and if I catch you about that school I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion too" (31). Pap recognizes that people with nicer clothing, or "starchy" clothes, are also associated with institutions such as education and religion, which are appalling and/or threatening to Pap. Pap's comments and the symbolic changing of clothes serve to reinforce the notion that citizens had difficulty accepting someone as civilized or sophisticated who appeared different from them, someone who by their appearance assumed the role of the "underclass" or "uneducated."

Additionally, Twain uses clothing to expose prejudices of the upper class towards underclass society and highlight their obsession

with outward appearances. Pap's prejudice of "niggers," perceiving them as the underclass, clashes with his perception of "upper-class" clothing when he sees an African American in nice attire. The line between his critique of clothing and his rant about the government blurs to the degree that Pap believes even clothing reflects the ineffectiveness of the government in society. Specifically, Pap complains that "[t]he law takes a man worth six thousand dollars and upwards . . . and lets him go around in clothes that ain't fitten for a hog" (41). Thus, he contrasts his own perceived worth with the "worth" of his clothing, believing that the two do not match and therefore the government is to blame. Twain reveals Huck's disinterest in the conversation by Huck's lack of attention or comment following his father's critique. After his father finishes speaking, Huck only remarks that Pap was not watching where he was going and consequently tripped over a tub of salt pork (3). This scene, coupled with Huck's preference for rags, a slave's clothing, foreshadows Huck's ability to see beyond racial prejudice and break free of society's system of clothing.

The effects of clothing even extend into Twain's critique of the religious institution. For example, when Huck falls upon a religious revival, he hears an "invitation" to accept the Lord. During the revival, the preacher calls "come in your rags and sin and dirt" (203). Paralleling sin with rags reveals the institution's dependence on appearance. To the "churched" world, Huck's "uncivilized" outer appearance of rags symbolizes his sinful inside. However, Twain exposes the falsity of society's ridiculous conclusion that external appearances reveal the inner being through Huck. While people "comb up, [on] Sundays, and all that kind of foolishness" (203) wearing starchy uncomfortable clothes, Twain argues their inner purity was far different from their outward "sivilized" cleanliness. In *The Annotated Huckleberry Finn*, Michael Patrick Hearn asserts that "Twain shared Huck's scorn for 'sivilization' as mostly sham and hypocrisy" (445). For example, Twain reveals the corrupt views of the church when Huck struggles with what to do about his love for

Jim: “There was the Sunday-school, [I] could a gone to it; and if [I’d] a done it they’d learnt [me], there, that people that acts as I’d been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire” (Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* 328). However, Huck ultimately decides to save Jim: “All right, then, I’ll go to hell” (331), rejecting the religious institution’s moral reasoning. Although Huck’s appearance reveals to society his “uncivilized” and “sinful” nature, Twain ironically reverses this assumption; regardless of what society would like to make Huck and Jim out to be, the two in rags are the two who ultimately hold higher moral reasoning. As Jeffrey Sommers notes in “‘I Never Knewed How Clothes Could Change a Body Before’: The Dual Function of Clothing in *Huckleberry Finn*,” Jim and Huck are not in need of a mask while the “Grangerfords’ external whiteness” is mistaken “for a true reflection of inner purity when it was merely a mask for the blackness of hypocrisy” (20).

Through the Grangerfords, Twain develops the tension between appearances and reality. In fact, in *Inventing Mark Twain: The Life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*, Andrew Hoffman exposes Twain’s awareness of the gap he creates between Colonel Grangerford’s gentlemanly appearance and the uncivilized nature of his family as Twain’s way of critiquing society. Hoffman states that Twain knew the “sharp separation between image and identity” (x), an observation also made by Sommers. Although Sommers may allude to the fact that the Grangerfords’ feud negates their “civilized” appearance of clothing, he neglects a crucial symbolic image of the superficiality of their clothing within their beautifully adorned house. While Huck takes a personal tour of the Grangerford house, Twain intricately describes the exquisite details of the home: “It was a mighty nice family, and a mighty nice house, too” (Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* 156). When recounting the intricacies of the house Huck comes to a table:

On the table in the middle of the room was a kind of a lovely crockery basket that had apples and oranges and peaches and grapes piled up in it, which was much redder

and yellower and prettier than real ones is, but they warn't real because you could see where pieces had got chipped off and showed the white chalk, or whatever it was, underneath. (157)

Huck's description of the fruit perfectly parallels Twain's interpretation of clothing through the eyes of Huck. The chipped fruit serves to symbolize the Grangerfords' superficiality. Although their clothes may look beautiful, ornate, and pure, they serve only to mask what is underneath. Twain asserts this concept in *Following the Equator*: "[Clothes] are on us to expose us—to advertise what we wear them to conceal. They are a sign; a sign of insincerity; a sign of repressed vanity . . . and we put them on to propagate that lie and back it up" (343). The fact that Huck notices the chipped fruit reveals his ability that will later develop in the novel, an ability to see beyond exterior décor to inner worth.

In the woods, Huck has the freedom to wear whatever he chooses and to be whomever he wishes. In fact, the constant return to the woods gives him the ability to "try on" different societal roles and then escape them once again by fleeing back into the woods, a type of rebirth. Huck, if not understanding the larger implications of clothing's role in society, at least realizes that for society not to recognize him, he must change clothes to mask his own identity and assume a new role. For example, Huck dresses as a female in a calico gown hoping that no one would recognize him and send him back to Widow Douglas: "I didn't want to go back to the widow's any more and be so cramped up, and sivilized, as they called it" (Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* 39). From the very start of putting on the disguise, Huck does not truly believe his clothes mask his identity because he states that "[I] made up my mind I wouldn't forget I was a girl" (86). Unfortunately, Huck's disguise quickly fails to mask his identity. However, clarification is needed to explain why Twain argues that society cannot see past clothing if Huck's disguise as a female, and later as a valet, fail. The answer lies in the fact that Huck does not accept society's belief that clothes can totally mask who he is and

transform him into a new person. Thus, unlike the Grangerfords or the duke and king, Huck loses the performative aspect of costuming by believing his identity still peeks through his “mask.”

Twain exposes Huck’s transcendence and rejection of society’s use of clothing for identity when Huck flees civilization by escaping into the woods and removing his clothes. Huck states that “we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us—the new clothes Buck’s folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides, I didn’t go much on clothes, nohow” (185). Jim and Huck choose to remain outside the system of clothes, and it is only until “confronted” by “society in the form of the Duke and the King” (Sommers 19), that they have to worry about being judged by their exteriors. The stripping of clothes shared by Jim and Huck reveals Twain’s intention of equalizing the two: a rich free white boy choosing to live in rags and a poor African American man who never had a choice. The equalizing scene in the woods supports W. Booth’s assertion that in *Huckleberry Finn* “Twain has struck a great blow against racism . . . [advocating] racial equality” (463). Because of Huck’s ability to see beyond the mask of clothing, he is also able to see beyond Jim’s skin color to find a deep friendship.

Ultimately, Huck decides to remove and differentiate himself from the system of clothing by stating “But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before” (Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* 451). By this point, Huck’s experiences make him aware of society’s approach of judging by appearances. Instead of conforming, Huck embodies the spirit of Samuel Clemens’s Mark Twain by choosing instead to wear clothes that stand out and are not totally accepted by society, and in doing so, both Twain and Huck escape and transcend the confining system.

## Notes

1. Paul Baender notes that Twain uses “outsiders” in his work as “voices for his own opinions” (192). Although Baender does not directly relate his statement to *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck fits perfectly into his definition: “the outsider never succeeds in humbling the society’s egotism or in curbing its selfishness, for it must continue to be what it is” (192-93).

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# “This Man . . . Doth Present Wall”: The Enactment of Objectified Labor in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

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The final act of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* celebrates the offstage marriages of Theseus and Hippolyta, Demetrius and Helena, and Lysander and Hermia, yet the primary focus of the act is not the three couples but a troupe of amateur actors who perform *Pyramus and Thisby*. On the one hand, the inset play provides a means of social restoration for the aristocracy by giving it a platform from which to mock the mechanicals’ ability as actors. Additionally, by providing their own interpretations of the performance, the nobles—especially Theseus—attempt to assert their ownership over the play. On the other hand, the play-within-the-play questions the status quo of the aristocracy by reducing them to spectators while the mechanicals take center stage. The question of who owns the play—not just its physical production but its meaning as well—is the main concern of this paper. I explore not only the final act, with special attention given to the play-within-the-play, but also the mechanicals’ preparations for their performance, specifically their concern with the audience’s response. Ultimately, the craftsmen turn the tragedy of *Pyramus and Thisby* into a comedy, inviting laughter from the audience. Because they do not intend the comedic rendering, the viewers’ response alienates the mechanicals from their play, a reminder that they are already alienated from their crafts. While the nobles tend to mock the lack of *mimesis* within the mechanicals’ play, I would argue that the mechanicals objectify themselves through their art in order to stress their alienation from the product of their performance, their crafts, and their senses; yet, through their retreat to the woods and their performance, they

begin to assert their autonomy, subverting the status quo.

As a metadramatic instance, the play-within-the-play serves to reinforce the aristocracy's authority; hence, viewing the play through the lens of Marxist criticism suggests that the owner/worker relationship parallels the viewer/performer relationship. Karl Marx explores the relationship between the owner and the worker in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. He explains that society falls into two classes, "property owners and propertyless workers" (106, Marx's emphasis), and claims that private property is the result of alienated, or estranged, labor (117). He writes, "The product of labor is labor which has been embodied into an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor" (108, Marx's emphasis). Marx suggests that through the production of the object both the labor and the laborer become objects. Critics of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* often adopt the moniker Puck gives the amateur acting troupe, "rude mechanicals" (3.2.9), or simply "mechanicals." According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "mechanical" means "[b]elonging to or characteristic of people engaged in manual work, esp. regarded as a class, artisanal; vulgar, coarse" ("Mechanical," def. A3). Thus the word "mechanical" not only explicitly ties the men to work but also implicitly binds them to a particular class, reinforcing the class dichotomy present during the inset performance of the final act. Elliot Krieger notes Puck's reference in *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare's Comedies*, claiming that it is "an epithet that objectifies the men and abstracts human skill from their work" (59). Krieger claims that even ascribing the name "mechanicals" to the workers dehumanizes them by aligning them so closely with their work. Further, through their production of the play-within-the-play, the laborers literally objectify themselves by turning themselves into art, a mode of production.

Several critics have noted that the performance of the play-within-the-play, framed by its onstage audience, restores a society that benefits not the workers but the aristocracy, whose superiority is reflected by the mechanicals' groveling for approval. Krieger

explores this dynamic when he argues, “[T]he play furthers the aristocracy’s fantasy of its absolute social predominance by replacing the craftsmen’s physical control of their work with their inept verbal control of nature in an artistic performance” (61). Because the aristocracy’s responses highlight the workers’ linguistic failures, the mechanicals’ performance reassures the viewers of their power. Theodore B. Leinwand agrees that the nobles achieve superiority but also contends that the final act celebrates the restoration of society as a whole. In “‘I Believe We Must Leave the Killing Out’: Deference and Accommodation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” he claims, “The proximity of [artisans] and nobility, the mutual celebration of aristocratic nuptials, and the expected pension for the performers make for a community of shared interests. Order is restored in Athens when all levels of society celebrate together” (159). Because both the onstage audience and the performers of the play-within-the-play receive the objects of their desire—either marriage or patronage—social order is restored. Leinwand notes the childishness of the mechanicals, especially considering their reliance on Theseus to be “made men” (MND 4.2.17, emphasis added), suggesting that they need Theseus’s approval to assert their manliness. Similarly, in “A Kingdom of Shadows,” Louis A. Montrose suggests that “the mechanicals are collectively presented in a childlike relationship with their social superiors” (218). The mechanicals’ desire to be “made men” (emphasis added) also reminds the viewer of their monetary focus, again reinforcing their desire for compensation for their performance. In “Changeling Bottom: Speech Prefixes, Acting, and Character in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” Lina Perkins Wilder writes, “[L]ike the company of which Shakespeare was a part, Quince’s company curries favor with the nobility in order to reap material awards” (48), and she suggests that the mechanicals aim to become professional actors. Of course, because they are marked by their theatrical inability as opposed to their professionalism, their aspirations provide further fodder for the nobles’ amusement. Then again, perhaps because they seem so non-threatening, the

mechanicals set their noble audience at ease, allowing them to subvert the aristocracy's power.

Throughout their preparation for the play, the workers focus on appeasing their audience, which suggests that their labor is for the benefit of others and thereby alienates them from the product of their labor. When Shakespeare first introduces the mechanicals, he simultaneously draws attention to and divorces them from their trades. Through their names, the mechanicals are explicitly tied to their crafts: Peter Quince, the carpenter; Bottom, the weaver; Francis Flute, the bellows mender; Robin Starveling, the tailor; Snug, the joiner; and Tom Snout, the tinker; yet they never practice their crafts in the play. Instead, they devote time and attention to preparing for their performance, possibly because they feel alienated by their position as craftsmen, which may motivate them to seek fulfillment through art. Ironically, the mechanicals simply trade one mode of production for another, for the workers now appear to work for two purposes: money and approval. Their desire for patronage reveals that their art is not a form of self-expression but rather a means of livelihood—despite the fact that the mechanicals never receive the “sixpence a day” (4.2.21) they believed they might earn for their performance, at least not in the onstage action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Even though their emphasis on monetary compensation reduces them and their play to commodities, the mechanicals seem aware of their objectification, for they enact it on stage. While Hamlet directs a player “to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature” (*Ham.* 3.2.20), the mechanicals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seem to ignore *mimesis* in their performance. When trying to determine how to create a wall for their performance, Bottom suggests:

Some man or other must present Wall: and  
let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast  
about him to signify Wall. (3.1.68-70)

Their lack of *mimesis* is, in a sense, an exhibition of their collective alienation as workers. Marx explains that man becomes objectified

through the process of alienation. In *The Grundrisse*, he writes, “The person is objectified in production; the materialized thing is subjectified in the person” (22). In other words, through the act of production, the person, like the product, becomes an object, whereas the object of the production becomes a subject. In the performance of *Pyramus and Thisby*, Snout literally objectifies himself by playing the role of Wall. At the same time, he subjectifies (or personifies) Wall by making it a speaking *character* rather than a prop or set piece.

The mechanicals’ decision to draw attention to their identities and social position as workers in their show may be due in part to Early Modern concerns about the mimetic quality of the theater. David Scott Kastan notes these fears in “Is There a Class in This (Shakespearean) Text?” He writes, “Acting threatened to reveal the artificial and arbitrary nature of social being” (6). Because players could appear, through costuming and acting, to be of a higher class than they were, actors might inadvertently suggest that class and power are merely affected categories. The world created by the stage, then, could subvert the social structure by allowing lower-class actors to depict kings and nobles who might seem just as adept as their real counterparts. Perhaps it is because the mechanicals do not want to appear as a threat to the prevailing ideology that they seem to work against the mimetic properties of the play by personifying props, identifying characters by name, and even speaking directly to the audience. For example, fearing the ladies’ response to the lion’s roar and the deaths at the end of the play, Bottom proposes that a prologue be written that proclaims:

we will do no harm with our swords, and that  
 Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more  
 better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not  
 Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. (MND 3.1.18-22)

Bottom’s request to be identified not only by name but also by trade shows his awareness of his audience’s concern with its own power. On the one hand, if his desire to state his social position is an act

of “false consciousness,” he may unconsciously subscribe to the ideological values of the ruling class and desire to assert himself as beneath the duke and other nobles. Barbara Freedman claims that the mechanicals’ performance of *Pyramus and Thisby* confirms the prevailing ideology due to the workers’ “impaired imagination.” In “‘Dis/Figuring Power’: Censorship and Representation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” she suggests, “When they carefully inform the court that they are not to be confused with their dramatic roles, they preserve the production of Elizabethan ideology at the expense of the play at hand” (186). Thus she argues that the lack of *mimesis* harms the quality of the play-within-the-play. On the other hand, if the Early Modern viewer were, as Kastan claims, concerned that the stage could convey class ambiguity, Bottom may wish to lure his audience members into a false sense of superiority in order to subvert their power through the ideological implications of the performance itself.

Even before the mechanicals perform, Philostrate dismisses the mechanicals’ abilities, for he assumes that, because they are workers, they will not be able to act well. Philostrate warns Theseus that the performers are “[h]ard-handed men, that work in Athens here / Which never labored in their minds till now” (MND 5.1.73-74). By reminding the onstage audience of the mechanicals’ low social stature (and, presumably, low educational level), he places them at ease, removing their fear of subversion through the authority of the stage. In fact, the mechanicals may simply *appear* to be inept, for their comedic performance could belie a deeper message. In “Bottom’s Dream, the Lion’s Roar, and Hostility of Class Difference in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” Michael Schneider notes that the mechanicals’ “chance at being ‘made men’—depends upon appearing naïve, i.e., without *intention* to make fun of romantic love” (199, Schneider’s emphasis). In other words, the mechanicals must appear to be theatrically inept in order to gain the patronage of Theseus. Philostrate may fall prey to the mechanicals’ intelligence, not their ignorance, when he tells Theseus:

I have heard it over,  
 And it is nothing, nothing in the world;  
 Unless you can find sport in their intents,  
 Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain,  
 To do you service. (MND 5.1.77-80)

Philostrate's words are ambiguous because he is unclear about whether the actors or Theseus will have to be "stretched and conned with cruel pain." If he means that the actors feel "cruel pain" in their attempts "to do you service," Philostrate suggests that the play benefits not the actors but the viewers, especially Theseus. Further, Philostrate's assertion that the play is "nothing" reflects his earlier dismissal of the performers as workers. Positing the play as an act of service, Philostrate's remarks parallel Marx's assertion about alienated labor: "If the worker's activity is torment to him, to another it must be *delight* and his life's joy" (*Economic* 115, Marx's emphasis). Marx suggests that production is painful to the worker, yet joyous to the owner of the product (153). On the other hand, if Philostrate's remarks suggest that Theseus will feel the "cruel pain" of having to stretch the actors' words, then he believes, as Leinwand claims, that Theseus will have to do the real "labor" during the play. Ignoring Philostrate's suggestion to forgo the play, Theseus believes, "Our sport shall be to take what they mistake" (MND 5.1.90). He asserts the joy he will take from his ownership of the play, which he believes he will obtain through his own imagination. If the mechanicals' "intents" are to create a play that appears as "nothing," then perhaps the onstage audience misses the rebellious message of the play-within-the-play.

The mechanicals all transform during the inset performance, disconnecting themselves from their identities as workers yet confirming their sense of alienation. Even though he physically embodies a wall, Snout ensures that the audience recognize him not as the wall but as the creator or presenter of that wall. He says, "I, one Snout by name, present a wall" (5.1.156). Snout's identification of himself by name suggests his desire to assert his autonomy,

especially when juxtaposed with Theseus's attempts to own the play (and therefore its parts, including the actors). Snout's description of his costume also reminds the audience that a wall, unlike a lion or the moon, is a manmade object. The absence of a manmade wall—opposed to a man *made* wall—serves as a reminder of the workers' collective alienation from their trades. He states, "This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show / That I am that same wall; the truth is so" (5.1.161-62). Snout's emphasis on the material aspects of the wall may be an attempt to remind the onstage audience of his status as a craftsman; as a tinker, he makes his living by mending household objects ("Tinker," def. 1a). His desire to express the "truth" of his role as a wall emphasizes his feelings of objectification, revealing that he identifies with the wall as an object.

While the aristocrats view the mechanicals' enactment of objects as yet another theatrical blunder, the personification of objects also draws attention to the fact that the performers are alienated from the product of their labor (their play) because the duke attempts to assert his authority throughout their performance. Through the act of ownership, then, the play becomes an element of private property, which Marx explores in his works. He writes that "*private property* is only the perceptible expression of the fact that man becomes *objective* for himself and at the same time becomes to himself a strange and inhuman object" (*Economic* 138, Marx's emphasis). Marx asserts that private property causes an individual to be alienated not only from the product of his labor but also from himself. Further, Starveling's depiction of a natural—rather than manmade—object also reflects his alienation from nature. When Starveling presents Moonshine, he says, "This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present; / Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be" (5.1.244-45). Starveling's use of the word "seem" suggests that he presents a "strange and inhuman object," for the moon is inhuman. He also calls attention to the fact that mankind attempts to ascribe human traits to the moon by envisioning "the man i' th' moon," perhaps highlighting man's desire to assert ownership

over natural objects by seeing them as reflections of himself. In his attempts to draw attention to what he deems to be a theatrical misstep on the mechanicals' part, Theseus calls the presentation of the moon "the greatest error of all the rest" (MND 5.1.246) because neither the man nor his dog is in the lantern. However, by assuming that the presentation of Moonshine is due to the inability rather than the choice of the mechanicals, Theseus ignores the symbolic message behind the personification of the moon: the workers are simultaneously objectified.

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# “Probably true enough”: Narrative Control Through Possibility in *Absalom, Absalom!*

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Though “unreliable narration” has become a widely used term (and one that is perhaps easily thrown around), its core concept or definition remains debatable. Wayne Booth’s original designation, a narrator that does not speak in line with the norms of an implied author, is still the basis for many, while others have shifted the attention away from an authorial presence to a textual or reader-based definition, or some hybrid of these (Booth 158-159). At some level, there is a narrative distortion, but the nature of that distortion and the distorted product itself are more uncertain. One particularly interesting case occurs in indeterminate or undecidable narration, where multiple narrators offer incompatible accounts and layers of unreliability. In cases like these, it often seems impossible to untangle the web and arrive at any sort of norm or stable reliability. At first, the several narrators of William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* seem to create precisely this: a tangled web of Thomas Sutpen featuring strands of narrative bias, incomplete knowledge, and fabrication. However, the concept of possible worlds theory suggests a new way to understand its unreliability, as the different accounts attempt to bring the story closer to the actual world of the text. At the most exterior diegetic level, Quentin Compson and his roommate Shreve, by creating people and events more accessible from the actual world, seem to *become* reliable through their unreliability by bringing the story in line with a sense of historical truth. In the absence of actuality, this sense of close possibility takes over.

While in many novels a character’s personality is often the source

of both behavioral and narrative tendencies, the two often are not closely linked beyond that; in other words, a narrator's twisting of the story—including omission, misinterpretation, or outright lies—rarely affects the nature of the story itself. In the case of Faulkner's narrators, though, action and message are tied so tightly together because the telling is *part of* the story and contributes to its ultimate resolution, a resolution often less concerned with events and action than it is with a progression of the mind and ideas. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, the narratives all center on Sutpen, but the storytelling becomes its own plot; moreover, inspired by attempts to understand Sutpen, the eventual account given by Shreve and Quentin creates Sutpen's history as much as—even more than—any tangible evidence does.

Each narrator displays clear indications of unreliability, but already some differences are apparent. In “Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators” Greta Olson, building off definitions of unreliability from James Phelan and Ansgar Nünning, makes a key distinction between *fallible* narrators—who “do not reliably report on narrative events because they are mistaken about their judgments or perceptions or are biased”—and *untrustworthy* narrators—whose inconsistencies “appear to be caused by ingrained behavioral traits or some current self-interest” (101-102). *Absalom, Absalom!* includes both of these. The primary narrators of the novel's first half, Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson, fall into the concept of fallible narrators. Though both of their accounts are biased in opposite directions, they nevertheless seek a similar goal through storytelling: to tell their versions of Sutpen. In *Character and Personality in the Novels of William Faulkner: A Study in Psychostylistics*, Ineke Bockting argues that the novel “is a novel of attribution, thematizing the assignment of cause-effect relations to human behavior. This assignment of motives to human actions, in which the individual automatically engages, serves to determine this individual's own future behavior” (200).

Each narrator wants to know what made Sutpen into the person

he was; however, their limitations prevent them from reaching this understanding. Though Miss Rosa claims objectivity by saying, “I will tell you what he did and let you be the judge,” her immediacy to the story gives every detail a sense of motive, some purpose to the telling of it (Faulkner 134). Quentin ponders this several times over the course of the novel. Early on, he thinks that she believes understanding Sutpen’s nature will help people “*know at last why God let us lose the war: that only through the blood of our men and the tears of our women could He stay this demon and efface his name and lineage from the earth*” (6, emphasis in original). Even though he rules this out as her primary motive, she later gives it merit when, after admitting Sutpen’s bravery, she adds, “But that our cause, our very life and future hopes and past pride, should have been thrown into the balance with men like that to buttress it—men with valor and strength but without pity or honor. Is it any wonder that Heaven saw fit to let us lose?” (13). Not only does this reveal a sense of destiny or divine wrath on her part, but the fact that Quentin picks up on this attitude before she says it shows both his intuition and the exaggerated extent to which she takes it.

Her interest in convincing Quentin that the tale needs to be told combines with her modal worldview to favor these types of interpretations. Each narrative mindset, when it controls a character’s thoughts and actions and in some way differs from the actual world of the text, can be conceived as a possible world. Adapted from a metaphysical concept to explain ontological issues, possible worlds theory posits each textual world as its own system, with myriad possibilities branching off, as a way to, as R. M. Sainsbury explains in *Fiction and Fictionalism*, “replace the absolute notion of truth and falsehood by a relative one: truth at (or with respect to) a possible world” (69). In *Heterocosmica*, Lubomir Doležel argues that the different possibilities are governed by different modal rule structures. Although the worlds themselves may be constructs of human minds, Doležel emphasizes that each “world . . . is a macrostructure, and its ‘order’ is determined by global restrictions”

(113). These restrictions are based on the modal operators of the world, which, Doležel goes on to note, “have a direct impact on acting; they are rudimentary and inescapable constraints, which each person acting in the world faces” (113). Thus, what makes the operation of a possible world distinct is the mutual interdependence of action, thought, and narrative.

Following Doležel’s framework, Miss Rosa’s worldview is based on deontic (societally based) and axiological (morally based) modalities, leading her to conceive of a world controlled by a sense of decency and right versus wrong (114). During his narration, Shreve envisions Rosa asking herself, “*How can he be allowed to die without having to admit that he was wrong and suffer and regret it?*” (Faulkner 244, emphasis in original). Rosa adds to this a constant insistence that the world and its events should *mean* something. Her hatred is so intense that it makes her confuse her world with a romanticized one of literary justice and people getting what they deserve.

On the other hand, Mr. Compson’s version, while presenting a more complicated, human version of Sutpen, is unreliable in its own ways. Bockting argues, “Mr. Compson tries almost desperately to assign a cause-effect relationship to Henry’s behavior” (220). However, Quentin also regularly assigns to the Sutpen story words suggesting fate and destiny: “He must have known, as he knew that what his father had told him was true, that he was doomed and destined to kill” (Faulkner 72). At another time, he asks,

Have you noticed how so often when we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women, how with a sort of astonishment we find ourselves now and then reduced to the belief, the only possible belief, that they stemmed from some of the old virtues? (96)

As his narrative progresses, he turns Sutpen into a true tragic hero, describing his struggle

against not only human but natural forces, . . . like you must with the horse which you take across country, over timber,

which you control only through your ability to keep the animal from realising that actually you cannot. (41)

What Quentin and Shreve will understand and focus on in their narration is that these “destinies” were set in place through human action, in relation to place and time.

Initially, as Quentin and Shreve take over, the situation gets more complicated. Shreve tells the story simply as he desires, and Quentin, seeking to uncover the truth, must do so through Shreve’s inventive methods and with his own family background in mind. Marta Puxan, using Olson’s distinction, argues that Shreve is an untrustworthy narrator, as he “explicitly foregoes the aim of verity in narration in favor of that of plausibility . . . . Shreve has a conception of telling a story that attends only to internal logic and personal pleasure” (531). Indeed, Shreve continually mocks the integrity of the story. In the first couple pages of chapter six, Shreve insists on his presence by continually getting Quentin and Rosa’s relationship wrong. After the third mistake, he immediately corrects himself with, “All right all right all right.—that this old—this Aunt R—All right all right all right all right” (Faulkner 143-144). The quick corrections show that Shreve really knows the detail and is instead deliberately provoking Quentin’s non-verbalized responses, forcing Quentin into the story.

This is not the only indication of Shreve’s purposeful disregard for the story. Soon after his involvement begins, he says, “Jesus, the South is fine, isn’t it. It’s better than the theatre, isn’t it. It’s better than Ben Hur, isn’t it” (176). Again, the repetition, as well as the lack of question marks, indicate the remark’s purpose to taunt Quentin, suggesting the artifice of the accounts given so far. He even refers to it as a game when he says, “You wait. Let me play a while now” (224). However, while unreliable, his provocation forces Quentin into the story in a more prominent way, leading to the union of the two storytellers that occurs in chapter eight, evoking the most vivid depictions of scenes from Henry and Bon’s time together and allowing them to see the scenes for which they have

no evidence. In the final chapter, Shreve takes similar approaches, but the humor is gone. In the novel's final moments, Shreve provokes Quentin to respond, prodding him with questions to force him to listen. With his last question, Shreve fully draws out the issue, asking, "Why do you hate the South?" (303). In doing so, he suggests the strangeness of choosing such a tragic, unhappy story as a depiction of the South, but even more, he forces Quentin to question his own role in the storytelling that just occurred.

Thus, though Shreve is an untrustworthy narrator—and Quentin by extension, due to his frequent following of Shreve's lead—it is possible that "untrustworthy" does not need its negative connotation in this application. In the second half of the novel, speculation replaces the historical nature of the earlier sections. Faulkner emphasizes this shift with heavy repetition of words like "probably," "must have," or "maybe." In one instance, Shreve says, "And maybe your old man was right this time and they did think maybe the war would settle it and they would not have to themselves, or at least maybe Henry hoped it would because maybe your old man was right here too and Bon didn't care" (274). Their speculation seems inherently unreliable. Shreve, who often dominates the discussion, has no connection to the events other than Quentin's telling. Even the details they have from other sources are subject to re-evaluation. In their discussion of the wounding, Shreve says, "Because your old man was wrong here, too! He said it was Bon who was wounded, but it wasn't. Because who told him? . . . It was Henry" (275). His ability to correct the story comes more from a willingness to disregard details.

Yet, Faulkner once said that "in *Absalom, Absalom!* we move from the least reliable narrator, that of Rosa Coldfield, the eye-witness, to the most reliable, that of Shreve and Quentin, who imagine those events for which they have no empirical evidence" (qtd. in Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg 263). The reader does not have to take Faulkner's word for it, but the nature of their creation, with its much clearer, causally-based chain of events, gives the statement

merit. Somehow, that randomized guesswork of Shreve and Quentin becomes the most reliable depiction of the implied author's message. The novel becomes what, in *The Formal Principle in the Novel*, Austin Wright calls a "narrator-controlled world":

here the ostensible autonomy of the fictional world is denied, and the events appear to be manipulated by the narrative process itself . . . the postulated forces in the fictional world are inadequate to account for the sequence or to make it coherent; whatever coherence there is cannot be understood or explained without reference to the intervention of the author as inventor. (70)

The objective history (or closest thing to it) of Thomas Sutpen dies with Miss Rosa, the last person to witness much of his story. The untold parts, never to be definitively revealed, would likewise perish, but Quentin and Shreve use what they know of the story to fill in the holes. In another instance of heavily speculative language, the Quentin/Shreve narrator says it was "four of them who sat in that drawing room which Shreve had invented and which was probably true enough"—these words, "probably true enough," are even repeated later on the same page (Faulkner 268). As Quentin and Shreve move beyond narrating to constructing a possible world out of that narration, modalities of that new world can accommodate the facts they know of the story, while providing legitimate grounds for their filler-work. The accounts of Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson, while true to their own particular worlds, move far away from the more or less realistic actual world of the novel. For either to be true, Sutpen must either be an abnormally inhuman monster, or fate and destiny must be driving forces in the universe.

Quentin and Shreve, on the other hand, create a possible world that requires much less departure from the actual. In "The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes," Marie-Laure Ryan writes of accessibility relations, through which a possible world may be connected to the actual; in her discussion Ryan lists a number of categories of compatibility, progressing toward those

of greater departure. Near the front of the list are the identity and compatibility of inventories; in other words, the contents between the actual and the possible. At the end are changes in logic or natural laws. Taken together, this means that a world limited to changes in the earlier categories will be more accessible than a world that changes the later ones (“Possible Worlds” 558-59). In Quentin and Shreve’s case, they create a meddling lawyer involved with Charles Bon and his mother, their reason simply being common sense: “sure, that’s who it would be: the lawyer” (Faulkner 241). The lawyer may not have existed in the textual actual world, thus creating a difference in inventory and identity, but the possible world where he *does* exist is more accessible than the possible worlds Miss Rosa or Mr. Compson create—worlds where fate and destiny are part of existence.

In this way, Quentin and Shreve become reliable *through* their unreliability and the boldness of their possible world construction. Inventing the story inherently misreports, as Quentin and Shreve describe what they could not know. When Quentin and Shreve decide that part of Mr. Compson’s story, that Bon was wounded at Pittsburg Landing but saved by Henry Sutpen, happened a different way, it is simply because they decide it fits better for Henry to have been wounded and saved by Bon (275). A large chunk of their narration describes the role of the lawyer in the story. They know nothing factual about any lawyer, except that he would have a role to play. By making these changes and additions, they essentially correct history, or at least adjust it to stay on a track that makes sense. Their misreporting brings them closer to accessibility with the actual world, which is no longer able to be fully accessed.

Yet, this only becomes possible *because* the actual facts are no longer accessible. During one of the reflections, Quentin thinks to himself “No. *If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain*” (155, emphasis in original). His distance from the events, his ability to look back and see both cause and consequence, allows him to see it in a more detached way. Here he is similar to Rosa, who “heard

*an echo, but not the shot*" (121, emphasis in original). Quentin hears the echoes in the aftermath and stories of the event. Because of his disconnect from it, he can use the echo he hears to reconstruct the shot. It is in this way that his character differs so markedly from his depressed state in *The Sound and the Fury*, where his struggles with himself and Caddy create a possible world that controls him through its modalities of honor and responsibility, in an actual world that has passed those values by. Describing what she calls "Quentin's defeat," Bocking says, "Quentin, who cannot find hope in the text of his father, tries to find hope in the texts of others," but that the stories he creates only heighten his loss (248). However, the real difference between the two might be placed more accurately in Quentin's loss of control over the modalities of the created worlds. As noted above, in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin and Shreve, due to their heterodiegetic removal from the story, have the ability to impose modalities and create a world that makes more sense than what they had before. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin cannot remove himself from his narration, since it is *his* story. Because of this, the inconsistency between the modalities of his world and that same world's actuality overpower him and drive him to suicide over Caddy.

At the core of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a sense of preservation. In each of the narratives, the storyteller attempts to understand Sutpen as a way of transmission to the future, whether it is to understand why the South fell, to understand one chapter in the history of a community, or simply to understand another human. Through the use of possible worlds theory to characterize these narratives though, the problems inherent in such motivated stories becomes clear. The desire and attempt to preserve betrays underlying motives about what is worth preserving, and without the caution of sticking to likelihood and a proximity to actuality, those motives are likely to twist the story even further. Faulkner, through each narrator, shows the possibilities and hazards inherent in the language of the mind.

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# From Dominance to Companionship: Animals in Behn and Defoe

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What is this earth and the sea, of which I have seen so much? Whence is it produced? And what am I and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal, whence are we? Sure we are all made by some secret Power who formed the earth and sea, the air and sky; and who is that? (Defoe 81)

In 1735, Carl Linnaeus published *Systema Naturae*, the first edition of his classification of living things, thereby leading eighteenth-century Europe down a path of biological and taxonomic sciences that forever changed humankind's perception of their relationship with the birds and beasts of native and foreign lands. Thereafter, the relationship between animal and human grew into a subject of intense intellectual and ethical debate. Now, around 250 years later, Linnaeus' ideas, along with many others, have developed into new twenty-first-century paradigms for animal-human relationships. These ideas are morphing into a branch of study known as *Animal Studies*. However, even before concepts like Linnaeus' took hold among English-speaking readers and developed into the various branches of animal studies present today, the relationship between animals and humans was already undergoing a profound transition in English literature. In comparing Aphra Behn's 1688 text, *Oroonoko*, and Daniel Defoe's 1719 text, *Robinson Crusoe*, readers see one of the first noticeable transitions from how

animal-human relationships are represented in seventeenth-century texts compared to those in eighteenth-century texts. Although similarities between animal and human interactions remain in both *Oroonoko* and *Robinson Crusoe* in the form of an intense desire to maintain ordered separation between so-called lower order animals and higher order humans, differences in how said groups interact show stark contrast as well. Oroonoko asserts violent power over animals in an attempt to prove his masculinity to onlookers and reassure his status as a forceful, dominant being, whereas Crusoe, on many occasions, labels animals as his companions and family. Thus, we see a transition from violent domination over animals as means to assert masculinity and control in *Oroonoko* to the compassionate caretaking of animal well-being stemming from a feeling of kinship with non-human species in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Although noted differences emerge in the treatment of animals between the two texts, marked similarities between animal-human relationships exist between the texts as well. For example, in each text we see an intense focus on *othering* animals as savage beasts bent on destroying the sanctity of humankind. In their introduction to *Between the Species: Readings in Human Animal Relations*, Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders cite what they call a *Sociozoologic Scale* in which

vermin . . . the worst animals—commonly portrayed in popular culture as fiends, predators, or maneaters—that contest the established social order itself [present themselves as] “Demons” [that] mount a serious and evil challenge to the ways things “ought to be” by trying to reverse the fundamental master-servant relationship present in the traditional phylogenetic order . . . . The typical response to demons is to kill them before they disempower or kill humans. (xxi-xxii)

Both *Oroonoko* and *Robinson Crusoe* enact this idea of exterminating the *other*, the vermin animal that threatens the stability of their established human social hierarchy. Rather than

allow the animal creature to disrupt the traditional master/servant, dominator/dominated relationship, the human threatened by the “demon” finds it necessary to fight back and kill the animal that defies this hierarchy of power. This killing is not simply an act of self-preservation; it is an action reinstating and upholding the social system of power in which humans and animals interact.

For example, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe says he “saw a dreadful monster indeed, for it was a terrible great lion . . . and [he] shot him into the head, and had the great pleasure to see him drop and make but little noise, but lay struggling for life” (Defoe 23). Although the animal was attacking Crusoe and his servant Xury, notice the use of the words “dreadful monster;” this word choice not only intensifies the terror of the beast’s pursuit, but also makes the beast seem almost supernatural in power and furthers his *otherness* from humans. It is apparently Crusoe’s duty as a higher order being to rid the world of this “monster,” and thus he has a right to “take great pleasure to see him drop” dead. Crusoe has rid the world of an animal that attempted to defy the superiority of human life over that of the “vermin” animal. Order has been restored.

This said, Defoe goes to great ends to differentiate between animality and humanity in his novel. At one point in the novel, Crusoe reflects that had it not been for his tools on the island, he would have had to “gnaw it [meat] with [his] teeth and pull it with [his] claws like a beast” (117). Thus, despite his loneliness on the abandoned island, he is still determined to maintain a separation between beast and human; he shudders at the thought of being debased to the mere wants, desires, and lack of manners characteristic of these so-called lower-order animals.

The same idea of *othering* the animal is present in *Oroonoko*. Caesar, otherwise known as Oroonoko, commits a similar kill as Robinson Crusoe’s. When a mother tiger attacks the exploring party, Oroonoko reacts:

*Caesar* [meets] this monstrous Beast of might, size, and vast Limbs, who [comes] with open Jaws upon him; and fixing

his [Oroonoko's] Awful stern Eyes full upon those of the Beast, and putting himself into a very stedly and good aiming posture of Defense, [runs] his Sword quite through his [the beast's] Breast down to his very Heart, home to the Hilt of the Sword. (45, emphasis in original)

Once again, language like “this monstrous Beast of Night” *others* the animal and makes it appear alien, deadly, and unfeeling in its desire for death of the human.

However, these two texts also demonstrate a positive transformation in how animals and humans interact. Crusoe, unlike Oroonoko, begins to value the company of his animal companions and considers them crucial parts of his “family” or kingdom on the island. Oroonoko, on the other hand, is constantly killing the animals he comes upon; there are no instances of companion animal relationships in *Oroonoko*. But, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe unabashedly admits he

had the loves of all [his] subjects at [his] absolute command. [He] could hang, draw, give liberty, and take it away, and no rebels [were] among [his] subjects. Then to see how like a king [he] dined, too, all alone, attended by [his] servants; Poll [his parrot], as if he had been [his] favorite, was the only person permitted to talk to [him]. [His] dog . . . sat always at [his] right hand, and two cats, one on one side of the table and one on the other. (Defoe 131)

This is a unique move Defoe makes in writing; he is valuing animal company as a suitable substitute for human relationships. Compared to human-animal relationships presented in earlier British novels, *Robinson Crusoe* is one of the first texts that creates this interspecies relationship focused on companionship and family.

Furthermore, notice the use of the word “person” to describe the presence of Poll the parrot in substitution for where one would expect to see the word “parrot,” “bird,” or simply “animal.” The use of the human identity noun, “person” in replacement of the more accurate and traditional use of an animal-associated noun

to describe Poll denotes an interesting transition in how writers, thinkers, and the fictional characters of our imaginations begin to view their relationships with members of the animal kingdom. In “Close Relationships between Humans and Nonhuman Animals,” Clinton Sanders argues, “The designation ‘person’ is the most elemental social identity. It provides the foundation for, and is constructed in the context of, relationships” (50). Yes, Poll is not a person per se, but the presence of an animal for the sake of company and companionship gives him a higher place of purpose and meaning in humankind’s own imagined idea of relationships. Sanders continues:

The animal’s personhood is an interactive accomplishment based on his or her definition as it arises in the context of the relationship. In applying a “person schema” (Howard 1995: 93) to shape and understand his or her interaction with the animal, the caretaker commonly makes a distinction between “person” and “human.” The animal is a person in the sense that his or her perspective and feelings are knowable; interaction is predictable; and the shared relationship provides an experience of closeness, warmth, and pleasure. (50)

To Crusoe, Poll is the only company who can remind Crusoe of his own humanity—a humanity reliant upon relationships with other persons whose “feelings are knowable” and whose “shared relationship provides an experience of closeness, warmth, and pleasure.” Poll cannot provide human companionship in its most elementary, basic form, but he can provide a close substitute because of his dependence on Crusoe for food, water, and essential survival needs and, most compellingly, because of his unique ability to verbalize bits and pieces of human language.

Moving to animal-human relations in *Oroonoko*, it must be noted that Crusoe’s relationship to animal companionship contrasts starkly with Oroonoko’s view on animals. The relationships between Oroonoko and animals serve as a reflection of the greater

systems of oppression working in seventeenth-century literature; the dominance Oroonoko displays over animals could be read as a need to assert his masculine dominance over another creature to remain well respected in social spheres centered on the system of patriarchy and male supremacy. As Susan McHugh so aptly states in “Modern Animals: From Subjects to Agents in Literary Studies”: “‘species’ gets added, along with race, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, class, and ability, to a profile that already frames subjectivity in human terms in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of how interlocking oppressions plague literary and other attempts to represent animality” (364). Thus, a difference in species grants Oroonoko, in his mentality and culture at least, reason and right to subdue the presumed lower order class of animals.

For Oroonoko, animals serve as a means to an end—a way to prove his masculinity in front of his peers. Even colonists surrounding him propagate this idea by offering him rewards of glory and respect if he kills beasts of the jungle. Oroonoko asks his female traveling companions, “What Trophies and Garlands, Ladies, will you make me, if I bring you home the Heart of this Ravenous Beast, that eats up all your Lambs and Pigs? We [the women] all promised he shou’d be rewarded at all our Hands” (45). The notion of asserting dominance over animals is encouraged by the social sphere in which Oroonoko finds himself. It becomes his consuming passion to kill these beasts and to gain acclaim from his travel mates. As one point on the journey,

Caesar had often said, he had a mind to encounter this Monster, and spoke with several Gentlemen who had attempted her . . . so that he remarking all these Places where she was shot, fancy’d still he shou’d overcome her, but giving her another sort of a Wound than any had yet done.  
(Behn 45, emphasis in original)

He must *talk* about killing the beast, *commit* to killing the beast, and *succeed* in killing the beast in order to assert his power in a seventeenth-century patriarchal, male-dominated hierarchy.

In contrast, Crusoe makes a point to respect the animals around him; yet, his respect for animals stems from assigning human emotions to his animal companions. Donna Haraway, author of the groundbreaking Animal Studies and posthumanities text *When Species Meet*, argues that “species and respect are in optic/haptic/affective/cognitive touch: they are at the table together; they are messmates, companions, in company, *cum panis*” (164). Yes, Crusoe shares a dinner table with his animal “messmates,” but he also moves beyond a reliance on these animals for kinship and begins to view animals as sentient, emotional beings in his abandoned, shipwrecked, lonely state of mind. In a land devoid of direct human contact before Friday’s arrival, one can understand why assigning human emotion to the only other living beings around him would be a feasible reality. However, I am persuaded that his companionship with the animals is more than just a result of loneliness; this new move to animal companionship and a desire for the accumulation of animals (in Crusoe’s case, these are the many, many goats) for one’s own *family* comes from a profound transition in intellectual and social ideas concerning animal presence in human domestic life. Crusoe embodies the transition from violent animal domination to having companion animals present in the family dynamic and household. Yes, he anthropomorphizes his parrot, Poll when he denotes emotion on Poll who is “overjoyed to see [Crusoe] again” when he returns home after a terrifying attempted journey by boat around the island, but this anthropomorphization is simply the beginning of a new realm of animal presence in human life (Defoe 128). Novels after *Robinson Crusoe* begin to give more and more human characteristics to the animal characters. The transition to anthropomorphization of animals is profound, quick, and subtle.

Crusoe also furthers this argument towards the suitability of animal companionship when he makes a distinction between material goods and the dog he finds on an abandoned ship. He says, “I took a fire shovel and tongs . . . ; and with this cargo and

the dog I came away” (172). The dog is not an item of cargo but an autonomous being. This idea then evolves into a feeling of respect for his fellow creatures. Crusoe says of the so-called vicious wolf that:

he [the wolf] does not usually attempt them, unless they first attack him. On the contrary, if you meet him in the woods, if you don't meddle with him, he won't meddle with you; but there you must take care to be very civil to him, and give him the road; for he is a very nice gentleman, he won't go a step out of his way for a prince (263).

Crusoe's approach here differs markedly from what Oroonoko would have done. Oroonoko would have viewed it his right and privilege to kill any beast that dare cross his path. But Crusoe respects the animal instead, especially if it does not do him any harm.

Consequently, Oroonoko views animals as a part of a tripartite structure: use value, exchange value, and encounter value, without the problematic solace of human exceptionalism. Trans-species encounter value is about relationships among a motley array of lively beings, in which commerce and consciousness, evolution and bioengineering, and ethics and utilities are all at play . . . “encounters” that involve, in a nontrivial but hard-to-characterize way, *subjects* of different biological species. (Haraway 46, emphasis original)

Essentially, Oroonoko sees animals as a commodity, an item that can be used to represent ideas of domination, frustration, and masculinity. In a world of slavery and subjugation, I find it intriguing that Oroonoko, himself a subjugated, dominated slave, furthers this chain of dominance in his violent domination over animals. Glenn Elder, Jennifer Wolch, and Jody Emel argue in “Race, Place, and the Human-Animal Divide” that “this process of animal-linked racialization works to sustain power relations between dominant groups and subordinate immigrants [or groups], deny their legitimacy as citizen subjects, and restrict the

material benefits that derive from such status” (21). Oroonoko is the one being dominated by white colonists and slave-holders, but he chooses not to allow himself to be the bottom level in the hierarchy of domination. He finds another classification of being that he can subjugate as a means to reassert his own identity and reliance on his need to feel empowered, in control, and masculine. Oroonoko justifies his thinking in that, “Many forms of racialization have, in fact, long relied upon a discourse about human-animal boundaries, namely the dichotomous division of sentient beings into categories of ‘human’ and animal” (Elder, Wolch, and Emel 26). The animal, a category where some whites place him and his fellow slaves, is a group to be dominated. But, Oroonoko takes this further when he finds actual animals to subjugate and dominate with masculine violence and control. He moves the classification of “animal” from himself to other nonhuman animals by doing this. Oroonoko furthers the idea that, “in general, animal bodies can be used to racialize, dehumanize, and maintain power relations” (27). Oroonoko turns to another classification of living creature, a different body, to “racialize, dehumanize,” and suppress others as a means to retain his own masculine, powerful identity in a world in which he himself is dominated and subdued by white supremacy. Animality denotes the ability for others to subjugate and overpower a group of beings; Oroonoko finds an animal group to further this chain of domination rather than have the chain of domination stop at him.

In these early texts, the goal is perhaps not to eradicate the boundaries between human and animal differences; if that were so, Defoe and Behn would not have made such an adamant effort to distinguish between human and animal. But, it must be noted that Behn’s text transitions into Defoe’s text; one evolves into the other, ascending to the marked change in how animals and humans relate and interact from one text to another. The transition is profound and illuminating, indicative of sociocultural issues in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and representative of

important, groundbreaking realities and issues in human-animal relationships. In these two novels, we see an evolution in human-animal relationship dynamics. Human beings begin to treat animals with respect, compassion, and familiarity in *Robinson Crusoe*, whereas in *Oroonoko*, animals remain mere means of demonstrating dominance over a so-called lesser creature to maintain patriarchal norms of masculinity.

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# The “Oriental Lear”: (Mis)understanding Kurosawa’s *Ran*

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In his article “Kabuki from the Outside,” David Goodman recalls going to see a performance. Before the show, Goodman and his fellow theatre-goers receive a brief introduction to *kabuki*, ending with a practitioner shouting “Japan has a tradition! Japan is not a colony!” (177). This declaration immediately defines the importance of maintaining culturally specific art forms in a global age—a nation with a tradition is not a colony. Presumably, when this tradition is disregarded or goes unrecognized, the nation is subsumed into a colonial entity. This *kabuki* practitioner’s contention is salient and loaded for post-colonial theorists, as it asserts that colonization is the process of cultural destruction. Akira Kurosawa makes a similar declaration in his film *Ran*, which is conspicuously foreign to Western audiences and critics. Kurosawa’s post-colonial sympathies are palpable in *Ran*, in which Hidetora, a warlord/oppressor, becomes one of the oppressed and is haunted by his history of violence and suppression of dissent. Kurosawa also opposes the dominant Western paradigm by giving precedence to the Japanese story of Mori Motonari over Shakespeare’s *King Lear* when describing the inspirations for the film (qtd. in Phillips 268). In Stephen Phillips’ “Akira Kurosawa’s *Ran*,” Phillips notes that, despite Kurosawa’s clarity with regard to his influences, Western critics have tended to focus on *Ran* as an “Oriental Lear” (267), rarely even referring to the legendary Japanese warlord by name. In *Ran*, Kurosawa critiques imperialism and colonialism within an explicitly Japanese context; however, this criticism can be applied to instances of colonialism more broadly. Given this critique, it is

ironic that the reception of *Ran* belies a pernicious Eurocenterism among Western critics.

The refusal of these critics to acknowledge the primacy of Mori Motonari's story in Kurosawa's film as well as their specific unfavorable comparisons between *King Lear* and the film exhibit their adherence to an intellectual paradigm termed "Orientalism" by Edward Said. In his text "Orientalism Reconsidered," Said maintains that "the Orient and Occident are facts produced by human beings, and as such must be studied as integral components of the social, and not the divine or natural, world" (90), and that Orientalism is a way of looking at the East from the West with a biased, almost universally negative perspective. The tendency of Westerners is to give cultural primacy to Occidental art and to denigrate or diminish Oriental art, which demonstrates the larger tendency of the West to denigrate or diminish Eastern culture and society. By attacking "the Orient," Westerners perform an act of "othering," defining themselves as Occidental in opposition to those they define as Oriental, to whom they consider themselves superior. Much of the criticism of *Ran* displays Orientalism, whether consciously or subconsciously. Kurosawa's film certainly is, to an extent, an adaptation of *King Lear*; however, Orientalism causes Western criticism to centralize *King Lear* because of its status as an Occidental text.

Kurosawa, on the other hand, is conscious of the concept of "othering," and uses it in *Ran* to develop a critique of imperialism. Most notably, Tsurumaru has been blinded by Hidetora in order to prevent his possible ascendancy to power. Tsurumaru also intentionally presents himself as feminine and remains in isolation in order to avoid further conflict or violence. He has been "othered" by Hidetora in several ways: his blinding makes him disabled, his gender nonconformity makes him an outcast in a society with binary gender constructs, and his isolation is othering in the most literal sense—forcing the physical separation of an "undesirable" from society. Hidetora's guilt following his encounter with Tsurumaru

is the guilt of the colonizer. Hidetora did, after all, take land and political power from Tsurumaru's (and Sue's) family and, in traditional colonial fashion, abuse the land's previous owners (forcing Sue to marry Jiro and blinding Tsurumaru) and violently suppress a potential political threat (again, Tsurumaru). Hidetora also colonized the land previously held by Lady Kaede's family. Lady Kaede is "othered" by colonization as well. She is forced to marry Taro, which places her in a supposedly subservient position to her colonizer. Later, Kurogane tells Jiro that it "is his right" to marry Lady Kaede if he so chooses following the death of Taro, which implies that Kaede has no independent agency, that she is simply a commodity. However, Kurosawa complicates this depiction by having Lady Kaede act as a strong rebel who refuses to accept this subservience and acts from within the system to abolish the oppressive rule of the colonizer.

Kurosawa presents the "othered" very sympathetically in *Ran*. Sue and Tsurumaru are pitiable due to their misfortune, while Kaede is too interesting to be overlooked or caricatured. These characters are consequentially able to avoid becoming casualties of othering, which is a paradigm in which it is vital to maintain a strict division between the hegemonic mainstream and the other, a division which is undermined by the reality of the other's humanity. Though Hidetora is an Easterner himself, he acts as the colonizer, so it is important that he feels regret for his actions, motivated by encounters with those he has wronged. When he encounters Sue and Tsurumaru in the ruins of their family's castle, he says this encounter indicates that he is in hell. He experiences torment upon being reminded of his colonial actions. Thus, the othered characters are given another dimension of humanity through the eyes of their former colonizer, because Hidetora's regret would not be possible were he still engaging in othering them (it would not make sense to sympathize with someone who is dehumanized). Kaede remains othered throughout the film, never truly gaining the sympathy of her former colonizer. Both Taro and Jiro listen to her, but neither of

them experiences a moment of repentance for their colonization. In fact, Jiro engages in othering quite late in the film, when Kurogane expresses reservations about attacking Saburo's army, which would certainly lead to war. Jiro explicitly tells Kurogane that "[he] is not one of [them]" when Kurogane expresses these reservations, and attempts to exile him, though Kurogane eventually remains with Jiro. Here, Jiro demonstrates the potential to other not only conquered/colonized peoples, but even those within the dominant society who question colonialist or imperialist action. Lady Kaede eventually destroys the Ichimonji clan, indicating one other possible critique of imperialism in *Ran*, one that is more practical than the idea of sympathy with the colonized. If the colonizer does not come to recognize the humanity of the othered (as Hidetora does with Tsurumaru and Sue), the colonized others will destroy him (as Kaede does to the unrepentant branches of the Ichimonji clan). Within *Ran*, Kurosawa combats othering by making familiar that which is foreign, by forcing interaction between colonizer and colonized, and by providing an example of the latent power lurking beneath the oppressed surface of othered, colonized peoples.

This film explicitly critiques imperialism, but not necessarily Orientalism, as there is no clash between the Orient and the Occident. The conflict remains entirely Japanese, and it is contingent upon the viewer to apply the principles of anti-colonialism expressed in the film to Orientalism more broadly. As Orientalism is a form of othering, however, *Ran*'s potential applications as an anti-Orientalist film text are fairly clear. If Hidetora, Jiro, and Taro are guilty of dehumanization when they engage in post-colonial othering, so is the West when it engages in Orientalism. Thus, seeing Kurosawa's Japanese film through an Occidental lens can be problematic, as the disdain for or lack of understanding of Japanese aesthetics can reveal Eurocenterism on the part of the West.

Kurosawa's aesthetic ambitions are clear. He situates himself firmly in Japanese *kabuki*, a tradition which emphasizes specific

methods of expression evident in *Ran*. One of these is the “kabuki walk,” (Shen 136), which, as Grant Shen writes in “Zaju and Kabuki in English: Directing in the Classical Styles,” involves “thunderously stomp[ing] . . . on the stage” (135), a gesture mimicked by Hidetora when he fails to find a suitable instrument with which to commit *seppuku* (suicide motivated by dishonor) after his sons Taro and Jiro attack him when he is taking refuge in the Third Castle. Throughout, characters can be seen performing “Suzuki stepping” (named for a specific *kabuki* method), in which actors “fire their feet to the ground while freezing their upper bodies” (135). This method of movement is demonstrated most notably during scenes in which Hidetora is frightened, for instance when Tango mentions Sabura to Hidetora. Hidetora scrambles away from Tango and Kyoami, occasionally stopping to pose in a posture indicating terror, with his face reflecting this fear. Also evident as the film progresses is Hidetora’s pale, ghostly visage. This is an example of the “heavy makeup and costume” typical of *kabuki* performers (141).

Shen also notes that “the importance of music in Asian theatre cannot be overemphasized,” and the atonal soundtrack of *Ran* is certainly no exception (137). This soundtrack is almost as central to the film as the plot. It fulfills the important role of telegraphing emotions to the audience, emphasizing the most egregious abuses of power. For instance, the central battle scene of *Ran*, the attack on the Third Castle and Hidetora by the combined forces of Taro and Jiro functions more as an opera than a traditional play or film. This scene contains little dialogue, and primarily relies on the unsettling score to convey not only the horror of the scene (which could be done through purely visual means, as a score is not required to feel horror at the violent images of the battle), but the increasing insanity and existential isolation of Hidetora in a world in which he has nothing. At this moment in the film, Hidetora has no family (he exiled his one good son, the other two have turned against him), no kingdom, no wealth (his concubines who, as commodified women, serve as an example of this wealth have been decimated

in the battle), no home, and no sanity. It is a powerful scene, and much of this power is derived from the score. Kurosawa's reliance on music extends throughout the film, but is particularly evident during two memorable scenes almost immediately after the massacre at the Third Castle. Upon discovering Hidetora in the fields around the castle, Tango and Kyoami realize he is mad with regret about his past, and Kyoami sings a song reflecting this regret. Shortly after this, Hidetora, Kyoami, and Tango seek refuge from a storm in Tsurumaru's home, and Tsurumaru plays the flute for his guests, because "music is now the only pleasure left to [him]" (*Ran*). Again, atonal music reflects the cruel and unforgiving world in which *Ran* takes place, as Kyoami's song recalls Hidetora's violent past and Tsurumaru's flute is his last refuge in a society that has mutilated and demeaned him. Tsurumaru's song seemingly causes Hidetora to face the reality of his own brutality, and Hidetora becomes terrified at Tsurumaru's fate. Music is vital to a full understanding of *Ran* because of the way in which Kurosawa invests philosophical meaning in scenes that would otherwise simply be disturbing through the use of the film's score. This reliance on music to create dramatic tension is another method Kurosawa borrows from *kabuki* (and other Asian theatre). *Kabuki* methods are palpable in *Ran*, and these methods produce a particular Japanese aesthetic.

Central to the aesthetic of *Ran* is the concept of spectacle. This is not unique to *kabuki* or Asian theatre, but it is an important part of these traditions. This is likely because, as James Brandon notes in "Kabuki and Shakespeare: Balancing Yin and Yang," *kabuki* troupes traditionally "performed side-by-side, vying for the same pool of spectators passing on the city streets" (18). For instance, the exaggerated facial expressions associated with *kabuki* and omnipresent in *Ran* are a way of connecting with an audience, of creating a drama that is pervasive and grand. To understand *Ran* within the context of traditional Western theatre (within the same context as *King Lear*, for instance) is a mistake. The intentional spectacle of *kabuki* is more comparable to musical theatre, operas,

soap operas, or *telenovelas*—genres in which the intent is to create something “over the top,” unsubtle, and bold. Brandon notes that both Shakespeare and *kabuki* have a “similar ‘baroque’ spirit” (16), which is true, though *kabuki* expresses this through the performative visual and aural, while Shakespeare frequently expresses it through richly ornamented language.

A fundamental misunderstanding of Shakespeare informs the critics who claim, as Peter Ackroyd does, that Kurosawa has “drained the poetry” from *King Lear* in his film (37). Rather, Kurosawa has translated the “baroque spirit” of Shakespeare into a Japanese medium. Critics who are upset over having lost some fundamental beauty of Shakespeare’s text in translation are not entirely wrong. Certainly, Shakespeare’s language is gone, replaced by Japanese text. However, this does not mean that this adaptation compares unfavorably with one of its source texts, *King Lear*. While *Lear* is situated in an Occidental context, *Ran* is firmly Oriental, and must be understood as such. Presumably, Eastern audiences have to perform a similar alchemy to understand *King Lear*, recreating their aesthetic sensibilities to absorb a play that is so Western. The “Occidentalness” of *King Lear*, however, does not cause the play to compare unfavorably to a similarly canonical Oriental text. Instead, the play must be received as having arisen from a specific Occidental theatrical tradition. Similarly, Occidental audiences must not dismiss *Ran* simply because its aesthetics at times clash with Western ideas about drama (specifically, “legitimate” drama). To appreciate *Ran* within its context, it is important to relinquish long held beliefs about the superiority of certain art forms (the more subdued theatre, novels, etc.) and embrace the notion of spectacle, which has heretofore (at least in scholarship, though perhaps not in popular culture) been relegated to the margins of the Occidental aesthetic tradition. Also implicit in Ackroyd’s criticism of *Ran* as a film that has “drained Shakespeare of its poetry” is an Orientalist perspective with regard to languages and potentially a belief in maintaining the hegemonic pretensions of English as a global language.

While English may serve as a common basis for interaction in an international world, this is simply a matter of circumstance, not of any inherent superiority of English to every other language. Ackroyd's assertion is highly loaded, as it accuses an adaptation of *King Lear* of somehow defiling the source text when it is translated. While there is not a direct assertion that English is superior to Japanese, there is certainly an implication that something is lost when *King Lear* is moved to an Oriental context, whether this context is linguistic or artistic.

*New York Times* critic Vincent Canby describes *Ran* as "big in physical scope," a film whose "beauty . . . suggests a kind of drunken, barbaric lyricism." In addition to the possible assumptions about English as a superior language in Ackroyd and the fundamental difficulty with recontextualizing Eastern theatrical works for a Western audience, Canby's language reveals another Orientalist incidence of othering in which non-Western traditions are viewed as "barbaric." Clearly, Canby is not calling Kurosawa a barbarian; however, the assertion that whatever beauty there is in *Ran* is somehow "barbaric" is problematic. It is true that the film is barbaric in the traditional sense (it is extremely violent); but, pairing the term with the word "lyricism" seems to assert something similar to Ackroyd's belief about *Ran* denigrating the text of *King Lear*. In Canby's case, the implication is that the beauty of the film (presumably its visual beauty) is "barbaric lyricism" in that this beauty is in the "physical scope" of the film, not the language. Frequently, the beauty of *King Lear* lies in its language for modern readers or viewers, because whatever visual depictions of *Lear* exist are interpretations of the text, not cohesive productions staged by Shakespeare. Because of this, when examining an adaptation of *King Lear* (or, for that matter, any Shakespearean play), there is a tendency among Western viewers or readers to focus on the fidelity of the adaptation to the source text, and comparisons between the original and the adaptation compare the language of Shakespeare to the language of the interpretation (whether explicitly or implicitly

by using terms like “poetry” and “lyricism”) rather than trying to form a cohesive perception of the adaptation as a whole. When the adaptation is visual (on stage or on screen), this tendency disregards an important element of the production. When examining an adaptation that is not in English, Orientalism is at play in this tendency as well, because of the comparison between two languages, which can bring about the comparison between two cultures instead, causing Occidental critics to give preference to the Western source text when the adaptation is Eastern. This disregards the strong visual tradition of *kabuki* and the resulting emphasis on the visual in *Ran*. Even more problematic in these cross-cultural comparisons is the fact that most of the Western critics examining the relative beauty of the language of *Ran* and *King Lear* do not speak Japanese and, consequentially, have no way of judging the aesthetic quality of the language in *Ran* aside from their own outsider’s assumptions about Japanese as a language.

Similar to the belief that Japanese is a “less beautiful” language than English is the belief that the story of *King Lear* is more worthy of being told than the story of Mori Motonari, whom Kurosawa cites as the primary inspiration for *Ran*. This is evident in criticism of the film. Canby notes that “Kurosawa resists the description of *Ran* as ‘his version’ of *King Lear*,” but believes that he “won’t have an easy time disentangling his film from Shakespeare.” Because *King Lear* is an important source text for *Ran*, this is true. However, Canby never mentions the story of Mori Motonari, which is the primary reason Kurosawa “resists the description” of *Ran* as simply a Japanese adaptation of *King Lear*. It is fundamentally not an adaptation of *King Lear* but a retelling of the story of a Japanese warlord that incorporates certain elements of the play. Eurocenterism, however, prevents critics from acknowledging this. In his review, *Chicago Sun Times* journalist Roger Ebert briefly mentions “the Japanese legend” from which Kurosawa draws inspiration, but spends most of his review comparing *Ran* to *King Lear*, though, to his credit, he does acknowledge the potential for Kurosawa’s film to “give the

story a freshness that removes it from all our earlier associations.” The problem with Ebert’s review of *Ran* (which is actually complementary of the film) is precisely that his “earlier associations” prevent him from appreciating the film in its own cultural context, instead seeing it in an Occidental context, as an adaptation of *King Lear* which includes a “Japanese legend” which Ebert subsumes into the general foreignness (the Orientalness) of the film which, in his estimation, recontextualizes *King Lear*, but is fundamentally a retelling of a Western work. This attitude undermines the cultural caché of Mori Motonari’s story, assuming that this story is not important enough to discuss because it means little to Western audiences.

In conclusion, in order to avoid indulging Orientalism, it is important to take into consideration the criticism of colonialism (specifically othering) in *Ran*, to be aware of Kurosawa’s Japanese influences and attempt to understand these influences in their own cultural context, and to acknowledge the propensity of Western critics (and by extension, viewers) to bring an Orientalist perspective to bear on Eastern works of art. By being aware of and working against Orientalist tendencies, it is possible to reduce (though not eliminate) Eurocentric interpretations of *Ran*.

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## The Problem with the China: Food and Gender in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*

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In the first dialogue of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Fanny Dashwood argues away her husband's intended gift to her stepmother- and stepsisters-in-law, concluding her case by declaring that they have already received enough by inheriting the plate, linen, and china: "the set of breakfast china is twice as handsome as what belongs to this house. A great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for any place *they* can afford to live in" (*Sense and Sensibility* 12, emphasis in original). At first, her mention of the china seems only to indicate her extreme selfishness, yet the subject keeps coming up. Besides books and Marianne's pianoforte, the Dashwoods' possessions brought with them to Barton Cottage seem to consist solely of the linen, plate, and china (21), and John Dashwood names linen and china as one of his primary expenses, though this assertion is dubious (160). The china is clearly important in the text, and its significance is elucidated in its final mention. After the Dashwood women hear that Edward Ferras is married, they lose their appetites, and "Thomas and the table-cloth, now alike needless, were soon afterwards dismissed" (251). The Dashwoods' linen and china are notable for not being used; Fanny proves correct in her assessment, not because the objects are too fine for the cottage, but because the Dashwood women do not eat at all.

Nina Auerbach indirectly offers an explanation for the Dashwood anorexia through her discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as a novel about women waiting for men to return from war:

“Mrs. Bennet is perpetually begging any and all eligible males to come to a dinner we have never seen the family at Longbourn eat, as if only in their presence can nourishment present itself” (“Waiting” 44). She argues that domestic details, including specific foods, only appear with men, who are thus necessary for nourishment. Barton Cottage is a house of women, utterly bereft of male support, so Auerbach’s argument readily predicts the lack of food there. Auerbach, however, does not extend her discussion to *Sense and Sensibility* and in fact mentions food only in passing, instead focusing on the more general topic of how men provide reality and physicality to female communities, which are “dispersed with relief into the solidity of marriage” (“Waiting” 55). This conclusion is troubling because an inspection of food and gender in Austen’s other novels seriously challenges Auerbach’s assumption that men are magnanimous or even capable providers. Meanwhile, Maggie Lane, the only other critic to comment on connections between food and gender in Austen, does so only in passing in her text *Jane Austen and Food*, leaving the problems Austen raises largely unexplored. In fact, Austen consistently raises concerns about men’s ability to offer nourishment in this gendered system of food distribution, first hinting at the resulting imbalances of power in *Sense and Sensibility*, as men become gluttons, hunters, and victims of starvation, and later showing the system’s total breakdown in *Mansfield Park* (1814).

Auerbach’s assertion that only men can provide food rings true in *Sense and Sensibility*. More specifically, men provide the only *nourishing* food: meat. Again and again, meat is the offering of choice: John Dashwood intends to and Sir John actually does send presents of game to the Dashwoods; Sir John serves “cold ham and chicken” at his outdoor parties and “cold provisions” for the excursion to Whitwell (*Sense and Sensibility* 26, 47); and inns serve salmon, cod, fowls, and cutlets to the girls and later “cold beef” to Willoughby (114, 225). This abundance of meat is not redundant but necessary for real nourishment. The only alternative seems to be the sweets and delicacies that appease young

Annamaria Middleton's tantrum (88) but fail to have an effect in the parallel scene in which Mrs. Jennings treats Marianne "with all the indulgent fondness of a parent towards a favourite child on the last day of its holidays," tempting her "to eat by every delicacy in the house" in her "endeavours to cure a disappointment in love, by a variety of sweetmeats and olives, and a good fire" (137). Mrs. Jennings's cure fails because sweetmeats are not meat at all, and only real meat can provide the nourishment necessary for life.

In particular, Marianne wants human flesh, that of Willoughby, and indeed Austen repeatedly equates men with meat in the novel. While trying to comfort Marianne at the loss of her lover, Mrs. Jennings says, "One shoulder of mutton, you know, drives another down," suggesting that one man is as good a food source as another (140). Similarly, she has earlier claimed that she will give Willoughby "a dressing as he has not had in many a day," calling to mind culinary language in which meat may be dressed, or prepared (136). Sir John even encourages Elinor that Willoughby is "very well worth catching," as if he is an animal to be hunted down (34). In *Sense and Sensibility*, then, men do not just provide food; they are the food, and this cannibalism already raises doubts about the efficacy of the system which Auerbach describes. "Waiting" has become a fierce hunt, and the "relief" of marriage comes only through barbaric consumption of the husband. Regardless, the Dashwood girls desperately need this human meat, and their lack of it nearly leads to starvation and death.

Marianne is most notable for her inability or unwillingness to eat throughout most of the novel. Lane reads Marianne's refusal of food as an example of "disempowered women . . . seeking refuge in the one aspect of their lives they *can* control, the consumption of food" and argues that Marianne rejects food to punish her mother for not being there for her (84-5). The novel, however, elsewhere describes such a refusal as a loss of "appetite" (*Sense and Sensibility* 251), or "craving for food, hunger" (*OED* n. 4.a.). Marianne lacks the basic instinct to eat because the food offered, like Mrs. Jennings's sweets,

can provide no real nourishment. Her absence of hunger also suggests that she is in fact eating, and indeed Austen writes that a “nourishment of grief was every day applied” (*Sense and Sensibility* 62). Marianne feeds on her own sadness; faced with a lack of men, she effectively eats herself as she shuns outside food and turns inward for satisfactory sustenance.

Marianne is not alone in this action; although Elinor largely continues to eat normally, this consumption appears to be one of the social lies that she performs, and she gains no real nourishment from it. At first, she seems to differ from Marianne in that she eats by reflecting on situations and people around her; for example, her conversation with Miss Steele gives her “knowledge which might feed her powers of reflection some time” (195). Such reflection would allow her to obtain sustenance from an outside source and thus avoid cannibalizing herself. As reflected in her continued pining over Edward, however, this sustenance cannot satisfy. Even the pretense of eating breaks down in volume III, as Elinor stops eating first due to Marianne’s illness and later, along with her mother, at the news that Edward is married. Without men, the Dashwood sisters can only eat themselves.

The sisters’ problem is solved by their marriages. Lane points to Mrs. Jennings’s description of Delaford, Colonel Brandon’s residence, as an indicator of the nourishment available there: Delaford has “the best fruit-trees in the country,” “a dove-cote, some delightful stewponds” (sources of fresh meat and fish), and “a butcher hard by in the village” and is a place where Mrs. Jennings and her daughter “stuffed,” or ate their fill (Lane 142-5; *Sense and Sensibility* 139). Both girls will find sustenance there.

Marianne and Elinor’s happy endings, however, do not represent a solution to the problem of obtaining food. Though Colonel Brandon and Edward are able to provide for them, other men in the novel are less successful. For example, though Charlotte Palmer is invariably cheerful, having obtained a husband who is now unable to get rid of her, Austen writes that “in visiting her poultry-

yard, where, in the disappointed hopes of her dairy-maid, by hens forsaking their nests, or being stolen by a fox, or in the rapid decease of a promising young brood, she found fresh sources of merriment” (*Sense and Sensibility* 215). Though Charlotte finds the destruction of her hens amusing, the attacks on her poultry closely mirror problems that women face throughout the novel. Indeed, hens, producing eggs and thus food without the need for men, represent unaided women throughout the story. Like those women, they face “disappointed hopes” (as in love), the abandonment of mother-figures (as in the deaths of both Elizas’ mothers and the separation of the Dashwood girls from their own mother), attack by predators (like Willoughby), and death (as the first Eliza dies, and as Marianne nearly does). The presence of these very real issues in Cleveland may indicate that Mr. Palmer is not properly providing her with food and protection, just as he is not protecting her hens. “Nice in his eating” and absorbed in his own pleasure-seeking, he is leaving her vulnerable to the very threats from which marriage is supposed to protect her (216).

Mr. Palmer’s self-interested Epicureanism may prevent him from feeding his wife, but men may also be unable to feed themselves. Robert Ferrars makes a telling remark when describing Edward’s disinheritance: “he must be starved, you know;—that is certain; absolutely starved” (212). Himself dependent on a woman and without a profession, Edward is in much the same position as the Dashwood women. Deprived of any real power, he cannot provide for himself, much less for a wife.

Fear of starvation may also motivate another behavior that inhibits men as providers: hunting. Hunting has the potential to provide for the dependents of the hunter, such as when Sir John is able to send the Dashwoods gifts of game, but even at its best, it makes it all too easy to consider food-providing as mere sport rather than a husband’s perhaps most important duty. The idea of hunting takes a darker turn when associated with Willoughby. His hunting is associated with his predation on women; he is out with a gun and

pointers when he first finds Marianne, intending only to sport with her feelings and thus amuse himself. Rather than providing for the women he encounters, he hunts them down, using his power as a man to cause serious injury.

Ultimately, all three of these problems—gluttonous Epicureanism, starvation, and malicious hunting—are the result of an imbalance of power. As Auerbach argues, at least here, Austen shows a preference for male power over the distortions caused by the preeminence of women like Mrs. Ferrars (“Waiting” 50), but this power must be moderated by the acknowledgement of male responsibility and duty to wives and potential wives. Colonel Brandon best exemplifies this balance. He has wealth and independence coupled with sustainable food sources like the stewpond and fruit trees that ensure both his continued care for and involvement with food production and his ability to provide nourishment without resorting to the predatory activity of hunting. Colonel Brandon, then, acts as the novel’s ideal solution to problems of male power and ability to provide, but the problems raised elsewhere will recur with more force in Austen’s later works.

*Mansfield Park* foregrounds these issues by portraying Fanny Price as constantly malnourished despite living under the male protection of Sir Thomas and with the courtship of Henry Crawford. Neither can provide her with the sustenance she requires, a failure that again results from the problems raised in *Sense and Sensibility*. Though all three appear in *Mansfield Park*, the greatest disruption to the men’s ability to provide food is starvation, which results from the power vacuum that Sir Thomas creates through a combination of tyranny and suppression, as well as blindness to the actual feelings and characters of his children. Sir Thomas cannot control his own home, and his absence for much of volume I further exacerbates his lack of power and thus his inability to feed his family. *Mansfield Park* might as well be a female community; there is no male authority figure to provide food. Sir Thomas’s dissociation from food is perhaps most evident upon his return from Antigua, when

he refuses food, desiring only tea, a sign of his weakness and loss of control over his children (*Mansfield Park* 124-25). His failure to provide results in the malnourishment of his children, akin to that experienced by both Edward Ferrars and the Dashwood sisters. Like Marianne, Tom Bertram nearly dies of consumption, and, like Elinor, Edmund Bertram resorts to feeding on reflections, possessing “spirits ready to feed on melancholy remembrances, and tender associations” (226).

In an environment where even the sons are underfed, Fanny must seek an alternative food source. As in *Sense and Sensibility*, only non-nourishing desserts like the gooseberry tart offered upon her arrival are available. Rather than eating herself like Marianne, Fanny follows Elinor’s path and feeds on reflections. For instance, she tells Mary Crawford that “one cannot fix one’s eyes on the commonest natural production without finding food for a rambling fancy” (144), and Edmund and Mary’s conscious looks are “sorrowful food for Fanny’s observation” (147). *Mansfield Park* legitimizes such nourishment with its emphasis on Edmund’s intellectual instruction and nourishment of his cousin and by later presenting the possibility that Fanny may be “starved, both mind and body,” suggesting the need for intellectual food (281). Fanny thus has far greater chances of successfully nourishing herself through reflection than Elinor, since intellectual food is now real and not just a poor substitute. As Auerbach points out in “Feeling as One Ought about Fanny Price,” however, such food, coupled with Fanny’s inability to eat real food at Portsmouth, makes Fanny monstrous:

Her starved incapacity to eat familial food is suggestive of that winsome predator the vampire, an equally solitary and melancholy figure who haunts British literature in his dual role as dark abstainer from a comic dailiness of which he is secretly in possession. Like Fanny, the vampire cannot eat the common nourishment of daily life, but he feasts secretly upon human vitality in the dark. (449)

Fanny feeds on the suffering of the family around her, herself

realizing that “it was barbarous to be happy when Edmund was suffering. Yet some happiness must and would arise, from the very conviction, that he did suffer” (*Mansfield Park* 191). She cannot prevent herself from gaining strength from Edmund’s misfortune. Later, as the Bertram family falls apart, “Lady Bertram wrote her daily terrors to her niece, who might now be said to live upon letters, and pass all her time between suffering from that of to-day, and looking forward to to-morrow’s” (290). Fanny thrives just when the Bertrams suffer most, monstrously feasting on the weakness and sorrow she observes. Intellectual nourishment may sustain her, but only at the expense of those she watches, as she participates in a second form of cannibalism.

Moreover, even this food source can be taken away from her, as it is when she goes to Portsmouth and is cut off from refined society. There she is “in the most promising way of being starved, both mind and body,” effectively dying (281). Her mental nourishment has never been independent but has always relied on Edmund, who teaches and stimulates her. Even at Mansfield it is earlier threatened as Edmund suppresses her judgments about Mary, but at Portsmouth it is totally taken away, leaving Fanny without any sustenance.

Her total lack of food results not just from her intellectual deprivation but also from the corruption of the food now presented to her. Though her home in Portsmouth possesses male providers and thus may offer nourishment that Mansfield cannot, male authority at Portsmouth is tainted, and so is the food: “the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy than even Rebecca’s hands had first produced it” (298). This corrupted food is inedible to Fanny, and this corruption extends to every person outside of Mansfield, excepting William and Susan Price. Henry has been “ruined by early independence and a bad education” so that, rather than nourishing Fanny, his courtship ruins her appetite (316, 207). Spoiled by his upbringing, he can offer no sustenance.

In fact, the young men of *Mansfield Park* must look to women for nourishment, reversing the usual gender roles, but the women of this oppressive and corrupting world cannot satisfy their needs. Edmund seeks food in Mary, but, like her brother, she is “spoilt, spoilt!” and has a “corrupted, vitiated mind” (308, 310). Herself unwholesome, she cannot provide him food. Henry addresses Fanny with more hope; though she is physically malnourished, she has proven her ability as an intellectual nourisher by teaching Susan. Nevertheless, Fanny has only been taught submission to and dependence on male authority by both Sir Thomas and Edmund, neither of whom allows disagreement or dialogue. In turn, Fanny’s only lesson for Susan is “the obligation and expediency of submission and forbearance” (270). Such submission leaves her wholly at the mercy of male-dominated food distribution and unable to feed men when they are lacking. The last chance of the world of *Mansfield Park* to obtain even insubstantial and monstrous nourishment has failed, and the novel’s nominally happy ending does nothing to alleviate the widespread hunger.

Austen does return to the idea of women as providers in *Emma* (1815), with the powerful hostess Emma herself and with Jane Fairfax, the governess capable of “earning her bread” (106). However, these female food sources ultimately prove too unstable and are rejected in favor of traditional male provision and marriage, as attacks on the henhouse continue, now in the form of the poultry-thefts that allow (or force) Emma’s marriage to Mr. Knightley. Again, happiness and nourishment are achieved only through marriage and are inseparable from the continuing threat of starvation. Austen leaves readers with a world of perpetual hunger in which women’s survival is as fragile as their unused china.

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## “And this is her voice”: The Nexus of Language and Power in *Jane Eyre*

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In a letter to the critic George Henry Lewes, Charlotte Brontë criticizes Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. She writes,

I got the book and studied it. And what did I find? An accurate daguerrotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy. (qtd. in Weisser 93)

Brontë rejects a romance novel devoid of passion. In “Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen, and the Meaning of Love,” Susan Ostrov Weisser argues that Brontë especially scorned Austen's mannerly, constrained approach to romance. Instead, Brontë incorporates elements of the Romantics into her definition of love in order to reconfigure women's role in and experience of relationships (Weisser 98). Weisser suggests “the radical gap that Charlotte Brontë perceived between herself and Austen is a key to understanding Charlotte's own work” (93). By exploring Brontë's negative opinion of Austen's work, we can more clearly identify themes of *Jane Eyre*. In particular, a focus on voice and speech allows us to assess underlying differences between the heroines of Austen and Brontë. Austen's protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, cannot actively pursue a romance with Mr. Darcy. However, in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë grants Jane power in the relationship with Rochester as she becomes financially stable. Jane returns to him on her own terms as pursuer. While

Jane is still limited by Victorian gender roles, Brontë affords her much more freedom than Austen's heroine. I will extend Weisser's argument to contend that Charlotte Brontë reinscribes the female role in relationships by granting Jane Eyre the power of speech.

Though Elizabeth Bennet, known for her saucy, unconventional witticisms, is often seen as the bold heroine who refuses to conform to society's expectations, she does revert to passivity in the final proposal scene. Notably, Darcy initiates the romance by coming to Elizabeth, who immediately thanks him for his role in forcing Mr. Wickham to marry her sister Lydia. Elizabeth indicates that she speaks this thanks with regard to her own feelings alone:

Mr. Darcy, I am a very selfish creature; and, for the sake of giving relief to my own feelings, care not how much I may be wounding yours . . . I have been most anxious to acknowledge to you how gratefully I feel it. (Austen 246)

Even though Elizabeth says that she is speaking for her feelings, her words are meant to express the debt she feels toward Darcy. She emphasizes the extent of this debt: "Let me thank you again and again, in the name of all my family" (246). Her willingness to thank him continually indicates that she is greatly indebted to him. Due to this great debt, Elizabeth is now positioned only to assume a passive role in the romantic relationship.

At this point in the conversation, Darcy begins to take control. He responds to her expression of thanks by saying that he undertook those actions out of care for Elizabeth, not for her family. She is now silenced: "Elizabeth was much too embarrassed to say a word" (246). Darcy then demands that she speak: "If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once" (246). She forces a response: "Elizabeth feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak" (246). Even though she is uncomfortable and embarrassed, she obeys him by expressing her feelings of love. He then controls the conversation by taking the role of the speaker, while she assumes that of respondent. Darcy expresses sorrow and repentance for his treatment of her,

but she is afforded no such chance to express repentance. In the expression of her own feelings, Elizabeth could have assumed a more active role in the conversation and in the relationship. As it is, she is not afforded any opportunity by Mr. Darcy, and she can only offer consolation for his feelings without regard to her own.

In an instance in which Elizabeth does attempt to assuage her own feelings of embarrassment, she asks Darcy of his thoughts when she had unexpectedly arrived at Pemberley, his estate. She says, "I am almost afraid of asking what you thought of me; when we met at Pemberley" (249). Notably, Elizabeth is so fearful of Darcy that she is "afraid" to ask. She is not able to voice her own questions, even though he has been issuing questions and receiving direct responses from her all the while. Her inquiry is not even a direct question; rather, she communicates the information that she fears to ask through indirection. In response, Darcy quickly turns the focus of the conversation back onto himself. He indicates that he wanted to communicate his transformation to her at Pemberley. He explains, "My object *then* . . . was to shew you, by every civility in my power, that I was not so mean as to resent the past" (249, emphasis in original). Notably, Darcy does not ask about Elizabeth's transformation, and she is denied a voice. Here, Darcy is the pursuer in both words and actions. The person who takes an active role, Mr. Darcy, is able to voice his own development. His dynamic character is accentuated as he identifies change within himself over time. Elizabeth, however, is almost reduced to a static character in this conversation, as she is unable to voice her transformation. The change she experiences is minimized, while Mr. Darcy's is drawn to the front. Whether intended or unintended by Austen, this dialectic between Mr. Darcy's dynamism and Elizabeth's stasis follows the paradigm of active males and passive females in early nineteenth-century romance.

Elizabeth also withholds her observations about Mr. Bingley from Darcy, who had previously convinced Bingley not to marry Jane. When Darcy had changed his mind, he allowed Bingley

to marry her. Elizabeth forces herself to remain silent about the humor that she sees in Bingley's obedience of Darcy's every whim. This passage portrays Elizabeth's characteristic wit, yet she is not permitted to share this humor with Darcy, who may react negatively to her joke. Austen writes,

Elizabeth longed to observe that Mr. Bingley had been a most delightful friend; so easily guided that his worth was invaluable; but she checked herself. She remembered that he had yet to learn to be laughed at, and it was rather too early to begin. (250)

Elizabeth refrains from speaking freely here, and the reader should note an irony in this passage. While Elizabeth jokes to herself that Bingley allows Darcy too much control over his life, she fails to realize that she relinquishes this control in the romance by censoring her speech with Darcy.

Although Elizabeth is indebted to Darcy both socially and financially, Jane is freed of these problems by *Jane Eyre's* end. She is financially independent, and her position of power in the relationship is a result of this fact. However, *Jane Eyre* cannot be seen as completely successful in revolutionizing romance. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar indicate that Brontë's other novels "suggest that she herself was unable clearly to envision viable solutions to the problem of patriarchal oppression" (369). Though she advocates passionately for the female voice, Brontë cannot describe a society in which such power exists (369). I contend that in lieu of a radically changed society in which females have power, Brontë merely revises the romantic relationship. Through Jane, Brontë presents a woman who is free from the traditional dependency on men.

The voice of Jane illustrates her independence. Jane's progression from silence to speech has been documented as one of the critical movements of the novel by many critics. For example, in "Speech and Silence in *Jane Eyre*" Janet H. Freeman argues correctly that, "All along, Jane has been learning to speak truly and to value true

speaking” (697). Jane’s forced periods of silence at Gateshead and Lowood hinder the use of her speech. Similarly, Rochester demands silence of Jane in the beginning of their acquaintance. As Freeman writes, “Jane is most acceptable to him when she holds her tongue—for example, when she obeys his absurd orders to sit locked in the attic sponging blood from the shoulder of Mr. Mason and saying not a word” (694). When she questions Rochester the next day on this incident, Jane does not receive an explanation. However, she asserts her voice by the novel’s end. Hence, we can determine, as Freeman asserts, “Words have power in *Jane Eyre*. They also bestow power. They are the instrument by which Jane Eyre learns to understand and master the world” (690). Jane eventually learns to control her world through language.

One of the most significant scenes that depicts this power shift is Rochester’s final proposal to Jane in chapter 37. She has returned to Rochester to rekindle their love. He is blind and recognizes her voice, although he demands that she identify herself. Just as Darcy orders Elizabeth to answer him, Rochester commands Jane to, “[a]nswer me—speak again!” (Brontë 422). However, while Elizabeth answers Darcy promptly, Jane ignores Rochester’s demand and offers him more water. He must touch Jane to verify her presence, and he comments on her familiar figure: “This is her shape—this is her size—” (422). Brontë draws attention to Jane’s speech itself when Jane adds: “And this is her voice . . . . She is all here” (422). Without her voice, Jane implies, something of herself would be missing. Jane then emphasizes the fact that she is the pursuer of this romance. She tells Rochester, “I am Jane Eyre: I have found you out—I am come back to you” (422). The first-person subject of these active verbs is Jane, and she initiates the romance. Significantly, Jane here names herself and voices her new identity.

Before Rochester can propose, he first must understand Jane’s new position of power. Rochester asks her why she is not starving or dead. She responds, “I am an independent woman now” (423). Because Jane earned money for herself away from Rochester and

then inherited a small fortune from her uncle, she is no longer financially dependent. This tips the balance of power toward Jane. Rochester's reaction emphasizes the rarity of such financial independence for a Victorian woman. He exclaims, "What, Janet! Are you an independent woman? A rich woman?" (423). He can hardly believe this information, and he immediately registers the social implications of this financial difference. He remarks that since she is now rich, her friends can take care of her, and she will not need to dedicate her life to a "lameter" like himself (423). She responds cheekily, "I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (423). Jane here reaffirms the significance of the power shift through her voice.

The development of voice has been attributed by many critics to Jane's narratorial withholding of information from Rochester.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the narratorial withholding of Elizabeth, whose silence indicates that she must hide a part of herself, Jane's withholding of information allows her control. When he demands she tell him about her time away from Thornfield, she "softens considerably what related to the three days of wandering and starvation" (429). Intending to save Rochester from unnecessary pain, she avoids specific facts. Jane also withholds information when she teases him about St. John Rivers. Her indirect and aloof responses to Rochester's many inquiries allow her control of the conversation and of Rochester's feelings. Jane explores the depth of his jealousy even as she realizes the object of his questions—to ascertain whether or not she has feelings for St. John Rivers. Though she understands what information Rochester seeks, she withholds it from him at the present.<sup>2</sup> Because Jane now has narratorial power over Rochester, she gains control in their relationship. The instance of narratorial withholding that critics most often debate concerns Jane's concealing from Rochester that she had heard him call her name three times, though they were in separate locations of great distance from each other. Rochester explains that he had heard a response, a voice from the winds or from somewhere else on Monday at

midnight. However, Jane hides her knowledge of this supernatural communication. She comments: “I listened to Mr. Rochester’s narrative; but made no disclosure in return. The coincidence struck me as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed . . . . I kept these things then, and pondered them in my heart” (436). She also remarks to the reader that she believes the supernatural elements of this information would burden Rochester in his weak state.

An analysis of Brontë’s dislike of Austen can shed light on Jane’s silence here. In many ways, Brontë has afforded Jane a more powerful voice than Elizabeth. Jane physically returns to Rochester, insists on the presence of her voice, and asserts her financial independence. If Brontë wanted to continue her theme of granting Jane power, in order to express her revulsion of Austen, this silence would have been intended as another indicator of the way in which Jane controls all aspects of her speech with Rochester. Chapter 38 portrays the success of Jane’s speech. In the ten years since Jane’s return to Thornfield, Jane and Rochester have grown close through language. She writes, “We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me” (439). Their communication is so natural and unconstructed that they merely voice their thoughts. The lovers are completely open in matters of speech, and they are able to understand one another through confidences. During the first two years of their marriage, Rochester remains blind. Jane’s voice paints a picture of his reality for him:

He saw nature—he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words the effect of a field, tree, town, river, cloud, and sunbeam. (439)

Jane’s voice constructs Rochester’s world. Freeman writes, “Rochester sees both nature and books by means of his wife’s voice” (698). Jane takes on this task, and her role as Mrs. Rochester, as a woman in power: she has the power of speech to control even the

parts of life which Rochester visualizes.

Weisser also notes that the power has shifted. She writes, “Rochester, the former master, is reduced to a state of helpless need, leaning on Jane, his nurse and beloved” (99). Though Jane is in power, she still seeks to serve Rochester. “Jane Eyre’s vocation is obvious” —she dedicates her life to him (Freeman 698). However, she remains free because she is financially independent. She stays with Rochester because she chooses him. Freeman indicates that Jane can express herself through language freely: “Jane has found her home, a place where she has the authority to keep on talking forever” (698). For the first time, Jane is in a position of authority in a romance.<sup>3</sup> Brontë would have likely seen this power as a necessary revision of Austen’s heroine.

Brontë revises her predecessor’s heroine by allowing Jane to develop an active female voice. Her rejection of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* sheds new light on the interpretation of the two heroines. Because Elizabeth is limited by her financial dependence to Darcy, she uses language in a passive way, as indicated by the final proposal scene. The use of language in the final proposal scene, influenced both by Jane’s financial independence and Rochester’s blindness, shows that Jane has gained significant power over the course of the novel. In this way, Brontë was able to rewrite codes of romance. Not only does Brontë rail against the passive role of women in romance, but the emphasis on Jane’s lack of money throughout the novel points to a social criticism as well. In “Girl Talk: *Jane Eyre* and the Romance of Women’s Narration,” Carla Kaplan writes this novel afforded Jane the opportunity to “protest against her place in the social order and by a concomitant vision of social change” (9). It seems that Brontë similarly sought to dismantle the wider structures responsible for entrenching women in passive roles. By rewriting Austen, Brontë fights these structures, and she succeeds in the character of Jane Eyre.

## Notes

1. Critics are divided in terms of how to interpret Jane's silence. Carla Kaplan indicates that much feminist writing on this novel argues that Jane is successful as a speaker. She explains, "Feminist paradigms for reading this novel have, in the main, presumed that Jane's desires as a speaker are fulfilled with Rochester" (14). Many feminist critics have argued that Jane is satisfied with the level of power she wields through language. However, Kaplan reads the instance of Jane's withholding at the novel's end to posit that Rochester falls short of the ideal listener that Brontë looks for. According to Kaplan, Jane's withholding about the St. John scene means that she is still not an active speaker. However, scholars such as Bodenheimer and Freeman see this withholding as an expression that Jane holds true power. Joan D. Peters indicates that this omission is seen by Bodenheimer and Freeman "not as a movement beyond social discourse but as a final realization of it" (218). Because Jane has the power to decide what information to convey to Rochester, she is able to take control of her speech. Kaplan, Bodenheimer, and Freeman represent other critics, such as Peters, who are divided on their interpretations of Jane's silence.

2. Jane here is not assuming the role of coquette—she does not play language games with Rochester in order to win him. Rather, she withholds information from Rochester in order to claim power in the new relationship, which is marked both by her financial independence and his blindness.

3. As a record of her development to this authority position, Jane's autobiography allows her to fully express her female voice to the reader. Ultimately, Freeman posits that this expression of self is more significant than her marriage: "The re-creation of her own life in her own powerful words completes Jane's history much more fundamentally than does her marriage to Rochester" (698).

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# The Language of Literature: The Subaltern Subverts the Colonizing Culture

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When reading postcolonial literature, it is important for one to note that while “post” indicates an end to a foreign power’s rule, there is no “after” in the process of colonization. As Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel writes in “Postcolonialism,” “Post-colonialism, rather, begins from the very first moment of colonial contact,” and continues to influence the colonized country and its people from that moment on (189). Authors from colonized countries continue to be identified as postcolonial writers because the influences from these dominant powers continue to exist. In this essay, I will look at how postcolonial authors use their writing to subvert an identity that is constructed within colonized cultures, focusing specifically on how they utilize postmodern and postcolonial theories of self and language to do so. I focus on how these subaltern authors attempt to resist such labeling and challenge these power structures, including the power of language, as they utilize narrative and bilingual fiction-writing techniques in order to speak as writers with a strong cultural and lingual heritage separate from English. In doing this, the bilingual writer simultaneously ostracizes and includes the English-speaking reader both inherently and deliberately. Subaltern identities, I conclude, are formed through literature in an inescapably circular way. The subaltern can indeed speak, but the sources of his language, the ideas he expresses, and the stories he tells are all inextricably linked to the hegemonic powers that be. The marginalized author can only hope to represent the

colonized culture by communicating a fabricated meaning through the translation of the English language. Because English is a second language that is inherently removed from the culture it is attempting to represent, the author's text begins forming an identity that is unavoidably separate, influenced by the world's interwoven, complicated history.

In order to understand the innate disadvantage postcolonial writers have, one can use Kristevan ideas about "mother" and "father" relationships to understand the importance of rejecting or accepting the motherland—the submissive entity. The father country becomes the dominant power, the influential social structure that imposes on society. Postcolonial writers must choose between using the voice of the mother or abandoning it in order to adopt the language of the father. In making this choice, the postcolonial writer is comparable to psychoanalytic subjects who are, as Chloe Taylor writes in "Kristevan Themes in Virginia Woolfe's 'The Waves,'" "threatened with castration . . . they relinquish the mother's body, this loss being eased by the fact that they can identify with the father" (58). By rejecting the mother language, postcolonial writers must reject part of themselves as well. The marginalized groups must struggle to find a balance—while the hegemonic powers can "play with language, explore its margins, trespass its borders . . . the female writer cannot: her investment in and struggle to enter the order of language have been too difficult for her to question the rules" (59). Psychologically, such writers have two choices: either "over-identif[y] with and desire the mother and love silently carnate experiences, or . . . over-identif[y] with and desire the father . . . because their sanity and lives . . . depend on it" (59). Paradoxically, in order to write in English but write of their native cultures, postcolonial writers must first sever their ties to their "mothers," identify with the "father," and use a new platform of communication to describe the mother country that they have just rejected.

So why does the marginalized writer go through this rejection to write in the language of power, English? Or, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

writes in “The Language of African Literature,” if not an outright rejection of the mother language, “Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues?” (8). It is important to realize the full impact these choices have (on characters, identities, society, and art) as well as the logistical reasoning behind such complex decisions. As Nkonko Kamwangamalu argues in “One Language, Multi-layered Identities: English in a Society in Transition, South Africa,” “It seems that the ever-marginalized and disadvantaged African languages remain exposed to . . . the Darwinian law of the linguistic jungle” (273). Many cultures see English as a necessary tool for economic advancement, respect, and even possibly their very safety; the Western canon of English literature is a respected and historically rich tradition, one that any writer aims to be accepted into—for money, recognition, and prestige. It seems a great sacrifice to write in the language that is enforced upon a culture as a prerequisite to achieving these goals. Can the subaltern speak when, as Riki Van Boeschoten states in “Code-switching, Linguistic Jokes and Ethnic Identity: Reading Hidden Transcripts in a Cross-Cultural Context,” “the dominant language is imposed by such measure, alien speakers cannot easily internalize it and their native language remains the natural means of communication” (355)? Does it resonate when that voice is spoken in a language chosen for logistical reasons, separate from the culture that is being written about?

In postmodernist theory, not only does language shape our identities, but it also controls the way in which we view ourselves within the context of a series of social hierarchies as they change through time. Dorothy Hale says in “Bakhtin in African American Literary Theory,” “identity” is “describ[ing] human identity as unproblematically both self-selected and socially determined” (445). The social identities of all people convey the imposed and subsequently created view concerning an individual’s place in society; essentially, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen

Tiffin write in “Re-Placing Language: Textual Strategies in Post-colonial Writing,” “you are the way you speak” (53). A colonized individual’s sense of self is formed through these identities enforced by the colonizer, which automatically devalues the colonized subject in relation to its dominating counterpart. “So the social and economic hierarchies produced by colonialism have been retained in post-colonial society through the medium of language” (75). Given this, the identity of the postcolonial writer—or arguably any writer—is the sum of a group of cultural influences all coming together. The identity does not stem solely from being “African” or “Indian,” but is constructed from a series of outside influences. Tim Parnell writes in “Salaman Rushdie: From Colonial Politics to Postmodern Poetics,” that to call a writer “post-colonial can be a neutral description of fact or can create another pigeonhole within which to contain the disparate energies of the text” (242). For these categories to be justified as a separate entity from English literature, English literature itself would have to be believed to be a pure, unaffected genre of literature. It is impossible that *any* piece of literature has “sources, forms, style, language, and symbol all [deriving] from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition” (Rushdie 67). Similarly, instead of one model of the “true” and “genuine” self, writers must be free to write about various “selves” that emerge from a range of different cultures and traditions.

Inherently, the identities that are formed as a result of these cultural exchanges are going to be controlled by those hegemonic powers that exist within the colonized countries (for internalizing and conforming to their cultures). Language is a crucial tool for constructing and maintaining the roles that various subaltern groups must assume. In fact, literature by the sub-altern is “always written out of the tension between . . . the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 38). The hegemonic power of the English language fulfills its role as a reinforcing and internalizing force of colonial influence and the colonized placed within a power structure based on their

use of language alone. Writers are at best going to learn to express themselves through the very language that silences them in the first place. Jamaica Kincaid questions this very paradox: “For isn’t it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime?” (qtd. in Anatol 941). Because of the postcolonial ideology, the relationship between identity, nationalism, and language are not pre-conceived but instead formed. There exists an unfulfillable gap between the English-speaking reader, the author writing in English, and the culture represented in the literature. What is lost in translation is the nuanced traditions that shape identity: “the cultural Otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the colonial language” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 53). The struggle to translate these experiences while simultaneously reaching the widest audience possible forms a gap, a place where the author finds himself in the middle of many cultures. Although the author may be writing in English, the various postcolonial techniques incorporating the native language into the text demonstrate the need to attempt to assert power through language.

Of the various techniques authors use to reassert their sense of self, the master narrative is a crucial component. In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon writes that the link between identity and language is, “an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and in the past” (7). Two-thirds of the novel *Cambridge* by Caryl Phillips is told through the journal of Emily, a well-educated, upper-class white woman leaving England. Linda Hutcheon states that postmodernism “is self-consciously . . . image, narrative, product of (and producer of) ideology . . . life in the postmodern world is utterly mediated through representations” (31). Our identity is formed through our own perceptions—Emily’s is represented through her journal, as any conflicting evidence challenging her own status will not be included in her consciousness. Cambridge, the native African educated in

England, hastily writes down his own autobiography before his impending death for murdering a white man. The narrative, aware of its own insignificance to society and its undeserving place as a master narrative, takes up significantly less space in the novel and becomes increasingly apologetic: “I say again: Pardon the liberty I take in unburdening myself with these hasty lines” (Phillips 167). There is a third section, however, where both marginalized roles—that of the Victorian woman and the African slave—are eradicated through the white master narrative. The black man who the reader has come to know to be an educated Christian has now become only a “mature slave” who was “particularly obnoxious” (171). Emily, who had ironically placed herself in the middle of these events, is not mentioned. The retelling of both Emily’s and Cambridge’s experiences by the dominant white male exterminates their existence within the narrative. Narrative is inherently political. It’s the surviving narrative that reveals who maintains power, controlling cultural identities:

Narrative is indeed a “socially symbolic act” . . . but it is also an outcome of social interaction . . . story-telling is . . . asserting a communicational bond between the teller and the told within a context that is historical, social, and political, as well as intertextual. (Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 51)

In the novel, the commentary Phillips provides reveals domination through language: the white male master narrative expunges both Cambridge’s and Emily’s identities and undermines their relevance to the world. This cycle presents itself through language and its connection to identity which, as Ayelet Ben-Yishai writes in “The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the Metanarrative of Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*,” “cannot be severed because the domination is inherent in the concept itself . . . the concept cannot be interrogated because it is a naturalized abstraction of the social forces at work” (212). In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, similarly, the native-speaking Okonkwo, “trembling with hate, [is] unable to utter a

word” when messengers come and declare that the “white man . . . has ordered this meeting to stop” (204). The “‘muted voice’ both in a literal and metaphorical sense is the direct consequence of state intervention” (Boeschoten 355). Once again, the master narrative of the English force belittles the existence of such a polarizing character into one of little consequence: The (white) Commissioner reflects that the “story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading . . . Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph,” after hearing about a local suicide (Achebe 209). In the end both authors succeed in exposing the abuse of the hegemonic culture while also simultaneously pointing out the inability to overcome it.

Selective lexical fidelity is also used in *Things Fall Apart*. By not outwardly explaining what *iba* is, Achebe “forces the reader in to an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 64). Writers use words from their native languages, acknowledging that “untranslated words do have an important function . . . They signify a certain cultural experience which they cannot hope to reproduce but whose difference is validated by the new situation” (52). Using these words allows the author to differentiate him/herself against the English identity formed in the text. Writers using these techniques endeavor to place readers in subtly different roles that invite them to experience the writing while also positioning them as outsiders and, consequently, creating “Others” in the readers themselves.

Wole Soyinka’s memoir *Aké: The Years of Childhood*, follows Soyinka’s earliest memories in 1930’s Nigeria. In this text, the author translates all native words as a footnote. Throughout the text, Soyinka is introduced to many foreign things from the magic of light bulbs, to the never-ending information that can pour out of a radio, to Kentucky Fried Chicken. It is in this way that the characters of the novel slowly adjust and assimilate to this new culture that is infusing their everyday lives. Similarly, the reader is

being introduced to a foreign culture. By providing the translations that interrupt the reading, the reader is constantly being reminded of *their* Otherness while reading about a culture that is not reflective of the English language they are reading. It is not *kobokobo* that is the “foreign” word—any “foreign” words are going to be in English when reading a Nigerian book.

The reader, who is educated in the Western model and therefore, like Soyinka, adopts English as his primary language, is once again reminded of his own position as the outsider and the danger it represents to native cultures:

Visitors came, spoke, argued or cajoled . . . There was a new language to be learnt, a new physical relationship in things and people. Once or twice, I felt that the entire household was about to prepare for a journey, to be uprooted from Aké in its entirety. (Soyinka 95)

Soyinka is feeling uprooted in a way that has been metaphorically taking place throughout the text, with all of Nigeria experiencing a “journey” as their culture rapidly changes around them. These outside influences become a part of Soyinka, who is formed by a multitude of experiences both in African and American culture. Along with the author, the reader is meant to acclimate to this new world and understand the many different aspects of this culture that both integrates and rejects different practices, words, languages, and ideas.

This autobiography provides a more concrete example of what it means to form one’s identity in a way that changes both society and its language. The people around Soyinka start to form their identities within the Western culture that has taken over:

They move on . . . pause at McDonald’s . . . and drown the mash in coca-cola. A girl decides at last on one of several competing brands of ‘skin-tone’ creams, already picturing her skin bleached lighter . . . There is a welcome intrusion of a more localized noise, or so it seems . . . it is only yet another local imitation of foreign pop, incongruously

clothed in some pious, beatitudinal phrases and left-over morsels of traditional proverbs. (157)

Instead of accepting African culture as normative, these people are working to conform to Western influence, something difficult to achieve occasionally. “For the colonized subject, gaining proficiency in the so-called ‘standard’ language [means] more closely resembling the white masters and their European culture” (Anatol 941). Those left behind, holding onto the language and culture that become more obsolete, become lost in the past. Idowu William writes in “Post-Colonialism, Memory, and the Remaking of African Identity,” that “the African predicament is based on the perception that Africans have no history . . . when history is cut, the first victim has always been that of pre-colonial Africa” (429). Similarly, those that stay in the past will also be “cut” from society. As the others submit to the values and expectations of a hegemonic power, they must start from the beginning, creating the inescapable process of conforming, which is at the heart of colonial domination.

Through circumstance, English-speaking societies became the world’s colonizers. It is not the lofty hope of recovering “pure” languages that should be the focus of “subaltern studies.” As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, “a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism” (87). More important than recovering origins, it is by understanding the power of language and reclaiming it that African writers become “free to speak” (87). At the same time, the essential question remains: “[C]an [they] utter only the subaltern language of empty self-expression?” (Hale 464). As Salman Rushdie writes in “Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist,” by recognizing the differences between cultures, literature,

may well be national, [may] well be linguistic . . . . I think that if *all* English literatures could be studied together, a shape would emerge which would truly reflect the new shape of the language in the world. (27)

By infusing the ideas of postmodernism and its connection to language, we see how postcolonial authors use language to assert and reconfigure their identity.

Once postmodernism is seen not as a world-view, but as offering a set of literary and theoretical strategies which can assault the certainties of oppressive discourses, the positive aspects of postmodern thought for a rethinking of postcolonized subjectivities becomes clearer. (Parnell 243)

The techniques used in the text that try to communicate this limitation are themselves limited, creating for the postcolonial writer an inescapable maze through the constructs of language: “Postmodern art acknowledges and accepts the challenge of traditions: the history of representation cannot be escaped but it can be both exploited and commented on critically” (Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* 58). Language has come to represent the people of the world and their past. We cannot avoid, but only become aware of and master, representation. Postcolonial authors address this challenge and attempt to master their own identities. The decision to write of their cultures reflects a “socially symbolic act,” not as a political statement but as an interesting paradox—a reflective act on their own identities. The very act of writing asserts dominance in narrative and content, yet, as part of the “Commonwealth,” is placed in the outer realms of the English canon. The marginalized author can only hope to represent the colonized culture through the translation of the English language by leaving the “mother” tongue for the more powerful “father.” She or he is trying to communicate not only a language, but the very culture itself that is unavoidably influenced by the world’s interwoven, complicated history.

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## Between Fact and Fancy: The Ethical-Aesthetic in Dickens's *Hard Times*

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Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* presents a critique of utilitarian-industrial ideology through the dialectic of "fact" and "fancy." We are introduced to this war between "fact" and "fancy" from the very beginning. Mr. Gradgrind states, "Now, what I want is, Facts . . . . Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them" (Dickens 5). Fancy is fact's double in *Hard Times*, and its escape or relief. According to the fanciful "Sleary philosophy," people "mutth be amuthed . . . they can't be alwayth a working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a learning" (35). Yet we learn early on from the fact-conscious that "you mustn't fancy. That's it! You are never to fancy" (9).

In "Walking on Flowers: the Kantian Aesthetics of *Hard Times*," Christina Lupton notes that from the opening pages to the end of the novel, *Hard Times* "makes a distinction between two forms of knowledge: rationally knowing and subjectively sensing—long-standing twin sentinels for the epistemological project of modernity—appear as enemies" (151). In the dialectic between "fact" and "fancy," Dickens champions "fancy" over the utilitarian worship of "fact," but, as many critics have noticed (Johnson, Lupton, Pulsford), Dickens's defense of fancy falls short of providing a solution to the problems of industrialism. In "*Hard Times* and the Structure of Industrialism: The Novel as Factory,"

Patricia Johnson claims that though Dickens believes that fancy is a possible release from the system, “[f]ancy itself can do nothing more than decorate this enclosure” (418), and according to Lupton, *Hard Times* does not make a good case for fancy, but “[o]n the contrary, one need only point out the ironically totalizing terms of Dickens’s most pedagogical novel, to see that his case for imagination is made in a highly factual way” (153). As many consider Dickens’s argument for “fancy” to fall short in face of the harsh “fact” of industrialism, critics have turned to a third concept, one that sublimates both “fact” and “fancy” into a new “way of beholding,” or a richer attunement to truth, to understand the ways in which the novel attempts to resolve its own tensions (Lupton 166). While many scholars have grasped the form of Dickens’s solution via the synthesis of “fact” and “fancy,” the concept has been given different names and qualities; however, Lupton’s and Pulsford’s articulation of the novel’s formative principle, which they both understand as the aesthetic, provides the most robust account of the novel’s navigation between “fact” and “fancy.”

The aesthetic is the vehicle through which the novel, particularly its continuum of “fact” and “fancy,” is navigated, unraveled, and ultimately put forth as the most truthful way of engagement. However, the aesthetic as the formative principle of the novel is ambiguous in its mixture of meaning and conclusions. Thus, in “The Aesthetic and the Closed Shop: The Ideology of the Aesthetic in Dickens’s *Hard Times*,” Stephen Pulsford notes that a critical consensus of Dickens’s politics has never been reached, and this is true of *Hard Times* as well (145). Pulsford characterizes the ambiguities of *Hard Times* and its criticisms that take up contradictory stances and conclusions as “ambiguities characteristic of aesthetic discourse” (146). Pulsford contends that while the novel claims to be the cooperation of reason and imagination, “it remains an aesthetic, acceptable to its contemporary critics, committed ultimately to its own preservation rather than to the perspectives of unaesthetic political discourse” (158). Whereas

Pulsford contends that the aesthetic has a “negative operation” that misrepresents political programs such as labor unions (146), both Lupton and Nussbaum posit the novel’s aesthetic as the solution to the utilitarian way of thinking, in its “certain form of rationality” that is a complexity of fancy and reason (Nussbaum 437), and the aesthetic is “not something to behold, but a way of beholding” (Lupton 166). In light of these two positions I offer a third, one that recognizes Pulsford’s concern of the destructiveness of the aesthetic with Lupton and Nussbaum’s epistemological qualities of the aesthetic. The third mode between fact and fancy is not just judgment, a “way of beholding,” but also obligation; *Hard Times* offers as an alternative to utilitarianism and circus life through the ethical-aesthetic, or the realization of the ethical through the aesthetic principle. The ethical-aesthetic both explains the paradox of Dickens’s critique of both industrialism and labor unions and offers itself as a practical recommendation against utilitarian thinking. Thus we will see the “closed shop” scene paired against the rescue scene, but first I will set the domain of the ethical-aesthetic in comparison to the previously mentioned theorists’ aesthetic.

Lupton characterizes the aesthetic in *Hard Times* as “subjectivity licensed by the triad of subject, object, and the experience of judgment which makes the coincidence of these two categories [reason and feeling] appear natural” (161). The aesthetic is subjective yet disinterested, and forms a subjective objectivity of judgment. Lupton adapts the Kantian aesthetic here, one that recognizes the difference between taste and the subjective objectivity of beauty. If all “fancy” in *Hard Times* amounted to was taste, the government official of the classroom would be quite right in absorbing taste in with “fact” (Dickens 10), for taste is empty and not up to debate. However, the narrator makes quite clear that fancy cannot be diminished as a judgment in taste, but rather that fancy is an important faculty in discovering higher truths about the good and the beautiful:

It is known, to the force of a single pound weight, what the engine will do; but not all the calculators of the National debt can tell me the capacity for good or evil, for love or hatred, for patriotism or discontent, for the decomposition of virtue into vice, or the reverse, at any single moment in the soul of one of these quiet servants, with the composed faces and the regulated actions (56).

The narrator directly responds to the Gradgrind philosophy, which, though it claims to be “ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to” (6), actually fails to find truth in any real sense, whereas the moral and aesthetic ideals (virtue and love) are asserted beyond mere taste, but as objective claims true for the universal. Thus, the aesthetic acts as the voice of truth in *Hard Times*.

In “The Literary Imagination in Public Life,” Martha Nussbaum similarly concludes that Dickens does not merely offer fancy as the solution to utilitarianism, but that the novel is itself the union of fact and fancy, and what is really the same as Lupton’s conception of the aesthetic. The aesthetic shows that the fact-philosophies of the utilitarian “are actually reductive and incomplete perceptions, and to ‘reason’ is a dogmatic operation of intellect that looks, frequently, both incomplete and unreliable” (Nussbaum 436). Nussbaum notes that utilitarianism is blind “to the qualitative richness of the perceptive world” (436), though it defines itself as a reason-based philosophy. The aesthetic “speaks not of dismissing reason, but of coming upon it in a way illuminated by fancy, which is here seen as a faculty at once both creative and veridical” (437). Unique to the aesthetic is its ability to synthesize the universal with the particular, which is why Lupton and Nussbaum posit the aesthetic as the solution to the dialectic of fact and fancy, whereas in the novel fact by itself resorts to the abstraction of the qualitative properties of individuals to tabulate human destinies, and fancy is relegated “to a compensatory role” to fact, an escape that does not offer systematic solutions (Lupton 155).

However, the aesthetic is not without its own political leanings and subversive tendencies, as Pulsford points out. The aesthetic in *Hard Times* demonstrates both positive and negative potentialities: “to turn against its bourgeois origins, and also the aesthetic’s inevitable containment of its own democratic tendencies” (Pulsford 147). Pulsford recognizes the epistemological qualities of the aesthetic that Lupton and Nussbaum note, in that the novel claims to be a cooperation of reason and imagination, but ultimately the aesthetic is still distinct from “truth,” in that the aesthetic has itself as an allegiance as a formative principle of the novel. According to Pulsford, the aesthetic takes the “individual human spirit” as its principle (149). Therefore, while the novel provides a scrutinizing critique of middle-class political economy, it also turns its aesthetic principle against labor unions, the social establishment that would provide practical solutions to the problems of industrialism.

While Pulsford is right in claiming that the aesthetic has its own agenda, it is not one solely of the “individual human spirit,” but has as its goal a call to action, and a certain way of being. The ethical-aesthetic in the novel is not one that irrationally attacks every collective institution, but instead uncompromisingly calls attention to harmful self-interest. As stated above, the ethical-aesthetic is both a judgment and a calling forth. It is the aesthetic that Lupton and Nussbaum define as a more truthful “way of beholding,” but instead of being a passive solution to industrialism and utilitarian thinking, it both actively recognizes the good through the beautiful and calls its cast and reader to realize it. Thus, while the novel negatively views the labor union under the leadership of Slackbridge, it recommends selfless collective efforts towards “good” goals. The ethical-aesthetic both exposes falsehoods and offers a perspective that combines the universal and particular. It acutely describes situations and characters with multiple qualitative differences, and brings an evaluation that is true to the particular as well as practical recommendations that are universal. The ethical-aesthetic principle is useful in understanding the description of the Hands, the labor

union and “closed shop” scene, and the rescue scene.

The ethical-aesthetic frequently brings the reader’s attention to the Hands and their paradoxical treatment. The Hands are treated explicitly as a collective, while implicitly the narrator grants the reader awareness of their individuality. This is done mostly through Stephen Blackpool, whom Pulsford finds problematic. Pulsford believes that the aesthetic reserves individuality for Stephen against the Hands, so that from the start we may sympathize with their cause, but never with the Hands themselves. However, the narrator offers snippets of ways in which Hands are recognized beyond their collective function. In the chapter entitled “Stephen Blackpool,” Stephen is compared in many ways with the Hands:

He took no place among those remarkable “Hands,” who, piecing together their broken intervals of leisure through many years, had mastered difficult sciences, and acquired a knowledge of most unlikely things. He held no station among the Hands who could make speeches and carry on debates. Thousands of his compeers could talk much better than he, at any time. (Dickens 52)

Compared to the Hands, Stephen’s one remarkable trait is his “perfect integrity.” However, the Hands themselves are remarkable in the pursuits and talents that they nurture after fifteen-hour work days. Stephen is also brought back into the collective of the Hands in the following chapter:

Stephen bent over the loom, quiet, watchful and steady. A special contrast, as every man was in the forest of looms where Stephen worked, to the crashing, smashing, tearing piece of mechanism at which he labored. (56)

It is easy to read this passage as separating Stephen against the Hands, as Lupton does (162). However, the emphasis of the ethical-aesthetic is on how every Hand is “quiet, watchful, and steady” in contrast to the violent sounds of the mill. Through Stephen, the ethical-aesthetic both individualizes the Hands and describes their shared circumstances in order to identify the heart of their problem,

and their problem turns out to be something they are not yet equipped to face.

Through most of the novel, Stephen is the paragon of the ethical, whereas Sissy is the paragon of the aesthetic (Lupton, Pulsford, Johnson). Stephen, representative of half the ethical-aesthetic, knows that there is a problem with both the union and the factory owners, and knows that there is something missing in the life of Coketown, but “can’t see a better system. All is, famously, a muddle” (Pulsford 157). Stephen lacks the judgment unique to the aesthetic to realize a better situation. Similarly, Sissy possesses the aesthetic, but because she is isolated from the world and the ethical, her potential amounts to nothing more than to “beatify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights” (Dickens 222). Stephen gains the other half of the equation, but only near his death, presented in the chapter titled “The Starlight.”

Stephen comes to realize the aesthetic in the Old Hell Shaft, through the star. When he gazes upon the star, he finds comfort and knowledge. In one of his last lines Stephen states:

But in our judgments, like as in our doings, we mun bear and forbear. In my pain an trouble, lookin up yonder—wi’ it shinin’ on me—I ha’ seen more clear, an ha’ made it my dying prayer that aw th’ world may on’y coom togetther more, an get a better unnerstan’in o’one another, than when I were in’t my own weak seln. (204)

We are then told by the narrator, “The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer’s rest” (204).

The ethical-aesthetic, through Stephen, illuminates the problem as one of alienation. Throughout the novel, the life of Coketown is characterized as monotonous, and the labor of the Hands gives little meaning to them. Thus, when the ethical-aesthetic considers the labor union, it recognizes it as both a preservation of the system, and, because the union is bound by mutual anger and grievances, rather than the ethical-aesthetic union of empathy found in the

rescue scene, it is easily corrupted by the likes of Slackbridge.

Dickens describes the workers of the union in positive terms:

There was no carelessness, no languor, no idle curiosity; none of the many shades of indifference to be seen in all other assemblies, visible for one moment there. That every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards the making of it better; that every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to the comrades by whom he was surrounded; and that in this belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of that crowd were gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest; must have been as plain to any one who chose to see what was there, as the bare beams of the roof and the whitened brick walls. (107)

The workers are genuinely concerned not only for themselves, but their family, fellow workers, and nation. However, this passage alludes to the negative, that they are being misled. They are admirable in every way, yet here they are shown to be susceptible to misdirection. Slackbridge is that element. Slackbridge uses the union as a platform to increase his social influence, and is ready to turn a fellow worker, Stephen, into a scapegoat.

Pulsford believes that this scene illustrates the aesthetic's subversive commitment to a capitalist ideology; however, it is far better to see this scene as another example of the unique judgment of the aesthetic. Rather than show labor unions in light of fancy or fact, the aesthetic illustrates realistic dangers of the union without claiming that unions in general are bad. In fact, the ethical-aesthetic illustrates the contrary with the rescue scene.

In the rescue scene, past animosity is discarded in favor of empathy, as the crushed and barely alive body of Stephen Blackpool is removed from the pit. Many workers rush to the site to provide support: "One of the men was in a drunken slumber, but on his comrade's shouting to him that a man had fallen down the Old Hell

Shaft, he started out to a pool of dirty water, put his head in it, and came back sober” (200). Workers are shown here to revive from their vices when given a meaningful task. As workers from Coketown and the surrounding countryside gather at the site, they demonstrate great productivity and engagement to their work that as Hands they never had. They display their good nature by working hours with no pay to save a fellow worker who they had previously believed stole from the bank and betrayed the union to Mr. Bounderby. During the rescue, both workers and spectators gain a new appreciation of humanness and understanding of social duty. The ethical-aesthetic places this union and ethic higher than the labor union Stephen refused to join without implying that Stephen was right in refusing to join.

The ethical-aesthetic principle of the novel not only offers a “way of beholding,” but also a solution. The novel suggests that the ethical-aesthetic engagement is the most fruitful response to industrial concerns. It does not concern itself with its actual possibility or effects, but remains as a universal calling. It seems obvious that the novel does not have a plan to offer in place of industrialism, that “muddle” is too large for the novel. However, the ethical-aesthetic offers both a rational and imaginative perspective to seek and implement a solution, one that is more active than the passive, disinterested response of the aesthetic alone. The ethical is an important part of the equation, as it not only is a mode of judgment, but an incentive to act.

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## Reciprocal Formation of Gender Identity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

| Fallon Alvarez

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In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troilus's love life directly reflects his shortcomings. As a prince of Troy he is bound to express himself according to the standards of courtly love, yet he scorns it at the outset of the poem. In contrast, Hector symbolizes masculine power in the backdrop of the Trojan War. The two brothers are repeatedly compared throughout the poem, revealing the standard of masculinity that Troilus desires but does not achieve. When Troilus meets Criseyde, he uses her feminine identity to authorize his own masculinity. Critics like Holly Crocker, Catherine Cox, and Marcia Smith Marzec have explored methods of masculinization in *Troilus and Criseyde*. A synthesis of these ideas illuminates the role of the courtship process in forming Troilus's masculine identity. Criseyde serves as a conduit for his gender expression, and it is through a relationship with her and with Hector that his masculinity becomes defined and subsequently dismantled.

Deserted by family and friends, Criseyde finds herself alone and vulnerable in the city of Troy. She asks Hector to protect her against persecution for Calkas's treason, ensuring her legal safety. After falling to her knees and begging for pardon, Hector considers "that she was sorrowfully bigone, / And that she was so fair a creature" (Chaucer I.114-15). He pardons her, but only after considering her appearance. To him, Criseyde is a shining example of femininity: equal parts proud and vulnerable, beautiful and piteous. As the most powerful and therefore most masculine man in Troy, Hector models the ideal male. When he sympathizes with Criseyde, he

authorizes her as a woman worthy of respect. The permission that she receives from him is multi-faceted, as it secures her legal safety but also establishes her reputation. In promising protection, Hector extends his status to her, making the initial projection of Criseyde that sets her up as a feminine ideal. In an instant, Criseyde comes to symbolize femininity because she has been authorized by the ultimate symbol of Trojan *masculinity*. Criseyde pursues his blessing because of the complex reciprocity of their gender relation. Her appeal to Hector signifies an unspoken endorsement of his masculinity, viewing him as an ideal version of male protection. Hector's protective identity binds itself to his reputation as an expert soldier. In "The State of Exception and Sovereign Masculinity in *Troilus and Criseyde*," Robert Sturges argues that Hector "is the poem's ideal of manhood, and his masculine power is regularly associated with the protection of Troy—especially by Criseyde" (36). Thus far Hector has kept Troy from harm, and Criseyde relates this fact to her present situation. Her widowhood and absence of a male protector give Criseyde a uniquely feminine vulnerability, one that depends exclusively on her rights as a woman in Trojan society. She identifies with the plight of Troy, a city under siege in need of Hector's effective protection. In "Deiphebus, Hector, and Troilus in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," Roseanne Gasse writes that Hector represents the "protective patriarchal order" (431) that establishes safety in the name of societal preservation. The Greeks threaten Trojan territory in much the same way that the angry mob threatens Criseyde's life (Chaucer I.90-91). In accordance with appropriate social protocol, Criseyde must seek out a protector whose masculine authority can override her feminine social destitution. Sturges notes that she "imagines that only heroic masculinity can safeguard her bare life" (36); thus she must find a hyper-masculine figure to guarantee her safety.

Criseyde's pardon by Hector signals to Troilus that she has romantic potential. Hector's reputation as a deadly soldier means that he has fulfilled his masculine duty, inspiring Troilus to pursue

the woman that Hector has deemed worthy. When Troilus sees Criseyde in the parade, he sees her as “a thing inmortal” with “natif beaute” (Chaucer I.103-4), setting her apart from all the other women in the crowd. This distinction appeals to Troilus’s desire to live up to his knightly status, and he realizes that Criseyde is his courtly romantic equal. Having garnered the approval of Hector and the attention of Troilus, Criseyde embodies Trojan feminine ideals. As Holly Crocker writes in “How the Woman Makes the Man: Chaucer’s Reciprocal Fictions in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” Criseyde is “an icon of feminine virtue” and winning her would make [Troilus] a marker of masculine nobility” (146): therein lies her appeal. Troilus’s decision to court Criseyde becomes a journey to fulfill his courtly duty and express his masculinity.

Hector’s opinion affects Troilus deeply, as they are brothers with the same soldierly occupation. They share a princely title, yet only Hector has earned his status at the end of Book One. Even at his best, Troilus is “save Ector most ydred any wight” (III.1775), indicating that Hector always occupies a superior position. Troilus allows his obsession with courting Criseyde to supersede his public duty as a soldier, and despite the wartime backdrop of the poem, he appears in few war-related scenarios. Gasse finds that Troilus “sets aside public responsibility for personal gratification” and “passion, not patriotism, spurs Troilus on” (434). Unlike Hector, who symbolizes masculine sovereignty, Troilus is only a soldier whose personal life interferes with his job. Debatably, Troilus would never have achieved a prince-like status had he not been born into it, but Hector proves that he deserves his royal rank time and time again. Hector’s commitment to the protection of Troy establishes his masculinity because he maintains patriarchal order. Notably, when Pandarus describes Troilus to Criseyde, she brings the comparison between Hector and Troilus to life:

A kynge sone in armes wel to do  
 And ben of goode condiciouns therto;  
 For gret power and moral vertu here

Is selde yseeyn in o persone yfeere.

.....  
 Of Ector nedeth it namore for to telle:  
 In al this world ther nys a better knyght  
 Than he, that is of worthynesse welle;  
 And he wel moore vertu hath than might;  
 (Chaucer II. 165-68; 176-81)

Criseyde ambiguously responds to Pandarus's description of Troilus, remaining unclear about which brother she declares "wel to do." Pandarus himself applies her words to Hector, making it clear that though he intended to focus on Troilus's finer qualities, the conversation has been led astray (II.176). This interaction exposes Pandarus's feelings about his best friend, as he denies the application of these words to Troilus. What he does not say in these lines is more important than what he does. In "What Makes a Man? Troilus, Hector, and the Masculinities of Courtly Love," Marcia Smith Marzec writes that "noticeably absent is any mention of 'moral virtue'" in the description of Troilus (64). In Pandarus's mind, Troilus does not match the description offered by Criseyde, where she mentions "moral vertu" (Chaucer II.167). He offers a counter to her words, choosing to cast Troilus as a passive character instead of an active one. Pandarus claims that the "Grekes for hym goone fleen" (II.194), indicating that the Greek armies react to Troilus more than they interact with him. Like his knightly status, Troilus does not earn this reaction as much as he inherits it. While Hector has personally slain Greek soldiers, Troilus only causes them to retreat. Both are useful tactics, but the latter relies on a reputation of being "Ector the secounde" (II.158). Troilus clings to his brother's renown because it authorizes him as a soldier, binding his identity with that of Hector. Criseyde, however, carefully chooses her words when she exclaims "'By God,' quod she, 'of Ector that is sooth. / Of Troilus the same thing trowe I'" (II.183-184). She, like the Trojan citizens, *knows* that these qualities are true of Hector, but can only suspect that they *might* be true of Troilus. She "suggests the

difference when she responds that this is indeed ‘sooth’ of Hector, but one can merely ‘trowe’ this of Troilus” (Marzec 64).

Criseyde’s reputation is bound to her striking physical appearance, and her value to Troilus increases because of her unique social situation. Her vulnerability makes Troilus’s desire honorable, as the courtship becomes an extension of his masculine protection. Providing her with safety allows Troilus to mirror Hector’s protection of Troy. In courting a woman as well regarded as Criseyde, Troilus expresses his nobility through the pursuit of a worthy companion. Her features and mannerisms bear directly upon him because they are a reflection of his courtly aspirations:

She nas nat with the leste of hire stature,  
 But alle hire lymes so wel answeyng  
 Weren to wommanhod, that creature  
 Was nevere lasse mannyssh in semyng;  
 And ek the pure wise of hire mevyng  
 Shewed wel hat men myght in hire gessee,

Honour, estat, and womanly noblesse (Chaucer I.281-87)

As Catherine Cox writes in “The Text of Criseyde,” Criseyde has successfully become a projection of Troilus’s own conception of gender, reminding him of her exceptional qualities that will increase his worth upon their union. She is described in “gendered and sexualized constructs articulated in masculine terms in relation to masculine decorums” (55). Moreover, she “was never lasse mannyssh in semyng”—therefore her physical identity as a woman, or rather as “not-man,” crucially defines the way that Troilus can relate to her. Her graceful movements indicate natural nobility, a fact not lost on Troilus. In securing an attachment between them, Troilus has a woman to mirror the nobility that he desires. Moreover, “gan he make a mirour of his mynde / In which he saugh al holly hire figure” (Chaucer I.365-66), literally projecting his desired image of Criseyde onto her actual being. As Kate Koppelman writes in “‘The Dreams in Which I’m Dying’: Sublimation and Unstable Masculinities in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” the mirror he makes does not

reflect upon himself, but allows him “to gaze further at the image (ever partial) of a woman he has yet to meet” (107). He sees her “holly” figure, expressing his belief that Criseyde is a comprehensive representation of her gender. To him, she wholly embodies “womanly noblesse” and appears as an untouchable holy being. As a “thing immortal” (Chaucer I.103), Criseyde’s divinity bolsters her symbolic status. She becomes attractive because of the cultural import Troilus places on her features, “legitimizing” an attempt to win her favor.

After the lovers consummate their relationship, Troilus transforms himself into a shining example of masculinity. He thanks the “heighe worthynesse / Of Love” (III.1609-10) and declares himself a “trewe knight” (III.1648). Troilus has successfully completed his quest for love, and his rewards manifest emotionally and physically:

Save Ector most ydred of any wight;  
 And this encrees of hardynesse and might  
 Com hym of love, his ladies thank to wynne,  
 That altered his spirit so withinne.  
 In tyme of trewe, on haukyng wolde he ride,  
 Or ells honte boor, beer, or lyoun;  
 The smale bestes leet he gon biside (III.1775-81)

Once again, Troilus stands in comparison to Hector, though this time the distinction between the two shrinks considerably. Not only has he become a dreaded foe, but his pursuit of Criseyde legitimizes this “encrees of hardynesse and might.” Troilus has not suddenly morphed into a heartless super-soldier, but rather is graced with strength because he is blessed with love—the ideal of courtly knighthood. His success in pursuing Criseyde allows him to embody cultural notions of Trojan masculinity. Finally meeting Hector’s knightly example, he pursues bigger, more dangerous quarry now because he has secured womanly affection. Just as Criseyde’s physicality became an expression of masculine desires, so too does Troilus’s. Troilus deserves his title only after he has begun

to express his strength and aggression, therefore successfully wooing Criseyde as his courtly equivalent. As Criseyde expresses the ideal of *femininity*, Troilus also expresses the ideal of *masculinity*.

Ironically, this “equality” exists only after the conquest of Criseyde. Criseyde personifies the ideals Troilus requires, but he dismisses the possibility that she could be anything other than the image he sees. Troilus upholds unfair gender expectations that trap Criseyde in a role she does not truly embody. Criseyde “claims only to be human and to behave, however ineffectually or mistakenly, as a human and a woman” (Cox 51), yet within her Troilus sees all of femininity. In an attempt to establish himself as *a* man, he forces Criseyde to be more than *a* woman. Cox asserts that Criseyde becomes less of a human being and more of a text for Troilus to manipulate. She does not betray Troilus; rather, he betrays her in his misreading. His “imagination constructs a fantasy object whose origin is located in Troilus’s singular desire; hence his narcissistic desire motivates his . . . attempt to force reality into compliance with fantasy” (Cox 43). Criseyde is a means to an end, and both her agency and individuality are lost in Troilus’s pursuit of manhood. When she leaves Troy, Criseyde’s emotions are exposed more than they have been throughout the entire poem. Once again, her physical body expresses details about her:

Hire face, lik of Paradys the ymage,  
 Was al ychaunged in another kynde.  
 The pleye, the laughter, men was wont to finde  
 On hire, and ek hire joies everichone,  
 Ben fled; and thus lith now Criseyde allone  
 Aboute hire eyen two a purpre ryng  
 Bytrent, in sothfast tokenyng of hire peyne,  
 That to biholde it was a dedly thing (IV.864-71)

Laid bare by her sadness, Criseyde alters her appearance beyond repair; rendering herself unrecognizable as she destroys her ethereal beauty. She no longer possesses the “natif beaute” (I.104) that men are “wont to finde / On hire” because she has rendered herself

physically incomprehensible, and thus invisible to them. Her female identity is stripped away as her body departs from idealized femininity. Her sadness puts her “in the midst of self-mutilation—literally tearing her body apart, making it into something new, unsublime, undivine, ugly” (Koppleman 111). Criseyde makes this transformation “allone,” existing in a space where she no longer suffers the projections of others. She discards her old identity as the feminine ideal in favor of “a dedly thing,” unaware of how lethal this mutation will become for the Trojans.

Criseyde’s transformation dismantles Troilus’s masculine identity because she no longer exists as the feminine ideal. Hector and Troilus, however, are the cause for her distress and thus their own destruction. When the Trojans trade her for Antenor, Criseyde suffers a double-betrayal. The “noyse of peple” (IV.183) overthrow Hector, and he fails to maintain sovereignty over the city, ultimately signifying a failure to live up to Trojan masculine ideals. Sturges’s assessment notes: His “failure of masculinity is . . . a failure of sovereignty: having failed to control the Greeks in battle, Hector also fails to control his own Trojan people” (38). The crowd dismisses their former champion, an act that destroys his identity completely. Hector loses the city’s respect and supreme power in Troy, finding himself displaced. His war efforts count for nothing among his people, dissolving the element that established his renown in the beginning. His constituents no longer project masculine idealism upon him, removing him from the web of Troilus and Criseyde’s gender formation. Without Hector as this crucial link, Criseyde is no longer authorized by a figure of masculinity. For this reason she must destroy herself and be remade by another masculine figure. She finds this mission successful with the “Ful redy” Diomedes (V.15), who becomes heroically and erotically masculine when the Greeks defeat Troy (Sturges 40).

Troilus, too, is affected by Hector’s dissolved identity, as the Trojan masculine ideal ceases to exist. This definition has been destroyed along with Hector’s power, and he no longer has a model

for his own behavior. Troilus, ever second to Hector, merely reflects the conception of maleness delineated in Troy. His courtship of Criseyde serves as an expression of the masculinity he sought to embody, largely constructed from Hector's exploits. Because the Trojan mob discounts Hector's authority, Troilus too loses any power he wielded through their association. The "standard of manliness" gives him meaning, "one to which Troilus more or less lives up—if not as the best man, at least as one of the best" (Sturges 37). Troilus seeks to become an exception like his brother, binding his identity to the cultural importance of both Hector and Criseyde. When these ideals no longer exist, his identity can no longer exist. Criseyde's self-destruction yields the same effect on Troilus, as it voids his masculine value. His pursuit of Criseyde has a foundation in her cultural commoditization, one that insists she maintain a feminine identity. Criseyde annihilates her key expression of "femaleness" when grief transforms her appearance. Thus, her feminine identity is destroyed along with Hector's masculinity. This cataclysmic obliteration of gender models renders Troilus's masculine identity invalid, exposing the reciprocal structure of Trojan gender definition.

The courtship between Troilus and Criseyde exists to establish Troilus as a masculine figure. Criseyde becomes a tool for gender definition, through which femininity and masculinity form a reciprocal relationship. The cycle of gender identity begins with Troy's approval of Hector as a masculine model. Criseyde, in turn, seeks out the masculine protector missing from her life, ultimately endorsing Hector's masculinity when she begs for mercy. These two characters project masculine and feminine ideals onto each other, closely binding their respective gender identity. After her pardon, Criseyde is authorized as the feminine ideal in Troy, and Troilus uses this status as a way to exert his masculinity. Criseyde's projected identity constructs and legitimizes Troilus's journey to manhood, ultimately proving Troilus's "maleness." Criseyde's vulnerability enables her transformation from a woman to "woman." Symbolic of

her gender, she embodies all of the positive and negative attributes projected onto her. Hector and Troilus are the beginning and the end, respectively, of the reciprocal gender-cycle. Masculinity “completes” the circuit, leaving feminine identity lost somewhere in the middle. Criseyde as a character bonds the men together, but her gender identity cannot exist independently. After Troy is conquered by the Greeks, Criseyde remains because of her attachment to a masculine figure. Troilus has died in battle, yet his, and not Criseyde’s, story remains to be told on Earth. For this reason the narrator focuses on “The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen” (I.1). The poem emphasizes Troilus’s perspective from the outset, and the structure of the work follows this example. The sorrow here belongs to Troilus, regardless of Criseyde’s stake in the matter. Though she may be a part of the “double sorwe,” it does not belong to her but revolves around her. She becomes the object of the “lovyng” Troilus places upon her, denying her agency and individuality. Criseyde’s wishes are irrelevant in the re-telling of her own story, and the narration of the tale mirrors the privileging of masculine perspective.

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# Comparing Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* to the Historical Henry

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In “The Dramatic Structure of Shakespeare’s *King Henry the Eighth: An Essay in Rehabilitation*,” Glynne Wickham suggests that Shakespeare’s *King Henry VIII* (1613) was written at the request of James I to build an image of “a Protestant Empire grounded in London, and led by the predestinately elect nation of Great Britain” (153). In Wickham’s view, the play is essentially a piece of pro-monarchy propaganda that removes the most controversial episodes from Henry’s life in order to foster a sense of national identity and trust in England’s leadership. While Wickham may overreach himself in this argument—for instance, he produces no evidence that Shakespeare wrote the play at James’ behest—he makes a useful observation: at times, Shakespeare’s Henry VIII appears to be more of an idealized character than a realistic one. The most striking example of this comes in the play’s final scene, in which the infant Elizabeth I is baptized and Thomas Cranmer prophesies a new era of peace and prosperity for England. Henry tells Cranmer after the prophecy:

Thou hast made me now a man; never before  
 This happy child did I get anything.  
 This oracle of comfort has so pleased me  
 That when I am in heaven, I shall desire  
 To see what this child does, and praise my Maker.  
 (Shakespeare 5.4.63-67)

Of course in reality Henry married Anne Bullen for a son,

so the birth of Elizabeth was actually a moment of profound disappointment for him. Furthermore, as John Margeson points out in his introduction to *King Henry VIII*, her baptism was a quiet, private affair, not a national celebration as Shakespeare depicts it (16-17). However Shakespeare ignores these facts in favor of a vision of Henry as a mythical figure who foresees Elizabeth I's reign as a potential Golden Age in British history. As Frederick Waage notes in "*Henry VIII and the Crisis of the English History Play*," when Cranmer begins to prophesy "he has ceased to exist as a person and become an obligatory, ceremonial, disembodied voice," at which point the play has departed from any attempt at historical accuracy (299). An idealized Henry VIII is not only to be found in the Biblical language of the final scene, either. Wickham argues that Shakespeare depicts Henry as blameless, as "the King's fault lies only in ignorance of the devilish mechinations being practiced upon him" (158). Indeed, there is a sense in the play that any morally questionable action of Henry's, from casting aside a faultless wife in Katherine to sentencing Buckingham to death, is either to be forgiven or blamed entirely on the scheming of Wolsey. For instance, Buckingham insists at his execution,

my vows and prayers

Yet are the king's, and till me soul forsake

Shall cry for blessings on him. (Shakespeare 2.1.88-90)

Katherine similarly instructs Capuchius during her death scene, "Tell him in death I blessed him, / for so I will" (4.2.163-64). The fact that even these persons who have been grievously wronged by Henry refuse to find fault with him affirms the image of the blessed king of the final scene. It is as if the characters understand that he is the father of Elizabeth and therefore of the idealized world of Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

However, despite his decision to cast Henry VIII as a just monarch, it would be hyperbole to say that Shakespeare removes all of the king's historical character flaws. Henry is depicted as an inept ruler and statesman, unaware of what is taking place in his kingdom

and even of what his own ministers are up to. As Waage writes,  
 With no strength of mind or ability to see through the plots  
 of Wolsey and Gardiner, unless they are presented to his eyes  
 overtly, he becomes decisive only in the last scenes where at  
 the same time he ceases to be lifelike. (300)

Of course, this version of Henry is mutually exclusive with Wickham's: an idealized, elevated king cannot be at the same time a feeble and ineffective one. In this paper I will explore the subtle ways in which Shakespeare depicts Henry's historical weaknesses as a monarch while maintaining his venerable status as a Tutor patriarch. Specifically, I will argue that Shakespeare uses the play's structure to illustrate the self-centered nature of Henry VIII's kingship.

One of Henry's obvious flaws in the play is his weakness as a judge. This flaw is historically accurate; E.W. Ives notes in "Henry VIII (1491-1547)" that "[e]goistical self-righteousness made Henry both the most forgiving and the most unforgiving of men." In *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Plays*, Warren Chernaik observes that the structure of *Henry VIII* mirrors this tendency of Henry's, as there are four parallel trials in the play—Buckingham's, Katherine's, Wolsey's, and Cranmer's—and Henry controls the outcome of each of them (Chernaik 170). This parallel structure allows Shakespeare to demonstrate Henry's inconsistency as a juror, as he handles each of the cases in wildly different ways. For instance, when Wolsey convinces the king that Buckingham is a potential threat, Henry decides to charge Buckingham and leave his case to the courts:

If he may  
 Find mercy in the law, 'tis his; if none,  
 Let him not seek't from us. (Shakespeare 1.2.211-13)

This is in sharp contrast to his treatment of Cranmer, who is given the king's ring for protection and told "Be of good cheer, / They shall no more prevail than we give way to" (5.1.142-43). In each case Henry's opinion of the accused plays a greater role in their fate than what he has actually done. Henry likes Cranmer, so he protects

him from judgment; he distrusts Buckingham, so he sends him to his fate. This arbitrariness is also seen in Henry's judgment of Wolsey, which hinges on the fact that "The cardinal's letters to the pope miscarried" and apparently come into Henry's hands entirely by accident (3.2.50). Even when Henry makes a proper judgment, then—for in the context of the play Wolsey clearly deserves punishment for his crimes—it is more of an act of random chance than an upright decision on his part which brings it about.

Henry's most unsettling judgment is his dismissal of Katherine. When she is essentially on trial at Blackfriars with her position as queen on the line, she pathetically asks Henry,

when was the hour  
I ever contradicted your desire,  
Or made it not mine too? (2.4.25-27)

The answer to this question is clearly that there was never such an hour. Katherine has been a perfect companion, so much so that Henry is comfortable telling her when they are first seen together,

you have half our power,  
The other moiety ere you ask is given;  
Repeat your will and take it. (1.2.11-13)

Yet despite the fact that she has been an ideal wife, Henry remains silent throughout her appeal. Later, when he sends her his goodwill through a messenger, Katherine responds,

O my good lord, that comfort comes too late.  
'Tis like a pardon after execution;  
That gentle physic, given in time, had cured me.  
(4.2.120-23)

In this passage Shakespeare intentionally emphasizes that Henry had the power to save Katherine at Blackfriars, but he chose to "execute" rather than "pardon" her. Katherine's story makes clear a point that is implicit in the stories of Buckingham, Wolsey, and Cranmer: Henry only acts in his own interests. If he perceives a person as a threat or they cease to have instrumental value for him personally, he will have no qualms about disposing of them. The play only gives

three examples of this pattern, but the audience would have been well aware that it was continued in the executions of Sir Thomas More and Anne Bullen.

Besides showing Henry's failings as a judge, the play also demonstrates his weakness more generally as a statesman. Again, Shakespeare is historically accurate here. Ives writes that Henry was uninterested in affairs of state as a rule and "frequently behaved as though he wanted government to take care of itself." This unwillingness to rule directly is reflected in the play's structure. Henry VIII does not dominate the stage in his play like many Shakespearean kings do. He takes an almost peripheral role, entering the action haphazardly, leading Larry S. Champion to observe in "A Celebration of History: *Henry VIII*" that "[h]e is central to neither to the narrative nor to the emotional concerns of the spectators" (172). It is almost as if Henry VIII chooses not to have a central role in the play. He only appears when there is a plot to be foiled, a wife to dispose of, or a party to attend. In short, Henry is only present for the scenes that have a direct effect on him personally.

If this structural feature hints at Henry's lack of commitment to government, the action of act I makes the point more explicitly. Henry is shocked when he learns of the tax that Wolsey has imposed to pay for the Field of the Cloth of Gold: "Taxation? / Wherein? And what taxation?" (Shakespeare 1.2.36-37). He adds gravely, "By my life, / This is against our pleasure" (1.2.67-68). Henry's distress at hearing of his suffering subjects demonstrates that he is compassionate, and the swift action he takes to remedy the situation once he is aware of it supports Wickham's assertion that he is an ideal king. However, the fact that he is unaware of effects of the tax demonstrates a disconnect between Henry and his kingdom. In the opening scene Abergavenny describes the unrest that the tax has caused:

I do know  
Kinsmen of mine, three at the least, that have

By this so sickened their estates that never  
 They shall abound as formerly (1.1.80-83)

That Henry could be totally oblivious that a tax that has caused such widespread economic turmoil even exists demonstrates that he is not in touch with his nobles, much less the common people under his rule. Granted, this depiction of Henry's reign is not entirely fair, as Ives writes that "the collaboration [with Wolsey] ensured that Henry was consulted on everything important and, should he wish, [he] could initiate." However, Shakespeare effectively illustrates Henry's lack of interest with government in the play, and if an issue, such as taxation, bored him, he would certainly be willing to delegate it.

Henry's historical character is also reflected in the way Shakespeare treats the king's Great Matter—Henry's divorce from Katherine and marriage to Anne, which brought about the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church. Henry was not a particularly spiritual man, and so was an odd one to spark a Reformation movement: "He did accept the need for faith, but understood this as assent to the creeds, not—as the reformers, Catholic and non-Catholic, understood—a lively personal commitment to God" (Ives). This attitude toward religion, like Henry's attitude toward political leadership, is reflected in the lack of religious discussion in the play itself. In fact, there is only one explicit reference to the Reformation, which comes when Cranmer is being accused by Chamberlain of

filling

The whole realm by your teaching

.....

Divers and dangerous; which are heresies,

And not reformed, may prove pernicious. (5.2.49-53)

Chamberlain does not provide any further details into the charge. We are not told what constitutes a "heresy," for instance, or how an unchecked heresy could make itself "dangerous" or "pernicious." In short, Chamberlain, in the only open discussion of theology in the play, is more interested in the political implications of Cranmer's

theology than whether it will actually strengthen or weaken the newly formed Anglican Church. Indeed, the fact that Henry has even formed a new Church is never mentioned in the play. This strange absence of any discussion of the Great Matter can partially be explained by the nature of writing a play about recent history; the audience would already be living out the consequences of Henry's reforms in Protestant England, so it is not necessary for Shakespeare to list them in depth (Chernaik 12). However, the events which lead up to the English Reformation in *Henry VIII* suggest that this is an intentional move on Shakespeare's part in order to critique Henry's approach to reform.

In my description of Katherine's trial at Blackfriars above I noted that Henry does not speak to Katherine at all. Henry does, however, deliver an impassioned speech after she has left the court, describing how much it pains him to divorce her and praising her as an ideal wife. This speech of Henry's at Blackfriars did actually take place, but historical gentry of England were not particularly impressed with the performance; as David Loades notes in *Henry VIII*, Henry's appeal to conscience even "failed to convince his own subjects" (200). This incredulosity at the king's motives is present in Shakespeare's account of the events as well:

Chamberlain: It seems the marriage with his brother's wife  
Has crept too near his conscience.

Suffolk [Aside]: No, his conscience  
Has crept too near another lady. (2.2.15-18)

Of course, the two go on to blame Wolsey for the king's lack of faithfulness, but the fact that Suffolk directly speaks out against an action by the king is a rarity in the play and provides insight into the national perception of Henry's relationship with Anne. This lack of confidence is understandable when one recalls the way Henry behaves at Wolsey's party when he first meets Anne. The king, instantly smitten, can only comment that Anne's is "[t]he fairest hand I ever touched" (1.4.75), adding that "By heaven she is a dainty one" (1.4.94). The fact that his feelings toward her are little

better than an instinctive arousal at her “daintiness” puts Anne in sharp contrast with Katherine, to whom Henry was comfortable surrendering half his power in act 1, scene 2. Whereas Katherine is a faultless wife, Henry is interested in Anne only because he wants to have fun. As with his caricature of Henry’s lack of knowledge about Wolsey’s taxation, Shakespeare’s interpretation of these events is shallow. Henry’s feelings toward Anne were strong enough for him to wait over five years for her: Henry’s first attempt at an annulment of his marriage to Katherine began in 1527, and he was not able to marry Anne until 1532 (Ives). However, Shakespeare’s version does provide insight into Henry VIII’s reign by accurately depicting Henry’s reasons for reforming the Church of England. Whether through Wolsey’s tricks or his own choice, the king decides that he wants a new wife, and nothing will prevent him from getting one. While Henry may have appreciated the enormity of his decision to break from the Catholic Church, his own desire to have a new wife and a male heir was certainly his main reason for doing so.

Shakespeare takes a nuanced approach to Henry VIII’s reign, using it to make two distinct points. The first is to acknowledge that Henry VIII was an imperfect, selfish man. This is evident in his arbitrary approach to judicial matters, his uninterested approach to government in general, and his flippant approach to the Reformation. This is a fitting stage role for a man who owned fifty palaces and composed musical arrangements to be played by his own private, travelling band (Ives). Henry liked to be comfortable and have things his own way, and only became involved in the governing of the country if it was absolutely necessary or if it would benefit him directly. However, Shakespeare makes another point about Henry’s life which is equally important to the meaning of the play: this king, imperfect though he was, was invaluable in the creation of contemporary Britain. Margeson writes that Cranmer’s prophecy at the play’s conclusion speaks “not only of the peace and security of Elizabeth’s reign, but also of idealised hopes, still felt by some in 1613, for the reign of James I” (4). Because Henry is the

embodiment of these hopes in the play, the patriarch who looks forward to their arrival, Shakespeare does not address Henry VIII's character flaws directly or in glaring terms. Instead, he quietly and subtly portrays Henry's weaknesses while strongly emphasizing his important role in English history.

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## Blood and Laurels: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Anderson's *Speak*

| Brittani Howell

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Since it appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the myth of Daphne and Apollo has resonated in stories of amorous pursuit. Love-struck by the mischievous Cupid, the god Apollo launches into a determined chase of the fleet-footed nymph Daphne who, knowing nothing of what "youth, and kindly love, inspire," wants nothing to do with Apollo's desires (Ovid I.40). Desperate, almost caught, Daphne cries out to her river-god father for help. Just as Apollo prepares to lay hands on his prize, the lovely nymph transforms from flesh and blood into bark and blossom. She becomes a laurel and Apollo, still besotted with his first love, claims her as his sacred tree. The myth has been rewritten and twisted in countless forms, reflecting the ways the culture retelling the story differs from its original cradles in Greece and Rome. Young adult author Laurie Halse Anderson participates in this tradition by evoking the myth in her novel about rape and its consequences, *Speak*. Anderson's protagonist, Melinda, first alludes to the myth when she puzzles over her art project: "Could I put a face in my tree, like a dryad from Greek mythology?" (17). As Melinda contemplates her possible role as Daphne, she casts her rapist, Andy Evans, as Apollo by calling him a "Greek god" (134). The evocation of the myth is subtle but significant. Anderson makes it clear that this is not Ovid's myth—she does not want it to be—but in evoking the ancient story, Anderson

brings her novel in conversation with Ovid and ultimately subverts the way he romanticizes rape in the myth of Daphne and Apollo.

Ovid tenderizes an attempted rape into a semi-tragic love story. Apollo's desires for Daphne, which are entirely physical, are given a touch of purity and innocence when Ovid describes Daphne as "the first and fairest of [Apollo's] loves" (Ovid I.1). The language of the myth paints Apollo sympathetically: he pursues because he is "enamour'd" and "led by love" (I.29, 111). He is never vilified for wanting to take Daphne against her will. Instead, the blame is placed on Cupid, whose arrow afflicts Apollo with unbridled desire. Furthermore, Apollo is portrayed at the end of the myth as a sort of faithful lover. His love for Daphne is so strong that he claims the laurel into which she has transformed as his sacred tree, forever to be known as a "prize of honour, and renown" (I.150-162). During the chase Daphne is quite vocal about her terror of Apollo's intentions, but any negative portrayal of the would-be rapist stops there. To the end of the tale, Apollo is a besotted and spurned lover, victim to the powers of Love.

Apollo may have escaped epithets from Ovid, but Anderson does not extend this mercy to Andy Evans. *Speak* not only vilifies Andy and holds him accountable for his actions, but it also dehumanizes him. Melinda comes up with creative nicknames—like "Mr. Neck" and "Hairwoman" for her teachers—but the monikers she applies to Andy communicate fear of a predator. Andy is "IT," "Beast," and wolf-like (Anderson 45, 149, 97). When she imagines receiving advice from the hosts of talk shows she has been watching, Sally Jessy tells her, "This boy was an animal" (164). Melinda's internal counseling session also tackles Ovid's attempt to sweeten a story of a failed rape with love language: Jerry emphatically tells her, "Was it love? No. Was it lust? No. Was it tenderness, sweetness, the First Time they talk about in magazines? No, no, no, no, no!" (165). There is nothing romantic about Melinda's rape, and she makes no effort to sugarcoat it.

In a particularly potent scene, Anderson eliminates any

argument in favor of a *deus ex machina* to blame for Andy's actions. Several months after the party where she is sexually assaulted, Melinda accidentally runs into Andy outside the town bakery as she is walking to school:

I cross the parking lot and IT comes out the door. Andy Evans with a raspberry-dripping jelly doughnut in one hand . . . . [H]e turns his head and sees me. And wolfsmiles, showing oh granny what big teeth you have.

He steps toward me, holding out the doughnut. "Want a bite?" he asks. (96-97)

When a girl loses her virginity, her hymen is torn, causing her to bleed. The raspberry doughnut—a round object with a hole in it containing red jelly—is a yonic symbol, and the red jelly dripping on the snow represents the blood Melinda lost when Andy violated her. Andy is, symbolically, holding Melinda's stolen virginity. The image of Andy holding the doughnut out to her is gruesome and it terrifies Melinda, who immediately turns and bolts (97). There is no Cupid to take the blame here; with this image, Anderson literally places the responsibility of the rape in Andy's hands.

While Anderson makes it abundantly clear that the fault of the rape lies with Andy, Ovid's myth blurs the placement of blame. Apollo's actions are caused by Cupid's interference, but Ovid also—astonishingly—places some of the blame on Daphne. Apollo's obsession with her, while inspired by Cupid, is fueled by his view of Daphne's beautiful form: the sight of her exposed legs as she flees only makes Apollo want her more, and for as much as he praises what he can see of her body he "believes the beauties yet unseen are best" (Ovid I.107-108, 78). Ovid disguises the god's lust by tailoring the language into an appraisal of Daphne's beauty, but the poem cannot obscure that the attraction is purely physical. However, the characters in the myth seem to think that this is somehow Daphne's fault. The nymph desires above all else to preserve her chastity, but her father, the river god Peneus, says that Daphne's "wish would prove her punishment: / For so much youth, and so much beauty

join'd, / Oppos'd the state, which her desires design'd" (I.52-54). In other words, Daphne cannot expect to preserve her virginity when she looks the way she does; it goes against nature for such beauty to stand alone. No wonder, then, that she cries in the midst of her flight to beg her father to "change [her] form, whence all [her] sorrows come" (I.135). Her body becomes her greatest inhibition to her self-preservation.

Melinda believes this false premise for about half of the novel, but *Speak* adamantly rejects Ovid's suggestion that the victims of rape are somehow responsible for the violations against them. Just before he rapes her, Andy tells Melinda that she is "too beautiful to hide in the dark" (Anderson 134). Like Daphne, Melinda accepts this as evidence that her body invites danger. She begins wearing drab, baggy clothing to obscure her form, believing that she is protecting herself from further harm. Melinda also falls into a common trap for rape victims: she internalizes this belief and turns it into guilt and shame (101). To make it clear that this is a false premise, Anderson does not allow Melinda to achieve any kind of resolution until she starts to reclaim her body and release the guilt that does not belong to her. Melinda herself is aware that she must achieve this reclamation to regain her psychological health. Her first resolution when she decides to "make [herself] normal" is to find pants that fit instead of choosing jeans that are too large for her (125). Melinda achieves her healthiest state of mind at the end of the novel when she can say to herself, "It wasn't my fault. He hurt me. It wasn't my fault" (198). Anderson's emphasis on the innocence of the victim pointedly undercuts Ovid's allocation of blame, blatantly declaring that the mindset Ovid puts forth is not only wrong but psychologically damaging to the victims of rape.

The ending of the myth is perhaps its most problematic aspect. Wistful over the loss of his love, Apollo says to the Daphne-turned-laurel tree, "Because thou canst not be / My mistress, I espouse thee for my tree" (Ovid I.148-49). The victim becomes the symbol of her assaulter. Ovid says that Daphne is so pleased with this turn

of events that “[t]he grateful tree . . . / shook the shady honours of her head” in assent to Apollo’s declaration (I.162-63). For the headstrong nymph, who despises and spurns “the name of bride” and the very idea of “the marriage tye,” it is highly uncharacteristic of her to be grateful at finding herself inescapably “espouse[d]”—married—to Apollo (I.37, 48). Anderson strongly opposes the idea of making Melinda, the rape victim, helpless to escape such a bond with her rapist. To emphasize Melinda’s ultimate freedom from Andy, Anderson dissolves the mythical roles she evokes so briefly: Melinda is no more a nymph than Andy is a Greek god. The dryads of Greek and Roman mythology are tree spirits, synonymous with the trunks and branches they inhabit. In her art class Melinda is given the yearlong assignment of drawing trees, and she finds herself consistently frustrated in her efforts to portray herself and her emotions through the trees she creates. She is never quite satisfied with the outcome of her tree art—at least, not until her final drawing, which will be discussed later.

Instead of trees, Anderson gives Melinda a different symbol to represent her: birds. Her most eloquent expression of herself comes through a sculpture she constructs out of the bones of her Thanksgiving turkey, which rivets her art teacher and her classmate with the clarity of her expressed inner turmoil (Anderson 63-64). Melinda tries to incorporate a tree into the piece, but she ultimately rejects it, saying “there is no place” for it (64). She cannot express herself adequately through the medium of trees, but the desecrated carcass of the flightless bird is something with which she can identify. Through birds, Anderson also illustrates Melinda’s progression; her identification with the turkey’s carcass is transcended by the end of the novel as Melinda frees herself from feeling trapped by the reality of her rape. In the last scene of the book, her realized freedom from her guilt and shame is described as she sketches her final drawing for her art class: “My tree needs something. I walk over to the desk and take a piece of brown paper and a finger of chalk . . . . I practice birds—little dashes of color on

paper . . . . I draw them without thinking—flight, flight, feather, wing. Water drips on the paper and the birds bloom in the light, their feathers expanding promise” (197). Her tree is incomplete without the birds. Her ease in sketching them surpasses anything she has felt in drawing trees, caught up in the “expanding promise” of hope and healing she feels are coming after her successful, final confrontation with Andy.

If the characters of *Speak* were bound up in the mythological roles they evoke, Melinda would be unable to escape becoming Andy’s trophy. Instead, Andy falls far short of the Greek god Melinda once thought him to be, and Melinda abolishes her identification with Daphne as soon as she contemplates taking up the role: “Could I put a face in my tree, like a dryad from Greek mythology? [I have] Two muddy-circle eyes under black-dash eyebrows, piggy-nose nostrils, and a chewed-up horror of a mouth. Definitely not a dryad face” (17). Melinda thinks she is too ugly to play a nature goddess, but in eliminating the parallel she frees herself from any possibility of becoming Andy’s trophy. Simultaneously, she evades the premises in Ovid’s myth that Anderson condemns as untrue: that rape has sweetened overtones, and that her own body is somehow to blame for the affront against it. *Speak* subverts the myth of Daphne and Apollo again and again, and, through it, Anderson indicates that rape victims have hope of a better resolution than simply resigning themselves to becoming trees.

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## Jurors

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